

Housing Development Task Group
Final Report

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Introduction

- 1) The Non-Green Belt and AONB Task Group (TG) was set up by the Bledlow-cum-Saunderton Neighbourhood Plan Working Group in December 2015. Its initial work programme was focused around the following question:
“How can a policy covering the Non-Green Belt and AONB area of the parish be defined, where reasonable and sympathetic development of limited local housing schemes is acceptable in principle?”
- 2) In the course of the TG's work, and in agreement with the Working Group, the geographical scope of the TG was widened to include the Green Belt and AONB area of the parish. Due to this geographical extension the name of the TG also changed from “Non-Green Belt and AONB” to “Housing Development”.
- 3) The TG was composed of residents with a good knowledge of the parish and had the opportunity to involve other members of the team working on the Neighbourhood Plan as needed. At the beginning of its activity the TG tried to identify local organisations with specific interest / focus on housing development issues but could not identify any such organisations. The decision was, therefore, taken to rely mainly on the outcomes of the parish survey and the feedbacks from the public meetings for residents' input in the working of the TG.
- 4) This report contains the TG's policy recommendations to the Working Group for inclusion in the Bledlow-cum-Saunderton Neighbourhood Plan.

Background

- 5) Over 70% of the territory of Bledlow-cum-Saunderton parish is classified as Green Belt and/or Chilterns AONB. Most of the remaining 30% is made up of green fields actively used for

agricultural or other land-related uses (Figure 1). The parish has few and diminishing non-agricultural employment sites.

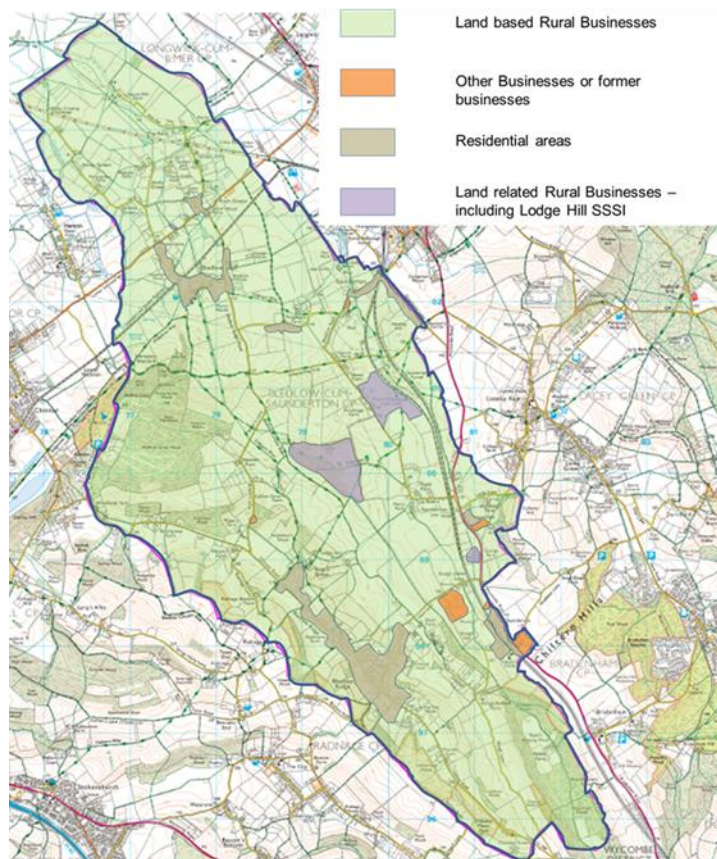


Figure 1 – Indicative Land Use by sector in the parish

- 6) The main built-up areas of the parish are Bledlow Ridge, Bledlow and South Saunderton (Figure 1). Outside these areas the built-landscape of the Parish is made up of hamlets, small clusters of houses and connected agricultural buildings, as well as relatively small ribbons of development.
- 7) Large parts of the parish are included in the following Landscape Character Areas¹, which individually and collectively define many of the key characteristics of the Bledlow-cum-Saunderton parish:
 - Longwick Vale
 - Risborough Chalk Foothills
 - Wain Hill Chalk Escarpment
 - Bledlow Ridge Dip Slope with Dry Valleys
 - Wye Chalk River Valley
- 8) During the period 2006-2015 extensions were by far the most common form of housing development which took place in the parish, leading to an increasing number of larger homes and a corresponding decrease in the number of smaller homes (only 20% of the parish's housing stock is made up of houses with 2 or fewer bedrooms)². This trend is supported by an analysis of the 2011 Census data², which shows that the average house size in the parish is 3.4 bedrooms compared with an average house size in Wycombe district of 2.9 bedrooms. Furthermore, the average occupancy of the housing stock of the parish (as measured by the number of people per bedroom) is lower than the district average with 0.75 people per bedroom in the parish compared with 0.88 people per bedroom for the district as a whole (Figure 2).

Variable	Measure	Bledlow-cum-Saunderton	Wycombe Metropolitan District)	(Non-South East	England
All Households	Count	948	67,861	3,555,463	22,063,368
Average Number of Bedrooms Per Household	Rate	3.4	2.9	2.8	2.7

Figure 2 – Size of household in the parish, size of housing stock and bedrooms per household

- 9) The age demographic for the parish² compared with the district shows the parish has a higher percentage of people in the 45 to 74 year old bracket and a lower percentage between the ages of 20 and 44 (Figure 3). With larger than average homes, this creates a bottleneck for people in their late fifties and sixties who wish to downsize once their children have left home. Furthermore, if we wish to attract younger families to the parish we need to be able to offer smaller and more affordable dwellings.

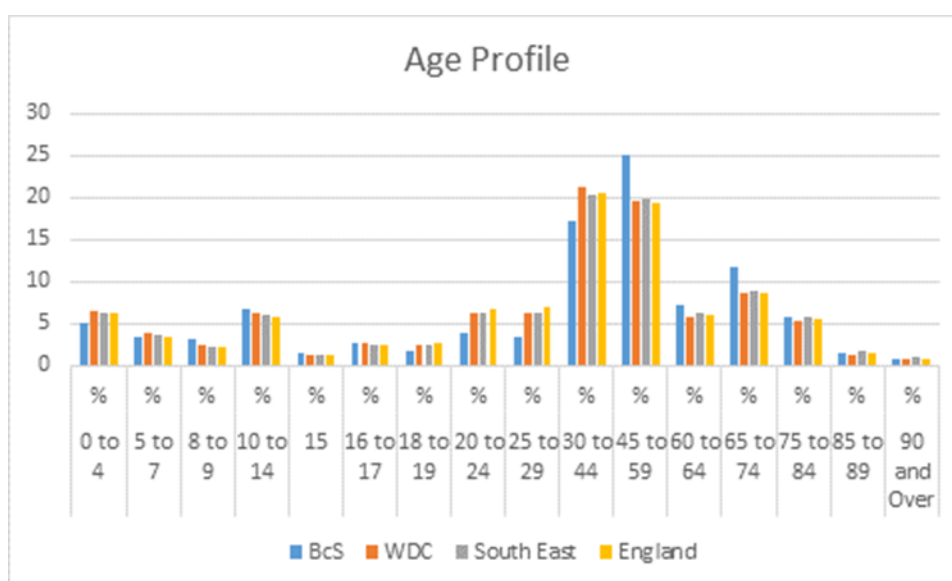


Figure 3 – Age distribution of parish residents in comparison to the District, South East and England

