

RIBBLE VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL REPORT TO PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

Agenda Item No.

meeting date: THURSDAY, 18 SEPTEMBER 2014
title: PROPOSED CRITERIA FOR REVISED SETTLEMENT BOUNDARIES
submitted by: DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY SERVICES
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1 PURPOSE

1.1 To describe the proposed methodology to be used in the forthcoming revision of the boundaries of the “Defined Settlements” of the Core Strategy as a part of the evidence base that will inform the forthcoming Housing and Economic Development DPD which will contain future land allocations and more immediately to assist in relation to the determination of planning applications.

1.2 Relevance to the Council’s ambitions and priorities:

- Community Objectives – The matters covered in this report will contribute to several of the objectives of the Sustainable Community Strategy including appropriate housing, encouraging economic activity and aiding the regeneration of Market Towns.
- Corporate Priorities – The document that is the subject of this report relates to Council ambitions of making people’s lives safer and healthier and also helping to protect the environment, by directing future development into appropriate and sustainable locations.
- Other Considerations – This paper will help improve the evidence base of the Borough’s Local Plan thereby assisting its performance and consistency.

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 The Core Strategy seeks to guide future development into the most sustainable locations. Its overall Development Strategy (Key Statement DS1), as currently defined in the Main Modifications that have flowed from the Planning Inspectorate’s Examination in Public in January, describes how the majority of future housing, employment and retail development will be focused towards the larger settlements of the Borough on the basis of their greater sustainability. These settlements are given the term “Defined Settlements” to separate them from other smaller groupings of houses and hamlets in the area. The Defined Settlements are all listed in DS1 and the definition of a Defined Settlement is within the current Main Modifications (as MM18) as a proposed addition to the Core Strategy’s Glossary.

2.2 A fundamental part of the above approach will be to define in exact geographic terms where these Defined Settlements begin and end by placing a settlement boundary around them. This boundary will also logically define where the settlements relate to the surrounding areas of Open Countryside, Green Belt and Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and their associated Core Strategy policies apply. The definition of settlement

boundaries is critical to the forthcoming process of formally allocating land for future development in the Housing and Economic Development Development Plan Document (HEDPD) and for the current consideration of planning applications. Ultimately the HEDPD allocations document will join the Core Strategy to form the overall Local Plan for the area.

- 2.3 The need for settlement boundaries was recognised in the current Districtwide Local Plan (DWLP) and a methodology was developed to define them. This is described in DWLP Chapter 3 paras 3.2.2 and 3.2.3. However this 1990's approach and the boundaries that were defined by it now need to be re-considered in the light of subsequent planning policy changes embodied in the Core Strategy and the physical development that has taken place since the DWLP came into force. This report therefore describes the issues involved in this re-consideration and the associated development of a new set of criteria to set updated settlement boundaries. The detailed document describing this work is called "Settlement Boundary Definition Topic Paper" and is appended to this report as a Background Paper.
- 2.4 The criteria are needed for two purposes, the first and more immediate is to bring boundaries up to date, for instance by plotting approved development since 1998. This will help Development Management staff in day to day decision making in relation to planning applications. In the slightly longer term it will also help in the definition of future land allocations as a part of the formal Local Plan allocations document referred to in 2.2 above.

3 ISSUES

- 3.1 The Topic Paper first outlines (Section 2) the relevant national planning policy background to boundary setting and the Core Strategy policies to which boundaries immediately relate. It concludes that, whilst the need for boundaries is stressed, it is up to each authority to define them for itself in a logical way that is appropriate to local circumstances. There is no set formula for boundary setting.
- 3.2 Section 3 then describes how a "defined settlement" is derived in Ribble Valley terms. This significantly lies on the pragmatic definition originally developed for the DWLP. This has been tested since 1998, was re-confirmed by evidence produced for the Core Strategy and was carried forward into the Core Strategy itself. It has not been subject to revision within the January 2014 Examination in Public. It is this definition that is laid out in Main Modification MM18 mentioned in para 2.1.
- 3.3 Chapter 3 goes on to describe how the area's various "Defined Settlements" were subjected to a series of sustainability tests to distinguish which were most appropriate to host further development. This work led to the production of a list of Defined Settlements into which future development will be focused that sits within Core Strategy Key Statement DS1. This Key Statement is part of a consultation on Main Modifications (see MM21 and 25) to the Core Strategy that has flowed from the January Examination. This consultation was on going at the time of writing this report and is due to close on 5th September 2014.
- 3.4 The core of the paper lies in Section 4 which considers in detail how a boundary can be defined around each of the Defined Settlements in DS1. It proposes a set of criteria, some of which were used in the DWLP and are considered to remain robust, and others

