



**SOUTH DOWNS  
NATIONAL PARK  
LOCAL PLAN**

## **Settlement Boundaries Topic Paper**

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March 2026

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## **1. Introduction**

- 1.1** This paper explains the approach taken to reviewing settlement boundaries as part of the development of a new South Downs Local Plan. The scope of the Settlement Boundaries Review was limited to assessing anomalies or errors with the existing settlement boundaries against the Settlement Boundary Methodology set for the adopted Local Plan, which is still considered fit for purpose, and applying this same Methodology to establishing new settlement boundaries around the additional allocations in the new Local Plan.
- 1.2** The paragraphs below under the sub-headings “Principle of inclusion of land uses” and “Detached parts of settlements” are from the Settlement Boundary Methodology. The wording is the same as used in the 2017 Settlement Boundary Review Update except for the following changes. These changes are the paragraph numbers in this paper, removal of out-of-date wording from a previous National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) in paragraph 2.13 below and the updated policy number for the development strategy in the Submission South Downs Local Plan 2024-2042.
- 1.3** The principles referred in the paragraph above were used to determine the outcomes of issues raised on the existing settlement boundaries during the development of the new Local Plan. These issues and outcomes are set out in table 1 at the end of this document.

## **2. Principle of inclusion of land uses**

- 2.1** Where the Development Strategy (Strategic Policy SDC2) identifies a settlement as being suitable for a settlement policy boundary then the main built-up area of the settlement has been included within the boundary. This will include any residential or commercial developments that have taken place since the boundaries were last reviewed (subject to the exceptions listed below) and sites with extant planning permission or proposed for allocation in the South Downs Local Plan. Barring the exceptions below, settlement boundaries have been drawn along defined features such as walls, hedgerows, and roads where possible.
- 2.2** 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.

- Allotments - **Exclude**
- School playing fields - **Site by site (see below)**
- Hard surfaced school playgrounds - **Include.**
- Recreation/sports grounds - **Exclude- including buildings.**
- Designated wildlife sites and buffers around them (where relevant) - **Exclude.**
- Woodlands - **Exclude**
- Orchards - **Exclude**
- Cemeteries and churchyards - **Exclude.**
- Agricultural fields or paddocks that are surrounded by development on all sides **Site by site.**
- Farmyards and farm buildings - **Exclude.**
- Former farm buildings, converted to other uses – **Site by site (see paragraph 10 below)**
- Nurseries, garden centres etc. - **Exclude**
- Agricultural/forestry workers housing - **Exclude.**
- Car parks, sports pavilions etc. – **Exclude (where permitted under countryside policies)**
- Community facilities e.g. schools, public houses etc – **Include where already within boundary or recently built adjacent to boundary. Otherwise exclude.**
- Residential caravan sites - **Site by site**
- Houses in the middle of large plots- **Exclude.**
- Large rear or side gardens (of houses clearly in the settlement) - **Boundary should run 10m from rear or side elevation of house (with exceptions, see below).**
- Roads, tracks, and public rights of way running along the boundary - **Exclude.**

**2.3** Green spaces (including but not limited to designated Local Green Spaces) are an important element of the landscape of the National Park and have been excluded from settlement boundaries wherever they occur adjacent to the boundary, except in cases where they have been specifically allocated for development through the Local Plan. This will include allotments, large school playing fields, woodland, recreation/sports grounds, cemeteries and graveyards, roadside verges, and landscaped areas (where they are significant in size and visually related to the countryside), internationally, nationally, or locally designated wildlife sites, agricultural fields, orchards, and paddocks.

- 2.4** Where they occur within settlements and not adjacent to the boundary, green spaces (other than agricultural fields or paddocks) have been included in the settlement boundary. They will often be protected from development by a Local Green Space policy or by specific policies relating to the type of green space.
- 2.5** Certain types of designated wildlife site, for example heathland, or identified ancient woodlands, have the potential to be harmed by certain types of development occurring within a given buffer zone, and where this applies a buffer zone surrounding the wildlife site will also be excluded from settlement boundaries. This may be in the form of the complete exclusion of parts of the settlement within a given distance of the site, or of drawing the boundary along the edge of those buildings that lie closest to the site.
- 2.6** Where agricultural fields and paddocks, including those no longer in agricultural use, are entirely surrounded by a built-up area, they have been assessed on a case-by-case basis. If they contribute positively to the landscape and/or have biodiversity, historic, recreational, or agricultural value then a settlement boundary has been drawn around them, and they will be subject to countryside policies.
- 2.7** Agricultural farmsteads are considered characteristically rural and part of the countryside and provide the historical connection between settlements and their agricultural origins. In addition, these spaces can provide visual links to the rural context beyond. Therefore, farmsteads standing on the edge of the built form of settlements have been excluded as they relate more to the rural context. This approach also provides an additional safeguard against infilling which has the potential to undermine this distinctly rural feature. The exception is farmhouses where they form an integral part of the built-up area of the settlement.
- 2.8** Conversions of agricultural buildings in the countryside have generally been required to retain the physical character derived from their former use. Therefore, they will not always be suitable for inclusion in settlement boundaries. They have been included within the settlement boundary where they are not visually or physically detached from the settlement. Converted agricultural buildings that are physically separate from the settlement boundary, or physically adjacent but retain a separate character (for example, having an access point that is some distance from the settlement, or remaining part of a larger complex continuing in agricultural use) will not be included in the settlement boundary.