- 10) During the period 2006-2015 some 80 planning applications were made for the construction of one or more houses, many of which were rebuilds of existing residential and non-residential development. Excluding the yet-to-be-built 42 houses on the brownfield site of Wests Yard in Saunderton, the net increase of the parish housing stock over the last 10 years totals some 40 houses, or an average of 4 new houses per year. This represents the “historic organic growth” of the parish housing stock. This finding is not surprising given the above-mentioned rural nature of the parish, and the restrictive development policy regime which is associated with it.
- 11) According to the draft “Housing and Economic Development Needs Assessment 2015”³ in the period 2013-2033, Wycombe District will require a total of 15,011 new units to meet its housing needs. Based on current population², the share of new houses for the parish during the same period would be equal to 215 units or 10-11 new houses per year if we adopted the same (rather crude) “pro-rata approach”. In practice the greater part of future sustainable development for the District will be around existing urban areas such as High Wycombe and Princes Risborough, and therefore the parish’s share of future housing will be lower than this. However, the TG believes that the “historic organic growth” of the parish housing stock needs to be maintained for the duration of the Neighbourhood Plan to ensure that all parts of our large parish (total size 2,716.55 hectares or some 10.5 square miles) can accommodate local housing needs. Whilst part of this growth will come from the redevelopment of brownfield land

/previously developed land (e.g. Coal Yard; former Molins site) the parish will need to accommodate new housing on other sites too.

12) In January 2016 the Neighbourhood Plan Working Group undertook a parish survey covering a wide-range of planning topics, some of which were relevant to the work of the TG. In particular, the results of the survey show that:

- In protecting the quality of the built environment priority should be given to (Figure 4):
 - Ensure that business and residential development is in harmony with the rural character of the Parish and sits well in the landscape (86% of respondents)
 - Define and preserve the boundaries of our villages and hamlets (73%)
 - Promote a high level of energy conservation/environmental sustainability in new buildings (64%).

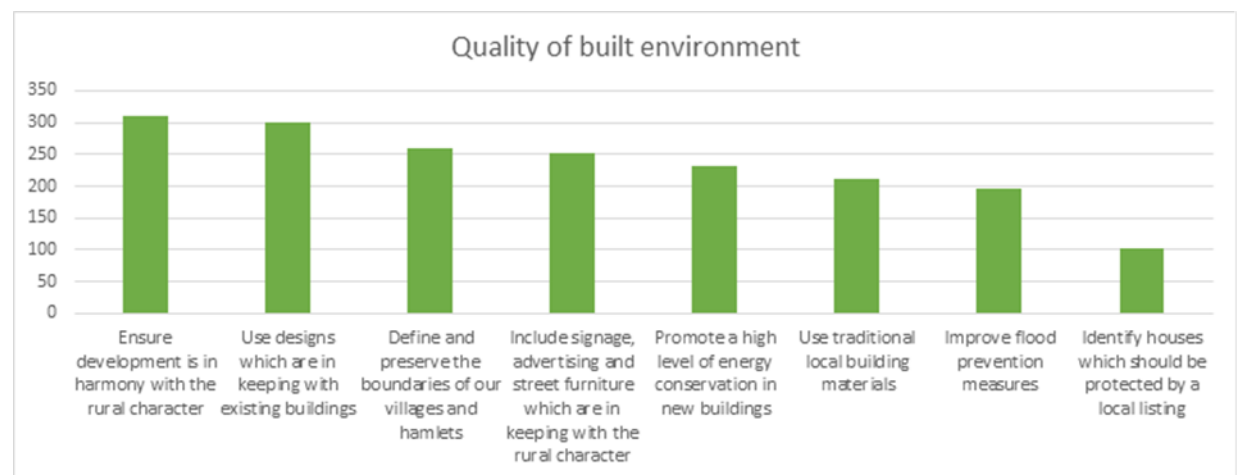


Figure 4

- The type of land which should be used for development is (Figure 5):
 - Brownfield / previously developed land (87% of respondents)
 - Infill, within the existing villages, hamlets and identifiable ribbons of development, where surrounded by buildings (56%)
 - Backlands (35%)
 - Infill, outside the existing villages, hamlets and identifiable ribbons of development, where surrounded by buildings (32%)
 - Other land outside the Green Belt or Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (30%).

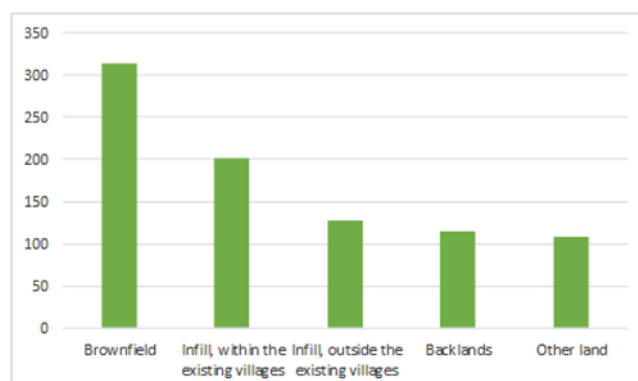


Figure 5

- The type of developments which should be prioritised is (Figure 6):

- 3 bedroom medium-sized family homes (identified as High Priority/HP by 129 respondents; Medium Priority/MP by 129; Low Priority/LP by 102)
- Affordable housing for letting or shared ownership only by those with a local connection (HP = 154 ; MP = 68; LP = 138)
- 2 bedroom smaller family homes (HP = 124 ; MP = 126; LP = 110)
- Sheltered accommodation for the elderly/care homes (HP = 100 ; MP = 98; LP = 162)
- Properties designed for the elderly (HP = 133 ; MP = 94; LP = 68)
- 4 bedroom plus larger family homes (HP = 55 ; MP = 82; LP = 223)
- 1 bedroom homes and apartments (HP = 48 ; MP = 77; LP = 235)
- By applying a simple weighting factor of 3/2/1 to each HP/MP/LP response, the above results clearly show an equal preference for the development of 3 bedroom (747 points), affordable housing (736) and 2 bedroom homes (734), followed by sheltered accommodation (658) and properties designed for the elderly (655). 4 bedroom (552) and 1 bedroom (533) developments do not seem to be a priority.