that reflect issues that have developed since 1998, such as the definition of Mineral Safeguarding Areas and revised Flood Zones guidance.

- 3.5 Sections 5 and 6 consider the implications for boundary setting of the Green Belt and the AONB. It should be noted that there is no indication within the Core Strategy that the boundaries of either of these designations will change.
- 3.6 The draft criteria were then pilot tested on a series of recent site visits around local settlements and were found to be useful and pragmatic.

4 RISK ASSESSMENT

4.1 The approval of this report may have the following implications:

- Resources – In-house staff and other in house resources will be required.
- Technical, Environmental and Legal – None.
- Political – No direct political implications.
- Reputation – It is important that the Council progress significant planning documents.
- Equality & Diversity – No implications identified.

5 **RECOMMENDED THAT COMMITTEE**

- 5.1 Adopt the methodology outlined in the Topic Paper in relation to on-going work relating to settlement boundaries.
- 5.2 Agree to continue to use settlement boundaries within the Districtwide Local Plan where appropriate for development management purposes.

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BACKGROUND PAPERS

Settlement Boundary Definition Topic Paper

For further information please ask for Philip Dagnall, extension 4570

REF: PD/P&D/18 SEPTEMBER 2014

BACKGROUND PAPER

SETTLEMENT BOUNDARY DEFINITION TOPIC PAPER (September 2014)

1. Introduction.

This report is intended to establish a series of criteria that will enable the effective review of the current settlement boundaries around all the Core Strategy Defined Settlements. These boundaries are very important as it is to the Borough's Defined Settlements that most of the area's future development will be directed and that also much of the remaining parts of the area fall within restrictive designations of either AONB or Green Belt.

In the short term in relation to planning applications that may come forward it will enable the updating of the current boundaries to recognise development that has been permitted since 1998 and also recognise new policies set by bodies that may affect current development such as Mineral Safeguarding Areas.

In the slightly longer term setting new settlement boundaries will be an important part of the forthcoming Allocations DPD document that will eventually accompany the Core Strategy as a fundamental part of the Borough's Local Plan. This will carry the strategic policies of the Core Strategy into allocations of specific areas of land to a variety of new uses.

The re-consideration of settlement boundaries will involve the re-examination of the justifications underpinning the existing boundaries in the light of new planning policy and allow the boundaries to be adjusted, where necessary and justified, to allow for future land allocations and designations for a variety of purposes. It will also need to acknowledge the implications of the replacement of existing policies that will shortly become defunct on the adoption of the Core Strategy.

2. Policy Context

The original definitions of a settlement and the criteria established for the setting of settlement boundaries around them were originally developed for the District Wide Local Plan (DWLP) of 1998. While some of the detail and methodology of these DWLP definitions may still be relevant, as is outlined below in section 3, the overall national policy context of the 1998 plan has now significantly changed. It is necessary therefore to consider what current policy says about defining settlements and settlement boundaries.

The starting point is the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and its associated web-based Planning Practice Guidance. It is equally important to consider how settlement boundaries relate to the various policies within the Core Strategy itself.

2.1 NPPF

The parts that have a general relevance to setting boundaries around different land uses within plans are set out below.

Para 157 bullet 4

Plans should “indicate broad locations for strategic development on a key diagram and land use designations on a proposals map.”

bullet 5

“allocate sites to promote development and flexible use of land, bringing forward new land where necessary, and provide detail on form, scale, access and quantum of development where appropriate”

bullet 6

“identify areas where it may be necessary to limit freedom to change the use of buildings, and support such restrictions with a clear explanation.”

bullet 7

“identify land where development would be inappropriate, for instance because of its environmental or historic significance..”

