

# Neighbourhood Planning

## Guidance on Development Boundaries for Neighbourhood Development Plans



This guidance note will provide you with information and advice on what development boundaries are and what you need to consider when creating a development boundary as part of your neighbourhood plan. You will learn how to assess a settlement boundary, the tools you can use to help you do this and what you need to consider when drafting a development boundary policy for your neighbourhood plan.

### 1. Existing development boundaries in Cornwall

Historically, some of the settlements in Cornwall had defined development boundaries in their District or Borough Local Plans (also referred to as settlement boundaries). These would now be out of date and none are retained for planning purposes by the Cornwall Local Plan (CLP) so there are no development boundaries in place in Cornwall, unless they are defined in a neighbourhood plan.

### 2. What is a Development Boundary?

Development boundaries are used to define a boundary between the built-up area of an existing settlement and the surrounding open countryside. The CLP defines a settlement as having, ‘a form and shape and clearly definable boundaries, not just a low-density straggle of dwellings.’ (para 1.68) Neighbourhood plans can indicate where the settlements are in their parish and show that they are considered appropriate for smaller scale, organic growth of open market housing by defining a development boundary in their NDP.

The development boundary should include those areas of land suitable for ‘infill’, ‘rounding off’ and use of ‘previously developed land’ (PDL) as set out in Policy 3 of the Cornwall Local Plan and described in the Chief Planning Officer Advice Note on Infill and Rounding off. Greenfield land immediately outside the development boundary will only be considered for housing exceptions sites, if there is local (parish connection) housing need, as per CLP Policy 9 (rural exception sites).

Elsewhere in the parish there may be scope for small scale infill in smaller hamlets, but land will generally be considered as ‘open countryside.’ Open countryside is defined in paragraph 2.33 of the CLP as, ‘the area outside of the physical boundaries of existing settlements (where they have a clear form and shape).’ Policy 7 of the CLP specifies the limited circumstances where new dwellings in the countryside could be acceptable; these include replacement dwellings, subdivision, conversions of suitable buildings and accommodation for temporary workers or essential agricultural workers.

### 3. Shall we use Development Boundaries?

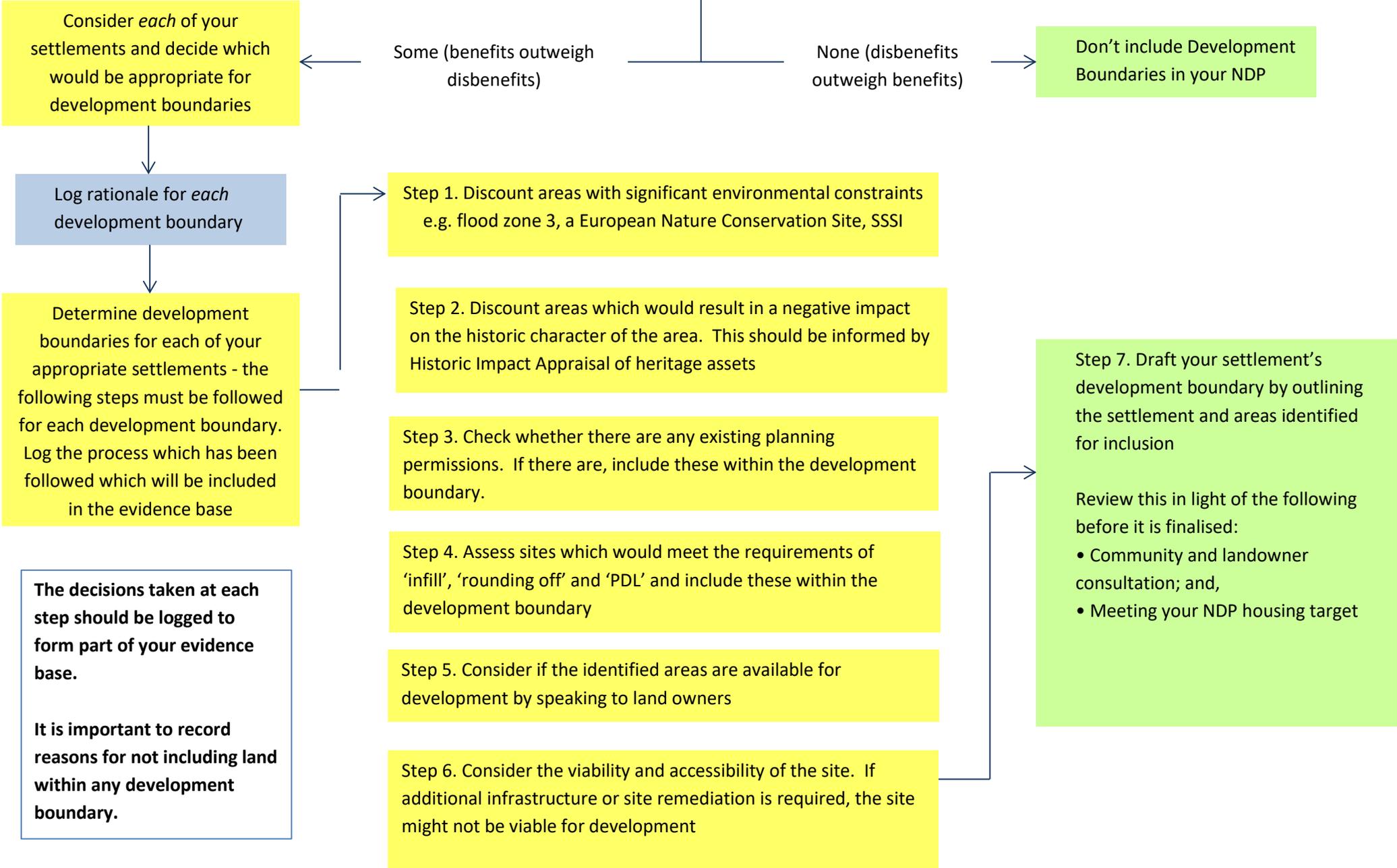
Drawing development boundaries will mean work for the steering group. The table below sets out some pros and cons to consider: -