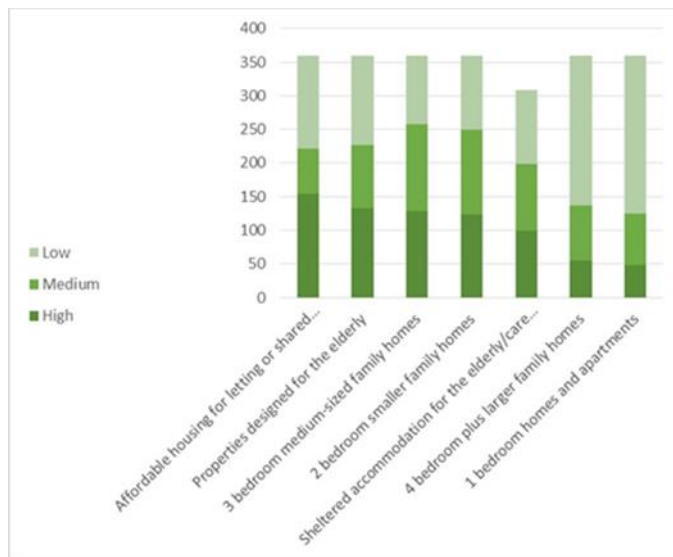


Figure 6

- In protecting the quality of the natural environment priority should be given to (Figure 7):
 - Protect the views of and from the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty from inappropriate development (92% of respondents)
 - Minimise light pollution by supporting a 'dark skies' policy (68%).

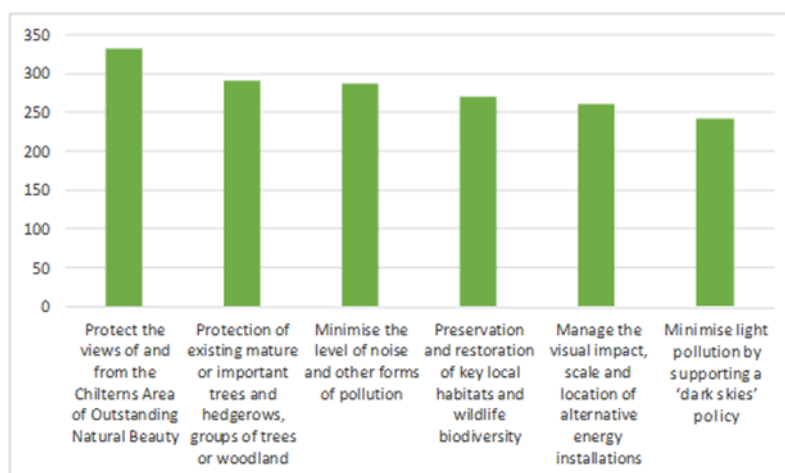


Figure 7

- 13) On 27th February and 5th March 2016 two public events organised by the Bledlow-cum-Saunderton Neighbourhood Plan Working Group took place (total attendance of 145 people). These public exhibitions generated a total of 137 feedbacks which included 107 comments related to the work of the TG.
- 14) While there were comments calling for “no development” at all in the parish or in certain parts of the parish (particularly Bledlow Ridge), the majority of the feedback was in favour of ensuring that the parish housing stock could grow to accommodate the needs of the residents. The feedback was, however, clear that such development (particularly new-builds) should be of small proportion in order to retain the community feel and avoid overdevelopment of the villages. Residents also expressed a strong support for smaller houses in order to build a better balanced village community. Some comments also cited the need to ensure that any growth would not put further strain on the existing services, which were deemed “at capacity”. Further details on the received comments are included in the “Recommendations” section of this report.
- 15) All these comments were analysed and considered by the TG when preparing the recommendations which follow.

Recommendations

- 16) The recommendations included in this report aim at defining policies which facilitate small housing development to meet the future local housing needs (see paragraph 12), while retaining the defining characteristics of our rural parish. The policy areas included in this report are:
- Settlement boundaries
 - Residential development – General
 - Residential development within Green Belt settlement boundaries
 - Residential development within non-Green Belt settlement boundaries
 - Residential development outside settlement boundaries

Settlement boundaries

- 17) At present, only Bledlow Ridge and the conservation area of Bledlow have defined boundaries.

Why settlement boundaries?

- 18) Settlement boundaries are a policy tool which aims to contain a settlement and prevent it from unplanned expansion into the countryside. Within a settlement boundary it is often easier to obtain planning permission for new buildings and new uses of land, whereas development is more strictly controlled in the countryside.
- 19) While defining settlement boundaries has potential drawbacks (e.g. (i) it can lead to a general assumption that development within those boundaries is acceptable; (ii) it can result in cramming development into already well-developed settlements; (iii) it can be difficult to draw a logical boundary around a settlement) these can be managed by applying a robust methodology and appropriate policies. Furthermore, defining boundaries has many advantages (e.g. (i) it gives certainty over where development is likely to be acceptable and where it is not; (ii) it ensures a more controlled approach to future development; (iii) It is often easier to obtain planning permission for other buildings within a settlement boundary), particularly for a parish like Bledlow-cum-Saunderton where protecting the countryside from unnecessary development is a critical policy consideration.
- 20) As 56% of respondents to the parish survey support development by infilling within existing villages, hamlets and identifiable ribbons of development (vs. 32% outside them), the TG's recommendation is to formally classify further settlements and define their boundaries with the dual objective of:
- Identifying specific planning policies which will make development more likely to be acceptable within the identified boundaries (subject to all other applicable policies) and (in the case of the so-called 50% rule in the green belt) relaxing the rules insofar as they limit extensions and replacement dwellings.
 - More strictly controlling development outside the identified boundaries with the aim of protecting the open countryside from development which is inappropriate for a rural parish.

Methodology

- 21) Before starting to identify potential settlement boundaries, the TG has defined a specific methodology aimed at a) making this exercise as objective as possible; and b) maximising the benefits and minimising the disadvantages of defining settlement boundaries. The methodology has then been applied in the search and assessment of the proposed settlement boundaries. The methodology comprises the following elements:
- A. Minimum Size
 - B. Typology of boundaries
 - C. Planning environment
 - D. Social and natural environment
 - E. Landscape Character Areas

A. Minimum Size

- 22) Given the fragmented fabric of the parish built-up areas outside Bledlow Ridge, Bledlow and South Saunderton areas, boundaries can only be defined for settlements which are smaller than villages but where, nonetheless, development has concentrated over the years. On the other hand the TG believes that these zones of concentrated development need to have a minimum size for them to be defined as "settlement". This is in order to a) avoid the creation of clusters of development which are too small to be sustainable and b) preserve the small scale and dispersed settlement pattern of the hamlets and farmsteads which is typical of our area.