Para 17 Core planning principles

bullet 5 states that the process should

“ take account of the different roles and character of different areas, promoting the vitality of our main urban areas...”

This is interpreted here as acknowledging the differentiation of areas for different uses such as settlements and the Open Countryside.

bullet 11

“actively manage patterns of growth to make fullest possible use of public transport, walking and cycling, and focus significant development in locations which are or can be made sustainable..”

This encourages the focusing of development into settlements as they are the most sustainable places.

Para 21 bullet 2

“Set criteria, or identify strategic sites, for local and inward investment to meet anticipated needs over the plan period”

This emphasises the need to consider the inclusion of employment land allocations within settlements, which potentially may influence the setting of settlement boundaries.

Para 23 bullet 6

“Local Planning Authorities should therefore undertake an assessment of the need to expand town centres to ensure a sufficient supply of suitable sites” (for a wide range of economic activity).

Though this is mainly within the context of town centre uses bullet 7 goes on to indicate that this could involve sites outside town centres. This could also influence the position of a settlement boundary, especially in relation to the three principal settlements.

Para 28 bullet 3

Stresses that in supporting tourism and leisure developments in the wider rural economy this may involve possible development within rural service centres. This is interpreted as potentially including some of the area’s defined settlements and could therefore affect their settlement boundaries.

Para 47

Emphasises the need to plan for the full objectively assessed housing needs of the Borough, this will result in housing allocations that may influence the form of a settlement boundary.

Para 50 also emphasises the need to plan for a variety of types and mixes of housing that could also influence the location and shape of the above allocations.

2.2 Planning Practice Guidance

Local Plans Chapter, Para 002 states that,

“planning authorities should set out broad locations and specific allocations of land for different purposes; through designations showing areas where particular opportunities and considerations apply.... A Policies Map must illustrate geographically the application of policies in a development plan.”

Para 010 sub section 4 also states,

“Where sites are proposed for allocation, sufficient detail should be to provide clarity to developers, local communities and other interests about the nature and scale of developing (addressing the “what, where, when and how “ questions.”

This emphasises the need for allocations to be clearly set out and that may encompass parts of new settlement boundaries.

2.3. Core Strategy Policies

The Main Modifications to the Core Strategy flowing from the January 2014 Examination in Public involve commitments to detailed settlement boundaries within Main Modification MM26 which relates to the Strategy’s Introduction and Context

The two Core Strategy policies most directly relevant to settlement boundaries are DS1 and DMG2 (taking into account any changes to them within the Main Modifications currently subject to consultation). However there are also several others that involve the presence of a settlement boundary in their interpretation.

2.3.1 Key Statement DS1.

Settlement boundaries are most immediately relevant to the Core Strategy Key Statement DS1- Development Strategy, which outlines the status of the Borough's various defined settlements and their relationship to future development. This Statement lies within the Main Modifications 21 and 25 within the Proposed Main Modifications to the Submitted Core Strategy.

2.3.2 Development Management Policy DMG2- Strategic Considerations (as amended in the Main Modifications of 2014 MM54).

This policy refers directly to the defined settlements and mentions the terms rounding off, consolidation and expansion mentioned below and the treatment of areas outside the defined settlements. The position of a settlement boundary is therefore very important in the interpretation of this policy.

Other Core Strategy policies that could also involve land delineated by a settlement boundary include:

- **Key Statement H3** Affordable Housing – relates to sites and thresholds within Clitheroe and Longridge ie within their settlement boundaries.
- **Key Statement EC2** Development of Retail, Shops and Community Facilities and Services - specifically mentions the defined Principal Settlements of Clitheroe, Longridge and Whalley in terms of their role as service centres and in relation to the specific provision of amounts of new retail floorspace. The boundaries defining these settlements will obviously be important in this context.
- **Development Management Policy DME4** Protecting Heritage Assets - as mentioned in the settlement boundary criteria below (see Section 4), may also have implications for the position of a boundary, for instance in relation to Conservation Areas.
- **Development Management Policy DMB3** Recreation and Tourism Development - deals in part with proposals being well related to main settlements or villages.
- **Development Management Policy DMB4** Open Space - deals with types of recreational and formal and informal play uses that are significantly related to the area's settlements and therefore potentially may affect their boundaries.

