

Settlement Confines Background Paper

Technical Engagement with Parish Councils

February 2024

This paper has been prepared as part of West Northamptonshire Council's technical engagement with Parish Councils on the rural area settlement hierarchy for the emerging West Northamptonshire Local Plan. This paper should be read in conjunction with the Rural Areas Settlement Hierarchy Parish consultation documents.

1. Introduction

The former Daventry and South Northamptonshire authorities developed their own approaches to defining settlement confines, which have been applied within the respective part 2 local plans. A single settlement confines methodology for West Northamptonshire is now needed to inform the new rural area settlement hierarchy. This paper compares the existing Daventry and South Northamptonshire approaches to defining settlement confines and suggests draft criteria for the new West Northamptonshire Local Plan. We are seeking Parish Councils' views on the suggested draft criteria as part of the technical engagement on the rural area settlement hierarchy.

2. What are settlement confines?

Settlement or village confines represent the extent of a settlement's main built up area and where certain policies apply. They are used to direct development to the most sustainable locations whilst protecting the character of the countryside, villages and towns.

3. Comparison of the former Daventry and South Northamptonshire authorities' approaches to defining settlement confines

Daventry Part 2 Local Plan Table 3 lists the criteria for defining village confines for Other Villages (because these are not defined in the plan, unless this has been done via a Neighbourhood Plan).

South Northamptonshire Council published a Methodology for Town and Village Confines (August 2016) as part of the evidence for the South Northamptonshire Part 2 Local Plan. The methodology lists 5 criteria with key considerations for determining what should be within and outside of village confines.

Both approaches are available to view online here:

<https://www.westnorthants.gov.uk/neighbourhood-planning/defining-settlement-confines-guidance>

Tables 1 and 2 below compare the criteria from the two different approaches and identifies the similarities and differences. The South Northamptonshire methodology specifically identifies "The need to try to base confines on **strong physical boundaries** that can be easily identified on the ground. (Roads, watercourses, and strong field and curtilage boundaries)" (Criteria C1). The Daventry method does not specifically mention physical boundaries but does refer to buildings and curtilages which are 'contained', which could be taken to infer the same sort of well-defined boundaries.

Settlement Hierarchy Technical Engagement with Parish Councils

In summary, the majority of criteria are the same or broadly similar (highlighted green in the tables). There are two criteria, one from each approach, which are not included in the other's approach (highlighted yellow in the tables):

1. South Northamptonshire criterion C4 allows for developments that are isolated or peripheral to the main built up part of a village, where there they meet certain criteria; and,
2. Daventry criterion F deals specifically with land between the edge of the village and a bypass.

There is one key difference in the two approaches (highlighted red), which is regarding exception sites. The South Northants approach includes them within confines (criterion C3), whereas Daventry criterion G specifically excludes them.

Key to comparison tables

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| | Both approaches are the same, or broadly similar |
| | Only included in one approach |
| | Different approach taken |

Settlement Hierarchy Technical Engagement with Parish Councils

Table 1 – comparison of elements included in settlement confines

| Daventry – IN | South Northants - IN | Observations |
|--|--|--|
| A. Buildings and curtilages which are contained and visually separate from open countryside that are clearly part of a coherent network of buildings that form the village | C1. The need to try to base confines on strong physical boundaries that can be easily identified on the ground. C5. Conversions of agricultural buildings have been included within the settlement boundary where they are not visually or physically detached from the settlement. C5. 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. | Daventry approach doesn't explicitly mention boundaries, but the reference to buildings and curtilages as 'contained' could infer this. |
| B. Areas of land with planning permission for housing or community use that are directly adjacent to the village and are under construction | C3. developments that have taken place outside but adjoining confines (including exception sites) and outstanding planning permissions where development has started | Both approaches include land with consent and which are under construction adjacent to the confines. Exception sites are included in the South Northants approach, but are excluded in the Daventry approach (see below). |
| | C4. Developments that are isolated or peripheral to the main built up part of a village, where there they meet criteria: at least 30dph, have at least 20 dwellings, are within 100m of the main settlement and do not have a separate identity. | Daventry approach makes no allowance for this. |

Table 2 – comparison of elements outside of settlement confines

| Daventry – OUT | South Northants - OUT | Observations |
|---|--|--|
| C. Gardens or areas of open space which relate to the open countryside taking into account the character and appearance of the garden and the surrounding area | C1. large gardens on the edges of villages that extend into the open countryside or the character of which relates more to the surrounding countryside than to the main built up part of a village. C5. Green spaces (including but not limited to designated Local Green Spaces) are an important element of the landscape of settlements and have been excluded from settlement boundaries wherever they occur adjacent to the boundary | Both approaches exclude gardens and open spaces/green spaces which relate more to the surrounding countryside. |
| D. Individual and groups of dwellings and buildings that are detached or peripheral to the village and relate to the open countryside rather than the built form of the village | C5. farmsteads standing on the edge of the built form of settlements should be excluded as they relate more to the rural context. 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). | Both approaches exclude buildings and development which is detached or peripheral. South Northants approach allows for isolated developments that are above a certain size and meet other requirements to have their own confines (see C4 above). |
| E. Areas of employment or leisure use, including public open space, that is detached or peripheral to the village | C2. undeveloped land that is, in use or appearance, more closely related to adjoining open countryside than to the built up part of a village or that affords important views into or outward from a village or an attractive setting | South Northants criterion C5 goes into detail on a number of different uses, including for employment, the scale of them |

Settlement Hierarchy Technical Engagement with Parish Councils

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| | <p>for listed or important buildings or conservation areas.</p> <p>C5. 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.</p> <p>C5 Existing employment sites 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</p> | |
| F. Land which would otherwise be outside the confines, even if it is between the edge of the village and a bypass | | South Northants approach has no reference to bypasses. |
| G. Rural Exception Sites | | Exception sites are included in the South Northants approach (see above). |

4. Suggested West Northamptonshire settlement confines criteria

Based on the above comparison and assessment of the two former authorities' approaches to settlement confines, the following West Northamptonshire settlement confines criteria are suggested.