Advantages	Disadvantages
Provides clarity over where infill and rounding off of existing settlements would be supported.	A development boundary removes the flexibility of the higher-level Local Plan policies e.g. it may unwittingly prevent a future proposal for a single dwelling which, without the development boundary, would otherwise be considered acceptable.
Can indicate the acceptable direction of growth by identifying development space in a preferred location.	Conformity is required with the CLP. Where there are obvious sites which would fulfil the requirements of ‘rounding off, infill or previously developed land’

	then these areas must be included within the development boundary. Arguably therefore the development boundary has not provided any options for growth which wouldn't ordinarily be accepted by CLP Policy 3.
Can be drawn with green gaps identified outside of the development boundary with the aim of avoiding the coalescence of settlements. The identification of green gaps will indicate to any future developers the areas which the community does not consider appropriate for future growth.	Green gaps require sufficient evidence to support their identification, such as a Local Landscape Character Assessment. They do not have the policy weight which is afforded local green open space designations which is supported in the National Planning Policy Framework.
A development boundary will provide clarity over which type of housing is acceptable and where. Put simply, it allows for open market housing within the development boundary and affordable led housing schemes outside the development boundaries.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Resource involved in determining an appropriate development boundary for each settlement. Also, where a parish introduces a development boundary for one settlement, the community may expect development boundaries for all settlements in the parish (resource issue).</li> <li>• Expectations over certainty might be raised. Residents might believe that by including a development boundary then this will result in no housing proposals being submitted outside of the development boundary. This is not case; a development boundary would not preclude an affordable led housing scheme proposal if it meets the policy requirements of CLP Policy 9.</li> <li>• The development boundary does not guarantee that housing will come forward within the areas inside the development boundary and these sites may be too small to deliver affordable housing.</li> <li>• The inclusion of development boundaries may result in the NDP taking longer to develop due to the required public consultation and agreement about where the boundary should be.</li> <li>• A strategic environmental assessment (SEA) might be required to assess any potential impact on the natural and historic environment. <a href="#">SEA Guide Note</a></li> </ul>

If an NDP group decides to use development boundaries, then you must consider which settlements should have a development boundary and the criteria are you using as guiding principles. These criteria must be applied objectively to the whole process and the justification recorded as part of your evidence base. The flow chart below illustrates the process.