2.3.3 Specific Adjustments to Clitheroe Settlement Boundary within Core Strategy Submission Documents in Relation to the Standen Strategic Site.

In addition, and as a part of the suite of Core Strategy submission documents sent prior to the 2014 Examination, a specific adjustment to the Clitheroe Settlement Boundary was made in relation to the Standen Strategic site. This is described as a change to the Proposals Map within the document "Regulation 19 Publication Draft. Resultant Changes to the Proposals Map". This boundary has not been revised in terms of the post Examination Main Modifications.

2.4 Summary of Policy Position

It does not seem that national policy gives a particularly detailed steer on the definition of settlements or settlement boundaries. Given the variety of potential circumstances that would affect boundaries and the varying definitions of settlements across the country this may not be considered a great surprise. However there would appear to be general policy support for setting a clear boundary line as opposed to any other approach.

Therefore it is necessary to construct a set of robust and locally pragmatic guidelines from local experience and in relation to local circumstances. This would, among other matters, necessarily include the specific adjustment made to Clitheroe's boundary within the Core Strategy mentioned above in relation to the Standen Strategic Site (see 2.3.3 above).

3. What is a settlement in planning terms and which of the Borough's settlements should have a settlement boundary?

3.1 Defining a Settlement

There are many places within the Ribble Valley that locals call their settlement. A dictionary definition of a settlement is, "settlement; being settled; place occupied by settlers, small village...". This definition would encompass a wide variety of settings within the area in which people live close to each other in smaller or larger groups of dwellings that they would naturally call their settlement.

In planning terms however it is important to be able to define those places capable of hosting future development, and those that are not, on a logical basis. This is an important part of promoting overall sustainable development and of protecting sensitive parts of the area from excessive or inappropriate levels of development.

From that overall definition of what and what is not a settlement there is the further need to draw boundaries- termed settlement boundaries - around those settlements that could sustain, to varying degrees, some further growth to ensure that new development is genuinely physically linked to them and to prevent sprawl. In doing so this will also implicitly define those areas that are not in settlements ie are in the open countryside around them and define the settlement in terms of the AONB or Green Belt.

Given that over 70% of the Borough lies within AONB or Green Belt, both of which are relatively restrictive designations in terms of future development, the treatment and mutual definition of open countryside and the Borough's settlements is therefore very important. It is towards the Borough's Defined Settlements (see below) that the significant bulk of future development will be guided to deliver a more sustainable long term future. The relationships of AONBs and Green Belts to settlement boundaries are described in more detail below (see sections 5 and 6 below).

Also, as mentioned above, this will involve re-visiting the logic and justification of the current definition of a settlement. The 1998 District Wide Local Plan (DWLP) contained the following definition of a “settlement” to which a variety of its policies related and which was agreed at the DWLP’s Public Inquiry.

“A defined settlement is one which contains at least 20 dwellings and a shop or public house or place of worship or school or village hall ie they are of a size and form that justifies treatment as a settlement. Settlements smaller than this limit will not be given settlement boundaries as they are not considered to be large enough or to contain enough facilities to allow for growth beyond that delivering regeneration benefits or local needs housing.”

It was used to set boundaries around over 30 of the Borough’s settlements, including one based around the Calderstones ex-hospital site that related to a specific DWLP Area Based policy (Policy A3).

This definition has been tested over the period since 1998 through many planning applications without revision and has been re-examined in relation to current policy and the Core Strategy and is considered to remain a pragmatic and useful definition in Ribble Valley terms. It acknowledges the nature of local settlements in relation to their surroundings, their relative scales and, in sustainability terms, the importance of the facilities and services that they have.