- 2.9** 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; garden centres and nurseries; and extensive community facilities such as hard surfaced sports grounds (including pavilions) and car parks, where they have been built outside existing settlement boundaries. More intensively built up community uses such as schools or public houses have been included in the boundary if they are already within it or if they have been built adjacent to the boundary since it was last reviewed; if they are older buildings outside the boundary, or new buildings but not adjacent to the boundary, then they will not be included.
- 2.10** Where a school building is included in the settlement boundary, a view has been taken on how much of the school playing field should be included in the boundary along with it. The principle used has been to include playing fields in the boundary where they are notably small in size or where they are surrounded by the boundary on three sides; where playing fields adjoin the boundary on only one or two sides, the boundary has been drawn so as to include a minimum amount of school playing field, while retaining a simple and where possible a straight outline to the boundary in the vicinity of the school building. This is to allow for a certain amount of flexibility for minor expansions to school buildings, while at the same time recognising the important role-playing fields can have in the landscape.
- 2.11** Residential caravan sites occurring at the edge of settlements have been assessed on a site-by-site basis.
- 2.12** Existing employment sites and proposed Local Plan allocations for employment on the periphery of a settlement, which are significant in size in comparison with the settlement's scale, or are clearly beyond a settlement and irrespective of scale, are excluded from the development boundary. This will protect the scale and structure of settlements from inappropriately sized or shaped residential developments which may occur on such sites if they become unsuitable for employment in the future.

- 2.13** Gardens are an important part of the setting and attractiveness of settlements in the National Park, softening the transition at the settlement edge, marking the edge of settlements in what is generally an attractive way, softening the appearance of built-up areas from the countryside and containing vegetation which shields new development. This role is especially important on the sloping terrain common in the National Park, where the edge of a curtilage can often be noticeably higher or lower than existing buildings within that curtilage. Large and long gardens, including landscaped areas ancillary to commercial sites, at the edge of settlements will therefore be excluded from settlement boundaries. This will not affect permitted development rights or the planning status held by gardens as land ancillary to residential use.
- 2.14** Houses in large plots, set back from the road, have been excluded from settlement boundaries where they occur at the edge of a settlement. This will protect vegetation in the garden which is likely to dominate views into the plot from the public domain.
- 2.15** Where houses themselves recognisably form part of the settlement pattern, but they have a large or long rear or side garden which stretches away from the rest of the settlement, the settlement boundary will run 10m behind the relevant rear or side wall of the main dwelling house, to prevent back land development and protect any vegetation which shields or may in future shield the settlement in views from the countryside. To avoid making petty deviations from physical boundary features, this criterion will only be applied where the furthest point of the curtilage is 20m or more from the closest wall of the main dwelling house to the boundary. Where boundary features on the ground run within 5m of the proposed resulting line, then they have been followed instead. This principle does not apply where it would result in minor, isolated bites being taken out of otherwise strong and straight settlement edges.
- 2.16** Where settlement boundaries run along roads, tracks, or public rights of way, they have been drawn along the edge closest to the settlement (though having regard to paragraph 5 above).

### **3. Detached parts of settlements**

- 3.1** Detached parts of settlements may have boundaries drawn around them where they:
- a) Have a density of 30 dwellings per hectare or more (after deduction of any long narrow rear gardens as per paragraph 17 above). Clusters of low-density villa style housing or of detached houses with sizeable side or front gardens will not be given settlement boundaries.

- b) Comprise a continuous block of curtilages, of buildings which are in close proximity to one another, without large residential plots, landscaping or other open space breaking up the area (though they may be separated by roads)
- c) Include at least twenty dwellings, and
- d) Are situated within 150m of the main part of the settlement, are visually related to the main part of the settlement and do not have any identity as a separate settlement or hamlet.