**Steps in considering and creating a development boundary**



## 4. Assessing the Settlement Edge

If you have decided to use development boundaries you must assess your existing settlement edge to decide where the boundary is drawn and record that evidence. The edges of some settlements can be irregular and may include lower density development, large gardens and previously developed land (PDL). Follow the steps described in the flow chart, use the [Local Council Interactive Mapping Tool](#) to check designations, constraints and current planning applications and use consistent guiding principles to decide whether land should be inside or outside the boundary. This is usually also informed by a landscape assessment of the settlement edge to protect the setting of the village. There is guidance on [Local Landscape Character Assessment](#) on the neighbourhood planning toolkit.

### Guiding Principles

Here are some examples of guiding principles, but there may be other factors which relate specifically to the character of your village.

- Use existing clear boundary features for example; hedges, roads, streams and walls
- Include gardens in the development boundary, unless there are particularly large gardens which are considered to extend into the open countryside.
- Include opportunities for rounding off at the settlement edge. Sites which are of an appropriate scale for the setting, are contained within existing boundary features and are surrounded on two sides by existing development would generally be considered as rounding off. There is guidance in the Chief Planning Officer Advice Note on [Infill and Rounding Off](#)
- Consider access to facilities, services and transport links. Are there safe walking and cycling links?
- Consider biodiversity and protection of wildlife habitats
- Consider impact on historic assets
- Include current planning permissions
- Exclude sporadic development which is of a different character to or clearly separated from the built-up area, unless it is being specifically allocated in your NDP or in the [Cornwall Site Allocations DPD](#)
- Exclude sports and playing pitches that are on the edge of the settlement

Test each piece of land around the settlement edge consistently against the same agreed criteria and record the results. Once you have *drafted* your development boundary it is important that this is reviewed in light of the following before it is finalised:

- Community and landowner consultation; and,
- Meeting your NDP housing requirement

It is best practice to make sure you consult residents and landowners with land/properties affected by the settlement boundary and make sure this is well publicised, so that interested parties have a clear opportunity to raise their concerns and know how they have been considered and addressed. This can reduce the risk of challenging objections later in the process.

In some places a village is right on the parish boundary and if you are drawing a development boundary which is close to the parish boundary, please make sure you consult the adjoining parish.

## 5. Development Boundary Policy

Once you have finalised your development boundary you will need to write your related NDP planning policy so that your development boundary is applied correctly in any planning decision making. You must include a development boundary map/s within any policy you develop, with clear evidence, justification and intent described prior to the policy wording. An example development boundary map is included at the end of the guidance. You can use the [Local Council Interactive Mapping Tool](#) to draft your development boundary map.

### Example development boundary policy

#### Policy H1: Development Boundary (ies)

##### Policy Intention

Development boundaries have been drawn for the village(s) of XXX (and XXX) in order to ensure the sustainable location of development and protect the open countryside. These are the preferred locations for housing development within the parish. There may be scope for very small-scale infill in other hamlets, xxxx and xxxx, within the parish and these will be judged on a case by case basis against Policy 3 of the Cornwall Local Plan.

##### Policy Justification

Evidence (expand/describe) and community consultation demonstrate that these settlements are the preferred location for development, due to access to facilities and the capacity for development to be accommodated without harm to landscape and historic character. (Include reference to Local Landscape Character Assessment, Historic Impact Assessment, location of school, shop, public transport routes, community consultations responses etc.)

##### Policy H1: Development boundary

This plan establishes a development boundary for the village (s) of XXX (and XXX) as indicated on Map X

- 1) Within the development boundary, small scale infill, rounding off and development on previously developed land will be supported where such development conforms with other policies in this Plan
- 2) Development of open market housing proposals outside but adjacent to the XXX development boundary will not normally be supported. Exceptions will be made for development which is affordable housing led, meets evidenced local need and is appropriate in scale and location in accordance with Policy 9 of the Cornwall Local Plan.
- 3) Outside of the development boundary in the open countryside only development which conforms with Policy 7 of the Cornwall Local Plan: Housing in the Countryside, will be supported.
- 4) There may be scope for very limited infill development in smaller hamlets in the parish. Proposals will be judged against Policy 3 of the Cornwall Local Plan.

## Development Boundary Map X