3.2. Sustainability Issues and Settlements.

In terms of sustainability the Core Strategy Settlement Hierarchy evidence document (2008) revealed that the settlements with boundaries defined in the DWLP remained those that had the best combinations of facilities, services and access. More recent work following the Core Strategy Examination within the document “Defining the More Sustainable Settlements” (April 2014) also confirmed the above view. In short the DWLP definition appeared to remain workable on the ground in defining those places that were more sustainable.

The DWLP settlement definition (and the settlements that were defined by it) was subsequently carried through into various Core Strategy consultations without challenge. This definition is now included within the Core Strategy Glossary under the term “Defined Settlement” within theon-going Main Modifications as MM18.

The 2008 Settlement Hierarchy examined all the area’s settlements that fell within the definition in 3.1 above in terms of their detailed service provision and other attributes and helped define the position of the three Principal Settlements of Clitheroe, Longridge and Whalley into which the bulk of new development within the plan period would be guided.

Research also revealed that, since 2008, significant development within the permitted Brockhall site (also covered by a DWLP Area Policy A2 and subsequent planning permissions) has now produced a built form that justifies consideration as an additional settlement within the above definition and Brockhall has therefore been added to the existing list of settlements and is included within the Core Strategy as a Tier 2 defined settlement (see below).

In the Submission version of the Core Strategy that was examined in early 2014 was a group of 32 of the smaller Defined Settlements called “Other Settlements”. This group comprised those Defined Settlements excluding the three Principal Settlements of Clitheroe, Longridge and Whalley. Various levels of development were proposed for each of the three individual Principal

Settlements and one quantum of housing development collectively for the Other Settlement group to be apportioned in more detail within a future land allocations DPD.

Following the Core Strategy Examination more work was requested to elaborate individual levels of development for each of the settlements within the “Other Settlements” group as a recognition of their varying levels of sustainability. This work (within the document “Development Strategy – Defining the More Sustainable Settlements and Patterns of Housing Development” consulted on in May to July 2014) produced two separate tiers within the original Other Settlement group.

The first is a group of Tier 1 Settlements that were judged more sustainable and capable of hosting new development. The second is a larger Tier 2 group with less capacity for future growth and into which only local needs housing and those developments able to deliver appropriate regeneration benefits would be considered. These were listed within a revised Core Strategy Key Statement DS1 as Main Modifications 21 and 25 in the post-Examination consultations of 2014.

Within the Core Strategy therefore all the above settlements, the three Principal Settlements and the 32 Tier 1 and Tier 2 settlements, are together termed as “Defined Settlements” to distinguish them from the open countryside, AONB or Green Belt and the smaller groups of dwellings, hamlets and farms that lie within them.

4. Criteria for the Definition of a Settlement Boundary

The definition of Defined Settlement quoted in the Core Strategy’s Glossary within the Submission Version taken to Examination also included statements that were intended to help set a settlement boundary around them and these also flowed from original criteria within the 1998 DWLP. They were retained as they were also felt to remain robust in terms of future work. They were not challenged within associated consultations or within the 2014 Examination in Public and its subsequent Main Modifications consultations. These statements are:

A settlement boundary should:

- Include all properties physically linked to the main (built) part of the settlement
- Include all developed and undeveloped areas of existing planning consents relating to the settlement
- Include all residential curtilages
- Boundaries should not include properties separated from the main body of the settlement by areas of open land not forming a residential curtilage
- In most cases single depth development (ribbon development) along roads leading out of settlements will be excluded unless they are physically well related to the settlement.
- Include sites that are so damaged by visual intrusion as to be unworthy of designation in the open countryside beyond. An example of this approach could be a site on the boundary almost completely surrounded by built development. This was originally cited as a part of the DWLP boundary definition of Main Settlement boundaries but also could equally potentially apply to Core Strategy Principal and Tier 1 and 2 Defined Settlements.