The following will be classified as being inside the confines:

1. Buildings and curtilages, including converted agricultural buildings, which are:
 - contained by strong physical boundaries,
 - visually separate from open countryside; and
 - clearly part of a coherent network of buildings that form the village,
2. Green spaces (other than agricultural fields or paddocks) where they are located within settlements and not adjacent to the boundary.
3. Areas of land with planning permission, adjacent to the buildings and curtilages conforming to criterion 1, that are completed or under construction.
4. Developments that are isolated or peripheral to the main built up part of a settlement, where they meet criteria: at least 30dph, have at least 20 dwellings, are within 100m of the main settlement and do not have a separate identity.

The following will be classified as being outside the confines:

5. Gardens and areas of open space (including, but not limited to, designated Local Green Spaces) on the edges of settlements which relate more to the open countryside than the built up part of the village, taking into account the character and appearance of the garden/open space and the surrounding area.
6. Individual and groups of dwellings and buildings (including farmsteads and converted agricultural buildings) that are detached or peripheral to the settlements and relate to the open countryside rather than the built form of the settlement.
7. Areas of employment or leisure use, including public open space, that are detached or peripheral to the settlement.
8. Land which would otherwise be outside the confines, even if it is between the edge of the settlement and a bypass.
9. Rural Exception Sites.

We would like to know what Parish Councils think of these suggested criteria. Below are some explanatory notes and questions (the questions are also included in the enclosed response form).

Exception sites

As identified above, the key difference between the two former authorities' approaches is regarding exception sites. For reference, rural exception sites are defined in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) as: *"Small sites used for affordable housing in perpetuity where sites would not*

Settlement Hierarchy Technical Engagement with Parish Councils

normally be used for housing. Rural exception sites seek to address the needs of the local community by accommodating households who are either current residents or have an existing family or employment connection. A proportion of market homes may be allowed on the site at the local planning authority's discretion, for example where essential to enable the delivery of affordable units without grant funding".

The Daventry approach specifically excludes exception sites from settlement confines, whereas South Northamptonshire included exception sites (which have consent and are under construction) within confines. The Council is considering continuing the Daventry approach for the new criteria which would mean all exception sites would be excluded from settlement confines. This may mean that some existing confines in the former South Northamptonshire area would need to be revised.

QUESTION SC1. Do you agree all exception sites should be excluded from settlement confines? If not, please explain why.

Isolated and peripheral developments

The South Northamptonshire methodology makes provision for developments that are isolated or peripheral to the main built-up part of a settlement, where there they meet specific criteria, to be included within confines. The Daventry criteria makes no allowance for such instances, but there are a number of settlements within the former South Northamptonshire area which are formed of two or more separate boundaries and it is therefore proposed to retain this criterion.

QUESTION SC2. Do you agree with suggested criterion 4: Developments that are isolated or peripheral to the main built up part of a settlement, where there they meet criteria: at least 30dph, have at least 20 dwellings, are within 100m of the main settlement and do not have a separate identity? If not, please explain why.

Land adjacent to bypasses

The Daventry criteria specifically classifies land between the edge of a settlement and a bypass as being outside of the confines. The South Northamptonshire methodology was silent on this. However, it is considered beneficial to retain this criteria for both the existing cases in the former Daventry area and for the new and proposed bypass locations in the former South Northamptonshire area.

QUESTION SC3. Do you agree with suggested criterion 8, to exclude land from settlement confines which would otherwise be outside the confines, even if it is between the edge of the settlement and a bypass? If not, please explain why.

Existing Confines

The Daventry Part 2 Local Plan does not define confines for Other Villages (the lowest tier of the hierarchy), although some Other Villages do have confines defined via a Neighbourhood Development Plan. Confines are otherwise determined when the need arises (e.g. the determination of a planning application) according to the criteria in Table 3 of the Daventry Part 2 Local Plan. Conversely, the equivalent settlements within the former South Northamptonshire area, known as Small Villages, do have their confines defined in the Part 2 Local Plan. The new West Northamptonshire Local Plan will need a consistent approach to settlement confines and so the Council is considering defining confines for all settlements in the hierarchy.

Settlement Hierarchy Technical Engagement with Parish Councils

Question SC4. Do you agree that all settlements in the hierarchy should have their confines defined in the Local Plan? Please explain why.

A map showing the existing settlement confines for your village is enclosed if they are defined in the relevant Part 2 local plan or an adopted Neighbourhood Plan.

Question SC5. Should there be any changes made to the settlement confines boundary? Please explain your suggestions and/or annotate the enclosed map.

QUESTION SC6. Do you think there is anything missing from the suggested criteria?

QUESTION SC7. Do you have any other comments on the suggested settlement confines criteria?