- 23) In order to define this “minimum size” the TG has undertaken an analysis of the existing development across the parish and has come to the conclusion that this threshold can be set at 35 existing buildings, as above such threshold the sense of small scale and dispersed development starts to disappear.
- 24) Once the “minimum size” of an area has been established a second test determines if the area includes at least two of the following “key local facilities”: (i) a school or pre-school; (ii) a shop or a pub; (iii) a church; (iv) a village hall and (v) good public transport links by our parish standards.
- 25) Finally a third rather more subjective test is applied to determine if the area provides the “sense of entering and leaving a settlement”. This is a function of the combined size and density of the build area, its geographical configuration and possibly the presence of an existing settlement name (as this gives the area historical context and shows continuity).

B. Typology of boundaries

26) There are two types of settlement boundaries:

- “Static boundaries” i.e. boundaries that are less likely to change over the lifetime of the Neighbourhood Plan, and are more easily identifiable on electronic and/or paper-based maps. Typically static boundaries include roads, railways, rivers and streams, well defined geographical features, etc. The TG recognises that “lines of communication” (e.g. roads, paths, railways) are excluded from the boundaries and therefore the boundaries will be placed on the inside edge of such lines of communication. Where possible static boundaries are to be used for the delimitation of settlements
- “Dynamic boundaries” (such as field boundaries, hedgerows or property boundaries) are also used in defining the area of a settlement. However, in order to conserve the character of the settlement and of the surrounding countryside, and with the aim to limit expansion of the settlement, sometimes boundaries may not relate fully to the physical features of the dynamic boundaries (e.g. large gardens of properties may be excluded from the settlement boundaries). In such instances the decision needs to be justified.

C. Planning environment

27) The last 10 years of planning history (planning permissions, refusals, planning appeal decisions) are to be considered when defining settlements and their boundaries, particularly when it comes to the impact of development on the open countryside and the significance of “gaps” to maintaining the character of the area. However, the TG recognises that there are times when policies relating to the open countryside have restricted growth within existing settlement areas unnecessarily, and for that reason the planning history cannot be the determining factor when considering where settlements exist.

D. Social and natural environment

- 28) In defining boundaries consideration is to be given to the social or economic function of the existing and/or granted development, in order to ensure that the development included within the boundaries relate better to the built form of the settlement than to the countryside.
- 29) Small pockets of development clearly detached from the settlement and rural exception sites for affordable housing are not to be included within settlement boundaries.
- 30) Important amenity areas such as playing or sports fields, allotments and cemeteries are not to be included in the settlement boundaries or, if included, are to be identified and protected by policy.

- 31) When in the presence of a large gap, consideration is to be given to its nature in order to determine its relevance from a landscape or townscape perspective. If the gap is “important” it should be excluded from the settlement area.

E. Landscape Character Areas

- 32) Settlements and their boundaries need to conform to the strategy set for the management of the Landscape Character Areas they are part of, and in particular:

- Longwick Vale –
 - Development of buildings needs to be limited.
 - Existing field boundaries need to be conserved (subject to “dynamic boundaries” needs).
 - Views across the landscape and towards the Chiltern escarpment need to be conserved.
 - The small scale and dispersed settlement pattern of the hamlets and farmsteads needs to be conserved.
- Risborough Chalk Foothills –
 - Open, expansive views from higher ground need to be conserved
- Wain Hill Chalk Escarpment –
 - Ensure views to and from the escarpment are considered in relation to new development in this landscape and adjacent landscapes.
 - Conserve historic elements and archaeological features, which provide evidence of past use of the land and are important landmarks within this landscape.
 - Conserve early field enclosures, which provide past evidence of the use of the landscape.
 - Conserve the uninterrupted, rural and wooded skyline as a backdrop to views from lower ground (such as Aylesbury Vale).
- Bledlow Ridge Dip Slope with Dry Valleys –
 - Maintain open views across the landscape, and avoid introducing large scale elements (such as pylons and masts) which would disrupt views and the legible landscape character.
 - Ensure that new buildings and development is sensitively integrated into the landscape through careful siting.
 - Conserve the historic field patterns (pre 18th century irregular enclosure, and early co-axial and assart systems) and avoid further divisions or expansions (subject to “dynamic boundaries” needs).
 - Maintain small scale character of settlement and areas of common edge settlement, avoiding development which would alter the character of these areas.
- Wye Chalk River Valley –
 - Conserve the character, fabric and appearance of historic buildings, in villages and hamlets and individual farmsteads.
 - Conserve historic elements, such as field patterns (coaxial fields, assarts and pre 18th century irregular enclosure).
 - Conserve archaeological sites/monuments and their setting, which provide evidence of past use of the land.
 - Maintain key views in the landscape to the mausoleum and church on West Wycombe Hill and to the chalk escarpment to the north.

Proposed new settlements and their boundaries

- 33) The TG has assessed the existing development within the parish using the 35 existing building “minimum size” criteria to identify the built-up areas which could be classified as a settlement, as follows:

- Bledlow Village
- Pitch Green settlement
- Saunderton Shootacre settlement
- Rout's Green settlement
- South Saunderton settlement
- Bledlow Ridge Village.

Bledlow Village

Options proposed at public events

34) Figure 8 contains the options proposed to residents for the creation of the potential boundaries of this settlement. The orange line in Figure 8 shows what the TG believed could form the basis of the settlement, with the purple line indicating further extension possibilities.