**3.2** Where boundaries are drawn around detached parts of settlements, this will not have any implications for land lying outside the boundary between the main part of the settlement and the detached part.

## **4. Issues raised on settlement boundaries during the development of the new Local Plan**

**4.1** Table 1 below shows those settlement boundary issues raised either by external enquiries or by officers during the development of the new South Downs Local Plan. The principles above from the Settlement Boundaries Methodology were used to determine the outcomes of the issues raised in Table 1 below.

**4.2** In addition, the allocations process has identified a small number of suitable allocation sites on the National Park boundary. Some of these allocations require the extension of an existing settlement boundary which is external to the National Park across the National Park boundary. There are two instances where there is an area of land between the National Park boundary and the existing external settlement boundary: SDA31 Land west of Liphook (within East Hampshire District) and SDA77 Land at Horsham Road, Steyning (within Horsham District). In both instances there is an existing settlement boundary outside the National Park of which the allocation is a logical extension. However, there is an area of highway between the National Park/allocation boundary and the existing settlement boundary. To regularise this issue in the interests of good planning, the South Downs National Park Authority will write to both district councils as part of their own ongoing Local Plan consultations/examinations and request that the existing settlement boundaries outside the National Park are extended to include these areas of highway to allow connection and extension of the settlement boundaries into the National Park.

**Table 1** showing settlement boundary issues raised during development of the new South Downs Local Plan 2024-2042 and the outcome.

Issue raised	Location	Outcome	Reason
Properties adjacent to church on Church Road to be included in the Steep settlement boundary (June 2023).	Church Road, Steep	No change.	Methodology correctly applied in the Settlement Boundary Review 2017 Update, no change since to justify a different outcome. Covered by 2017 Update, Appendix 1, page 23, Steep table, reference 72.
Extend Lancing settlement boundary into the South Downs National Park to include this plot (September 2023).	Land north of Mount Way, Lancing	No change.	Site has been excluded from the Local Nature Reserve according to the DEFRA Magic Map. There is no enclosure by surrounding development and the plot remains a green space even if of low-quality due to activity on the site. No justification to extend the settlement boundary of Lancing into the National Park and include the plot.
Rowlands Castle settlement boundary extension into National Park (October 2023).	“Northern tip” of the settlement Bowes Hill/Woodhouse Lane, Rowlands Castle	Settlement boundary amended.	Boundary extended into National Park through East Hampshire Local Plan Part 2. Boundary amended within the South Downs National Park to reflect this extension.
Extend Swanmore settlement boundary into the	Cobbett Close (south of Dodds	Settlement boundary amended.	The allocation Land north of Dodds Lane, policy SDA79

Issue raised	Location	Outcome	Reason
<p>South Downs National Park Residential to include an adjacent residential development completed around 2007 (October 2023).</p>	<p>Lane), Swanmore, Winchester</p>		<p>in the South Downs Local Plan 2024-2042 submission version is opposite Cobbett Close. The Swanmore settlement boundary is proposed to be extended to include Land north of Dodds Lane SDA79. It is appropriate that Cobbett Close containing smaller houses and plots adjacent to the existing residential area of Swanmore is also brought within the settlement boundary extension.</p>
<p>Residential development near Kingsfernsden Lane off Ramshill to be included within the Sheet settlement boundary (October 2023).</p>	<p>Broadlands House and adjacent surrounding properties off Ramshill, Sheet</p>	<p>No change.</p>	<p>Methodology correctly applied, no change since to justify a different outcome. Covered by the 2015 Settlement Boundary Review Methodology Paper, Appendix 1 page 24, Sheet table reference 258.</p>
<p>Three dwellings on the edge of the village to be brought within the Binsted settlement boundary (May 2025)</p>	<p>Adjacent to the Cedars Public House off The Street, Binsted</p>	<p>Settlement boundary amended.</p>	<p>The three dwellings were built out after the 2019 adoption of the South Downs Local Plan. They are immediately adjacent to, and part within, the</p>

Issue raised	Location	Outcome	Reason
			existing settlement boundary. It is appropriate to extend the settlement boundary to include these dwellings.
Extension to Easebourne settlement boundary (November 2025)	Area including residential properties of Pucks Corner, Homelea, Vectum, No. 377 and Birthday House, Easebourne Street, Easebourne	No change.	Several of the properties are set back in large plots beyond dwellings fronting Easebourne Street. They have previously been excluded from the settlement boundary. Including these properties would go beyond correcting an anomaly in the application of the methodology and open the area for infill development.