Also within the DWLP the issues of “rounding off”, “consolidation” and “expansion” of settlements were set out. They also have a bearing on settlement boundaries, although in the DWLP these terms appeared linked to boundary setting around Wilpshire, Clitheroe, Billington, Longridge and Whalley that were then termed “main settlements” in the DWLP terminology. These were defined as “main settlements” within now superseded strategic planning documents. Within the Core Strategy and new planning policy Whalley, Clitheroe and Longridge are now termed Principal Settlements and Billington and Wilpshire are Tier 1 settlements.

These three definitions were also re-examined in relation to the new settlement hierarchy proposed within the Core Strategy and were also considered to remain substantially relevant to general boundary setting ie could be applied to all the Core Strategy Defined Settlements. These amended terms were included within the Core Strategy (Submission Version) Glossary of Terms. They are shown below:

- **Rounding Off** – Development that is essentially part of rather than an extension to the built up part of the settlement. It can be defined as the development of land within the settlement boundary (which is not covered by any protected designation) where at least two thirds of the perimeter is already built up with consolidated development.
- **Expansion.** This is the limited growth of a settlement. Generally it should be development that is in scale and keeping with the existing urban area.
- **Consolidation** – Locating new development so that it adjoins the main built up area of a settlement and where appropriate both the main urban area and an area of sporadic or isolated development.

Additional Criteria

In setting clear and consistent future settlement boundaries it is therefore proposed to retain the criteria mentioned above together with a series of additional ones mentioned below. These flow from discussions with planning staff and post 1998 changes to wider planning policy. Note that the criteria below are not currently within the Core Strategy’s Glossary. These are:

- **General point** - Development boundaries should follow clearly defined physical features, such as walls, fences, hedgerows, roads and streams.
- **In terms of Conservation Areas and Listed Buildings (both lying within the overall term Heritage Assets) and their settings** - the re-positioning of the settlement boundary, for reasons of land allocation or for other reasons, may have some effect. This will have to be carefully assessed in the light of current legislation and specific Core Strategy Key Statement EN5 and Development Management Policy DME4.
- **Include necessary land – use allocations.** The settlement boundaries should not preempt new allocations but will need to take them into account.
- **Treatment of Calderstones and Brockhall** - The A3 and A2 Policy boundaries within the DWLP will not be replaced on adoption of the Core Strategy. New boundaries will need to be developed for these settlements and should include as a starting point the General Development Limit within the extant Permissions on these sites.

- **Presence of Mineral Safeguarding Areas (MSAs)** – these are defined by the County Council as the minerals planning authority. Comments should be made regarding the proximity of any new boundary to a MSA, but an MSA is not to be regarded as a fundamental constraint to development or allocation and therefore does not preclude a settlement boundary being placed over a part of it.
- **Flood Zone (FZ) boundaries** – a FZ is not an absolute constraint to settlement boundaries, as some defined settlements already have a settlement boundary and a built form that includes part of a FZ. The type of FZ is important and if necessary also the implications of any relevant Sequential and Exception tests within NPPF. The starting point should be to note the possible relationship of the FZ to a current and potential settlement boundary.
- **Neighbourhood Planning (NP)** – as yet no NP has emerged in the area, though one could during the Allocations DPD development period. It is possible that it could relate to a settlement boundary and any potential allocations. Liaison with localities progressing an NP will be needed.
- **Safeguarded Land** – the DWLP contains a small number of areas under policy ENV5 Open Land, eg adjacent to the current settlement boundaries of Wilpshire and Billington that were effectively safeguarded for development beyond the DWLP plan period. Policy ENV5 will not be replaced on adoption of the Core Strategy. If not covered in part or whole by current permissions, and therefore included within the settlement boundary, they should be considered to be outside the settlement boundary.
- **Open Space issues**- this in part involves the re-consideration of relevant DWLP policy G6 sites as this policy as it stands will not be carried forward into the Core Strategy. It is replaced by a series of Core Strategy Development Management Policies (EN5, DMG1, DME4, DME2 and DMB4). This re-consideration will be on the basis of the existing G6 Site Survey and the relationship of its sites to the replacement policies in the Core Strategy. Where the re-consideration indicates that a former G6 site that adjoins a settlement boundary may need to change its status this may also affect the line the settlement boundary may take. In addition there may also, depending on evidence base information, be the future need to allocate additional open space on the periphery of settlements and again this could affect a boundary's line.