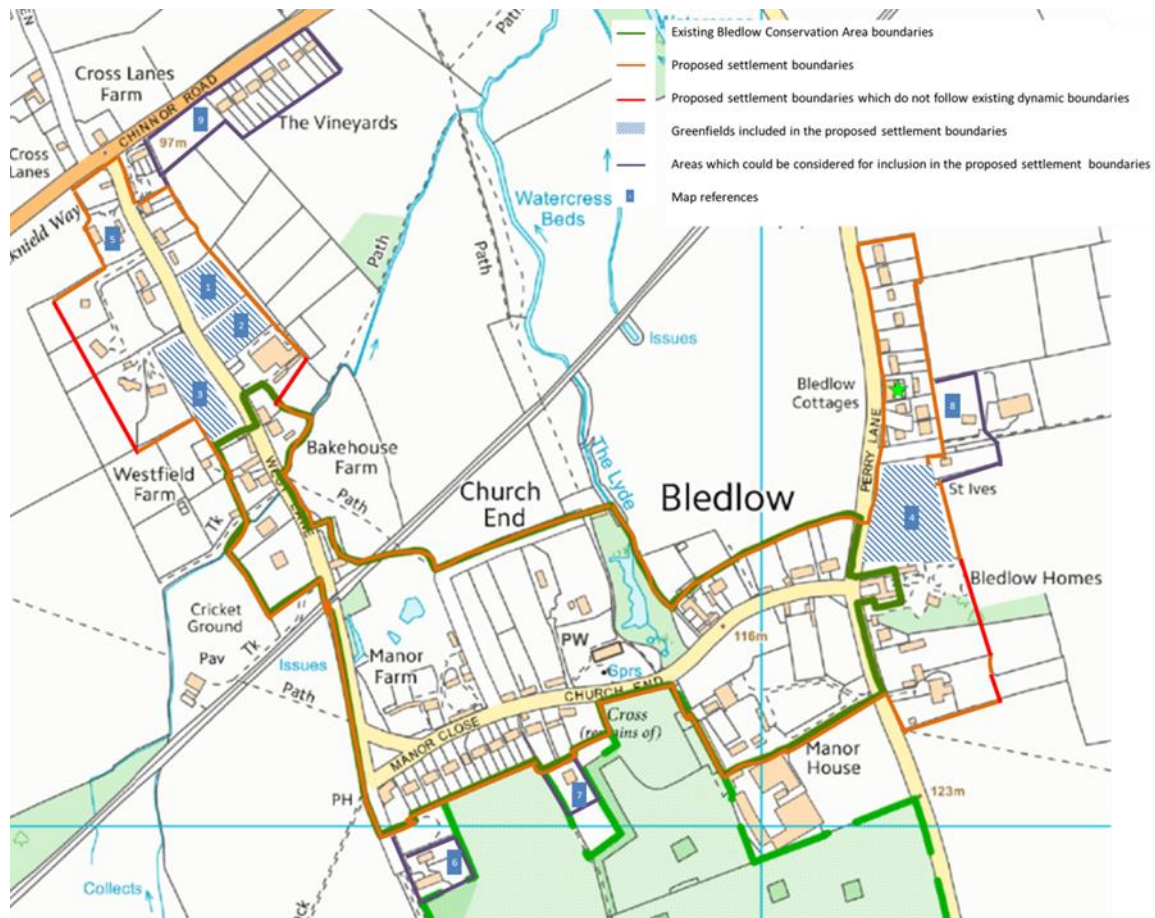


Figure 8 – Bledlow Village; proposed options for settlement boundaries

35) Only a handful of (supporting) comments specifically related to the proposed Bledlow Village were received, too few to have a lot of weight.

Recommendation

36) The core of the settlement is the current Bledlow Conservation Area, to which expanded areas of existing development along West Lane and Perry Lane are added (Figures 9 and 9a). The proposed boundaries provide an opportunity to create a continuity of the built-up area in and around Bledlow without unduly increasing the overall scale or density of the village or impacting on the surrounding landscape and views towards and from the Chiltern AONB.

37) Both sides of West Lane already include large sections of development and the views from the road across the fields, which the TG proposes to include in this part of the settlement (Figure 9 – map ref. 1; 2 & 3), are limited. The recent approved development of the former Children’s Homes and at Cutlers Orchard on Perry Lane has narrowed the distance of the built area with the Bledlow Cottages development. The views from Perry Lane across the field to the north of the former Children’s Home, which the TG proposes to include in this part of the settlement (Figure 9 – map ref. 4), are also very limited.

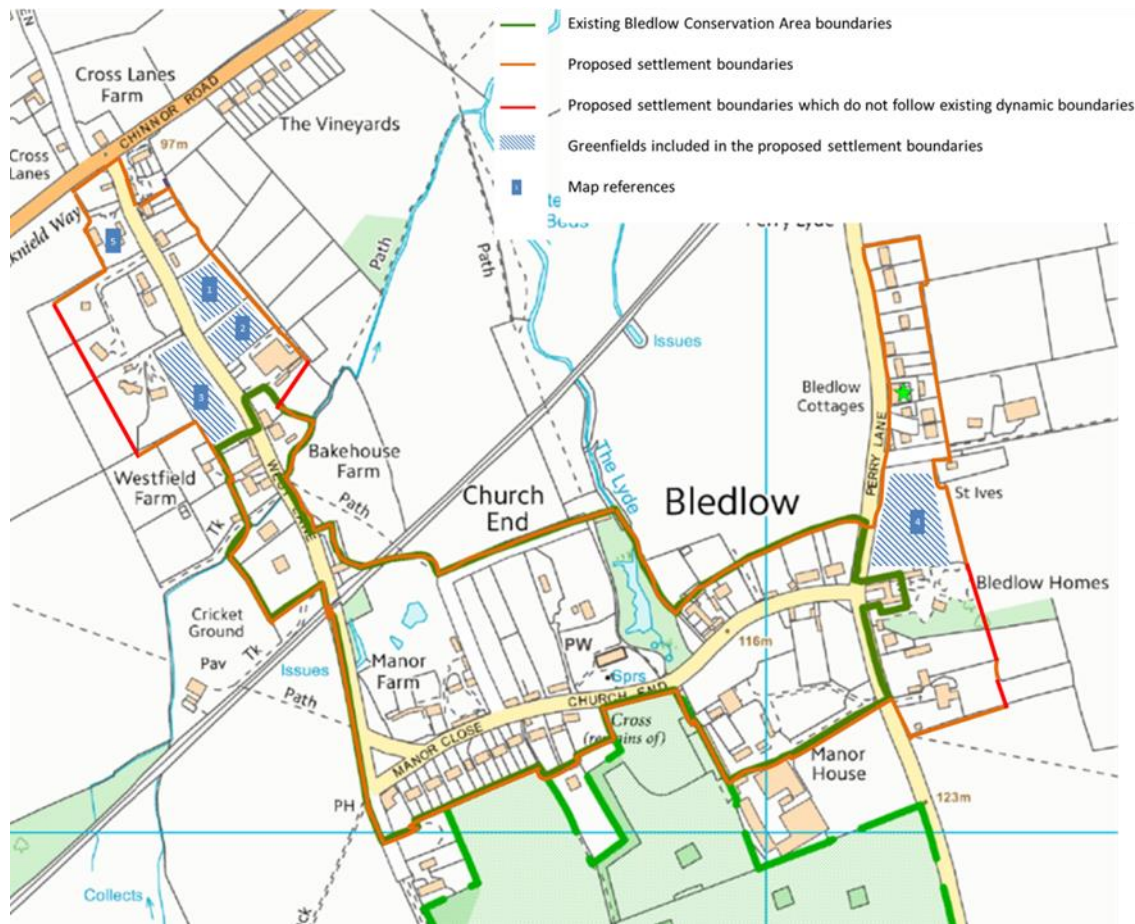


Figure 9 – Bledlow Village; recommended settlement boundaries



Figure 9A – Bledlow Village; aerial view of recommended settlement boundaries

Assessment (using the retained methodology)

38) Minimum size –Bledlow Village includes ca. 85 existing buildings, well above the set threshold. The current development includes the “key local facilities” of the church of Holy Trinity and the Lions pub, as well as the Manor House (and Lyde Gardens), all buildings which provide a focal point for the proposed settlement. The proposed boundaries reinforce the sense of entering the village, as the boundaries start with the beginning of the built areas in West Lane and Perry Lane (both directions of travel).

39) Typology of boundaries –

- Static boundaries: the proposed boundaries along West Lane and Perry Lane expand existing development fronting these important local roads. Bledlow Conservation Area is well characterised and can also be considered as a “static boundary”.
- Dynamic boundaries: by and large proposed settlement boundaries relate fully to physical features. Where this is not the case (red line in Figure 9), the exception is justified by the need to limit the potential encroachment of the built environment on the open countryside.

40) Planning environment – Approved development of former Children’s Homes and at Cutlers Orchard has narrowed the distance of the built area with the Bledlow Cottages development.

41) Social and natural environment –

- All existing development included in the proposed boundaries relates well to the built form of the settlement. Questions can be raised with regard to the agricultural buildings under Figure 9 – map ref. 5 and the equestrian complex made up of fields under Figure 9 – map ref. 1 & 2 and the adjacent yard, both along West Lane. While the social function of this equestrian complex may well justify its exclusion from the settlement boundary, its economic function and its position in the developed West Lane could support it being part of the built form of the settlement. On balance the TG sided with the latter perspective. As per the agricultural buildings under Figure 9 - map ref. 5, the TG is of the opinion that its position in the developed West Lane could justify its inclusion within the settlement boundaries.
- No clearly detached small pockets of development and no rural exception scheme sites are included in the settlement.
- No important amenities are included in the settlement, other than the Lyde Gardens which are privately owned but currently accessible to the public.
- There are three relatively large gaps included in the proposed boundaries (hatched areas in Figure 9). The TG believes that none of the gaps are “important” from a landscape or townscape perspective because the views that they open are limited.

42) Landscape Character Areas – The settlement lies partly in the Longwick Vale and partly in the Risborough Chalk Foothills Landscape Character Areas. The settlement respects the features of both Character Areas as it offers limited potential building development; by and large respects existing field boundaries; does not compromise the existing views across the landscape and towards the Chiltern escarpment; does not modify the small scale and dispersed settlement pattern of the hamlets and farmsteads; and does not affect the open, expansive views from higher ground.

43) Overall it is the TG’s assessment that Bledlow Village fulfils all the criteria and, therefore, the TG recommends formalising it as a settlement as per the recommended boundaries.

Pitch Green settlement

Options proposed at public events

44) Figure 10 contains the options proposed to residents for the creation of the potential boundaries of this settlement. The orange line in Figure 10 shows what the TG believed could form the basis of the settlement, with the purple line indicating further extension possibilities.



Figure 10 – Pitch Green; proposed options for settlement boundaries

45) Only a handful of comments, specifically related to the proposed Pitch Green settlement, were received, too few to have any material weight, although there was local opposition to including the field along Chapel Lane (Figure 10 – map ref. 2). One such comment refers to the gaps in the built area (Figure 10 - map ref. 1 & 2) as “very poorly sited for access and traffic”. These concerns are addressed in more detail in paragraph 50 below.

Recommendation

46) The core of the settlement is the crossing of the B4009 road with Sandpit Lane, on the one hand, and Perry Lane, on the other. The extension of the built area on Perry Lane is limited to the existing development on the right-hand side of the road going towards Bledlow. On the other side of the B4009 the settlement boundaries include most of the existing development on Chapel Lane and the initial built-up area of Sandpit Lane, up to and excluding Coram Stables, which represents the natural boundary to the built area. As per the B4009, the proposed boundaries include the development made up of the Bledlow Village Hall and the houses on its right (direction Chinnor → Princes Risborough – See Figures 11 and 11a). The proposed boundaries recognise the existing development and do not unduly increase the overall scale or density of the settlement or impact on the surrounding landscape and views towards and from the Chiltern AONB.

47) This settlement includes two green fields which represent medium-size gaps in the built area (Figure 11 - map ref. 1 & 2). Their relevance from a landscape or townscape perspective is not considered "important".



Figure 11 – Pitch Green; recommended settlement boundaries



Figure 11A – Pitch Green; aerial view of recommended settlement boundaries

Assessment (using the retained methodology)

48) Minimum size – Pitch Green settlement includes ca. 45 existing buildings, above the threshold. The settlement brings together the area which has in the Bledlow Village Hall its focal point with the long-established Pitch Green development. The physical configuration of the B4009 with its crossing and “S bend”, provides the sense of entering a settlement, which is further reinforced by the two existing bus stops (including for the rail-link Chinnor – Princes Risborough and for school buses). The proposed settlement includes the following “key local facilities”: Bledlow Village Hall; Bledlow pre-school (housed in the Village Hall) and good public transport links (for our parish standards).

49) Typology of boundaries

- Static boundaries: the B4009, Perry Lane and Sandpit Lane / Chapel Lane represent ideal “static boundaries”.
- Dynamic boundaries – By and large proposed settlement boundaries relate fully to physical features. Where this is not the case (red line in Figure 11), the exception is justified by the need to limit the potential encroachment of the built environment on the open countryside.

50) Planning environment – Rejections of planning application for the field Figure 11 – map ref. 2 and “Meadow Bank” (on appeal) have been considered. In the case of Meadow Bank the development was rejected on the basis that it was an unacceptable intrusion into the open countryside⁴. For the field at Figure 11 – map ref. 2 the reasons for rejection included change of use and the sensitive location between two existing listed buildings. In the view of the TG, both of these locations fall within the Pitch Green settlement area and therefore potential future development at these locations (subject to all applicable policies) should not of itself amount to development in the open countryside. The TG specifically noted local concerns about the field on Chapel Lane but felt that those concerns were largely addressed by existing planning rules that would remain in place – notably rules protecting listed buildings, access and flooding.

51) Social and natural environment –

- All existing development is for housing and relates well to the built form of the settlement. Unlike the equestrian complex of West Lane, Coram Stables could be excluded from the settlement because its peripheral position compared to the settlement and its social function correlates better to the countryside than to the built form of the settlement.
- No clearly detached small pockets of development and no rural exception scheme sites are included in the settlement.
- Bledlow Village Hall is included in the settlement and its inclusion is subject to the Village Hall being included in the list of assets of community value (see Community Infrastructure Task Group report), in order to prevent inappropriate development of this building.
- There are two medium-size gaps included in the proposed boundaries (hatched areas in Figure 11). The TG believes that these gaps are not “important” from a landscape or townscape perspective. The TG recognises that any potential planning application related to the field Figure 11 – map ref. 1 needs to address the access issue, most likely to be achieved via negotiation with neighbouring properties rather than the creation of a new access point on Perry Lane.