Given the effective general presumption in favour of development within a settlement boundary, subject to other policies, it is proposed to exclude some areas (ie place them outside the settlement boundary) that would be regarded as a part of the settlement to protect them from the possibility of development. An example of this would be a school and its attached playing fields situated on the periphery of a settlement. Other uses to be excluded for the same reason could include formal or informal public recreational space.

- **Traditional rural buildings which have been converted to residential use**, together with their residential curtilages, will be included within the boundary. Modern agricultural buildings and working farms, where they relate to a boundary, will be excluded.

5. Green Belt

It is also important to clarify the relationship of any settlement boundary to the Green Belt boundaries which will also form a part of the Core Strategy and following land allocations DPD. It is important to be clear which of the area's defined settlements relate to the Green Belt and the exact status of Green Belts within the Core Strategy.

Of the Principal Settlements of Clitheroe, Longridge and Whalley only Whalley has a settlement boundary that partly adjoins the Green Belt.

Of the Tier 1 Defined Settlements only Barrow and Chatburn do **not** have significant parts of their current settlement boundary adjoining Green Belt. The stated position in the Core Strategy (see Key Statement EN1) is that the Authority does not propose to amend its Green Belt boundaries in relation to "exceptional substantial strategic changes". The supporting text of the Statement goes on to state that, "Some minor changes will be considered where appropriate to rationalise the existing Green Belt boundaries in response to the findings of the evidence base."

Given the above and that Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) sites have been excluded on the basis of their position within the Green Belt it is suggested that those specific parts of current settlement boundaries that adjoin Green Belt will not be extended into the Green Belt and are therefore likely to remain very similar to their current extent. This may also have implications for any future adjustments to the parts of settlement boundaries that do not adjoin Green Belt and issues such as future allocations.

None on the Tier 2 settlements have a boundary adjoining Green Belt.

6. AONB

A large part of the Borough's area is covered by the Forest of Bowland Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and its relationship to and bearing on current and future revisions to settlement boundaries are also important. The following Tier 2 settlements lie wholly within the AONB:

- Bolton by Bowland
- Chipping
- Downham
- Dunsop Bridge
- Holden
- Newton
- Sabden
- Sawley
- Slaidburn
- Tosside

Of the remainder the following are significantly affected by it:

- Grindleton – nearly all (90%) lies within AONB, only southern boundary adjoins open countryside.
- Hurst Green - nearly all settlement within AONB
- Pendleton – eastern most part (c 20% of total) of settlement lies in AONB
- Waddington – northern and north-western part of settlement inside AONB
- West Bradford - roughly northern third of settlement lies in AONB

Also the north – western extremity of Gisburn’s settlement boundary adjoins the AONB.

Core Strategy Key Statement EN2: Landscape does not preclude development within the AONB, though it emphasises that the protection, conservation and enhancement of the AONB are the primary objectives. Therefore it is possible to consider the expansion of the settlement boundaries of the above settlements if considered necessary and justified in terms of any effect on the AONB and within the levels of development considered appropriate in these settlements.

7. Other Potential Considerations

It should also be noted that a significant part of the current settlement boundary of Longridge, the Borough’s second largest Principal Settlement, abuts the Borough boundary with Preston City Council and this section will therefore remain in its current position.

8. Initial Pilot of Boundary Criteria

The boundary criteria proposed in section 4 above were trialled by applying them to a small group of settlements on site visits by planning staff. They were found to be a useful and pragmatic guide and no major issues were encountered.

9. Next Steps

It is therefore proposed to apply the criteria above to all the Core Strategy Defined Settlement boundaries to initially provide an up to date boundary in relation to post 1998 development and policy changes. This will be helpful in the consideration of on- going planning applications.

The criteria will also be important in the forthcoming Housing and Economic Development DPD which will translate the Core Strategy strategic commitments into land allocations relating to housing, employment, open space, environmental designations and other matters where they relate to the Defined Settlements.