52) Landscape Character Areas – The settlement lies in the Longwick Vale Landscape Character Area. The proposed settlement respects the features of the Area as it offers limited potential building development; by and large respects existing field boundaries; does not compromise the existing views across the landscape and towards the Chiltern escarpment and does not modify the small scale and dispersed settlement pattern of the hamlets and farmsteads.

53) Overall it is the TG’s assessment that Pitch Green fulfils all the criteria and, therefore, the TG recommends formalising it as a settlement as per the recommended boundaries.

Saunderton Shootacre Settlement

Description

54) This settlement is made up of two long ribbons of development, one along Bledlow Road and the other along Shootacre Lane. The latter is part of the Green Belt area. The proposed boundary of the settlement along Shootacre Lane coincides with the parish boundary (see Figure 12). The settlement is in “touching distance” from the built-up area of Princes Risborough.

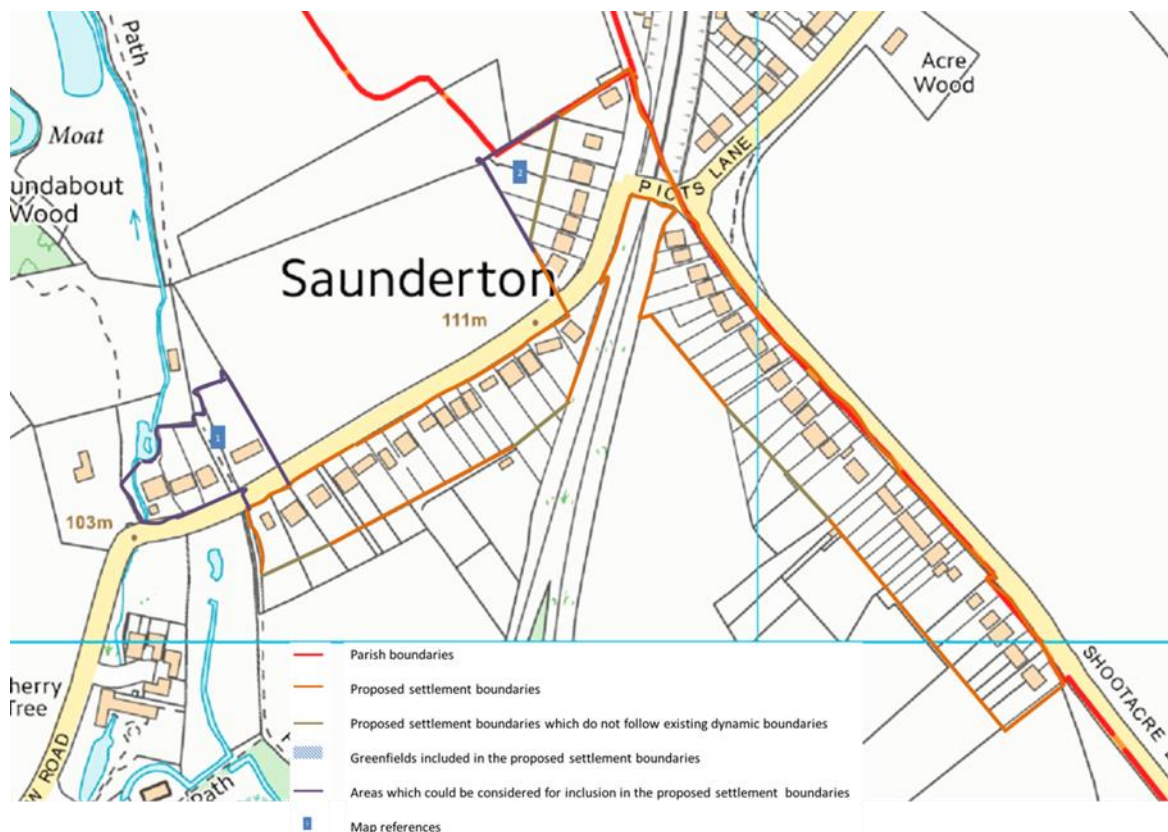


Figure 12 – Saunderton Shootacre; possible settlement boundaries

Assessment (using the retained methodology)

55) Minimum size – While the settlement includes ca. 45 existing buildings, the Shootacre area of Saunderton does not include the required two “local key facilities”, does not give the “sense of entering a settlement” and does not have an existing settlement name.

56) Typology of boundaries

- Static boundaries: Bledlow Road and Shootacre Lane represent ideal “static boundaries”.
- Dynamic boundaries – By and large proposed settlement boundaries relate fully to physical features. Where this is not the case (brown line in Figure 12), the exception is justified by the need to limit the potential encroachment of the built environment on the open countryside.

57) Planning environment – The application for a new house on the plot next to “Medway” on Shootacre Lane was approved because it represented the closing of a gap in an otherwise built up row of houses. Normally development within the green belt is presumed to be inappropriate, but the case officer considered this to be an exceptional case because of its planning history.

58) Social and natural environment –

- All existing development is for housing and relates well to the built form of the settlement.
- No clearly detached small pockets of development and no rural exception scheme sites are included in the settlement.
- No important amenities are included in the settlement.
- There are no gaps included in the proposed boundaries.

59) Landscape Character Areas – The settlement lies in the Risborough Chalk Foothills Character Area. The settlement respects the features of the Area as it does not detract from the open, expansive views from higher ground.

60) The Saunderton Shootacre area does not fulfil enough criteria to become a settlement, although it does meet the criterion for “minimum size”. Furthermore, the settlement would be artificially constrained by the Parish Council boundaries and would not offer any potential for small housing development. On these bases the TG recommends not to formalise Saunderton Shootacre as a settlement. As a consequence, this development was not proposed to residents at the public events.

Rout's Green settlement

Description

61) Rout's Green is a development “washed over” by the Green Belt and Chilterns AONB (See Figure 13). Rout's Green is separate and yet very close to Bledlow Ridge settlement, with which shares a number of similar landscape and built-form features. Socially it is part of the Bledlow Ridge community and (on Chinnor Road) within the 40mph speed limit area even if it is physically somewhat separated from Bledlow Ridge and not connected via a footpath on the highway.



Figure 13 – Rout's Green; possible settlement boundaries

Assessment (using the retained methodology)

62) Minimum size – This settlement includes ca. 35 existing buildings, just in line with the set threshold. However, while Rout's Green is a long-standing development and is physically well-characterised it does not include any “key local facilities”.

Typology of boundaries

- Static boundaries: the main static boundary is Routs Green road.
- Dynamic boundaries – By and large settlement boundaries relate fully to physical features. Where this is not the case (red line in Figure 13), the exception is justified by the need to limit the potential encroachment of the built environment on the open countryside.

63) Planning environment – There have been no recent applications for new houses in this area.

64) Social and natural environment –

- All existing development is for housing and relates well to the built form of the settlement.
- No clearly detached small pockets of development and no rural exception scheme sites are included in the settlement.
- No important amenities are included in the settlement.
- There are no gaps included in the boundaries.

65) Landscape Character Areas – The proposed settlement lies in the Bledlow Ridge Dip Slope with Dry Valleys Character Area. The proposed settlement respects the features of the Area.

66) Rout's Green does not fulfil enough criteria to become a settlement, although it does (just) meet the criterion for "minimum size". Furthermore, the new settlement would not offer any potential for small housing development. On these bases the TG recommends not to formalise Rout's Green as a settlement. As a consequence, this development was not proposed to residents at the public events.

South Saunderton settlement

Options proposed at public events

67) Figure 14 contains the options proposed to residents for the potential boundaries of this settlement. The orange line in Figure 14 shows what the TG believed could form the basis of the settlement, with the purple line indicating further extension possibilities.

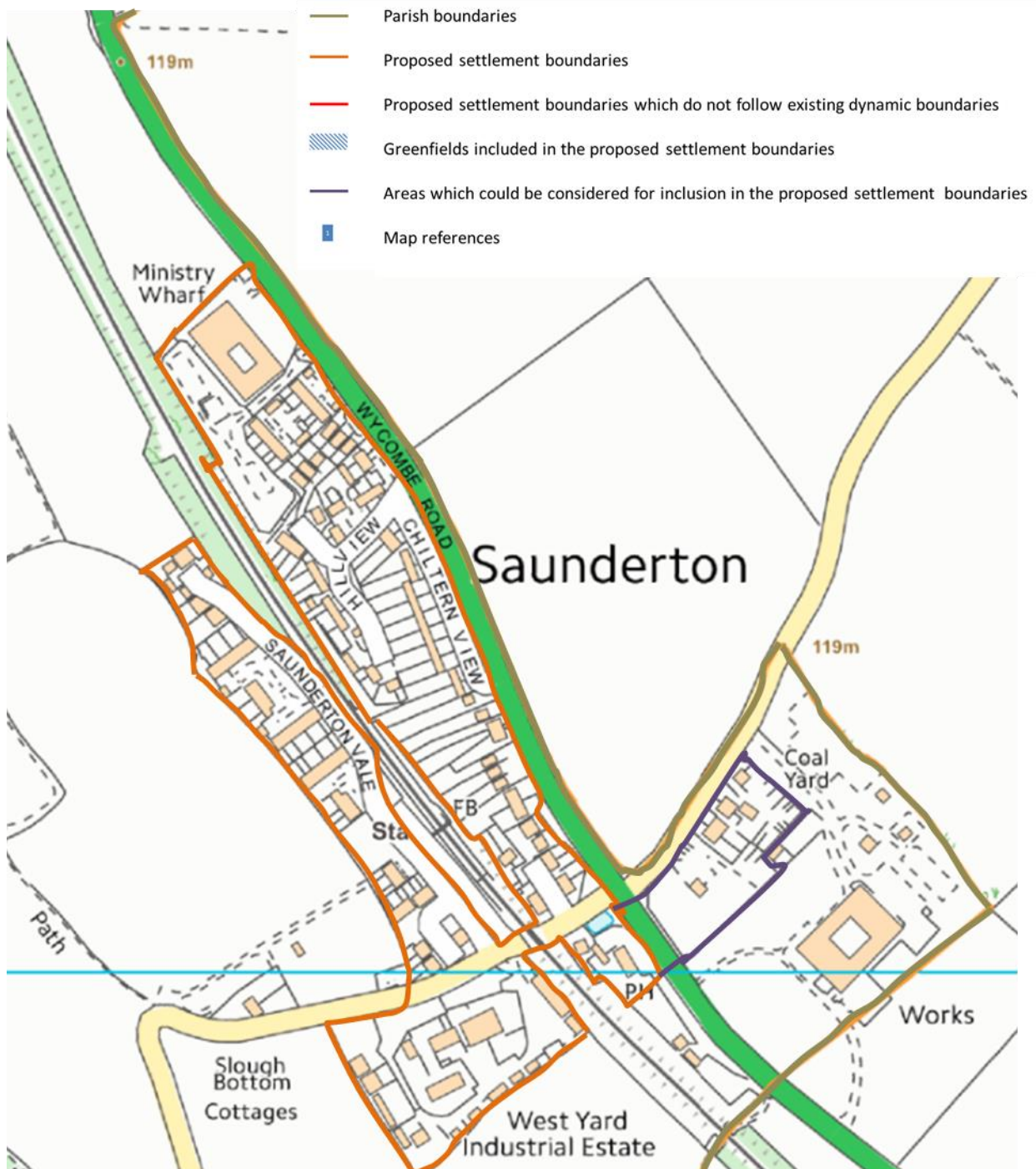


Figure 14 – South Saunderton; proposed options for settlement boundaries

68) Only a handful of (supporting) comments related specifically to the proposed South Saunderton settlement were received, too few to have any material weight. These comments, however, were in favour of including the area in the purple line in Figure 14 within the proposed settlement boundary.

Recommendation

69) This settlement covers the area around Saunderton station and comprises existing residential development at Saunderton Vale, mixed residential and light industrial buildings along the A4010 running on the other side of the railway line, the former West Yard industrial estate (currently being converted into 42 new houses), the Golden Cross pub and the former Coal Yard

on the other side of the A4010, which is currently subject to an application for residential development (see Figures 16 and 16a). The area is washed over by the Green Belt and forms part of the Chilterns AONB. It is served by a mainline railway station with services to London, Marylebone.



Figure 15 – South Saunderton; recommended settlement boundaries



Figure 15A – South Saunderton; aerial view of the recommended settlement boundaries

Assessment (using the retained methodology)

70) Minimum size – South Saunderton has in excess of 110 buildings and therefore comfortably exceeds the minimum size. Furthermore, with the railway station at its heart you get a sense of entering a built up area whether you approach along the main road or along Slough Lane or Small Dean Lane. The main road is characterised by traffic islands on the entry to the settlement and a reduction in speed limit from 50mph to 40mph. In addition to the railway station (which has its own car park) and a bus stop, the settlement has a popular pub, the Golden Cross.

71) Typology of boundaries

- Static boundaries: the main static boundaries are the A4010 flanking Ministry Wharf to the West, Small Dean Lane running along the former Coal Yard to the South East and Slough Lane running alongside West's Yard to the South. The railway line and embankments form a static boundary effectively cutting the settlement down the middle.
- Dynamic boundaries – The proposed settlement boundaries relate fully to physical features, namely existing fences and hedgerows forming the boundaries with existing properties.

- 72) Planning environment – The most significant development in the last 10 years is the application to demolish the existing industrial buildings at West Yard and replace them with 42 new houses. The application was approved in 2014 and the site has now been cleared. At the time of the application, the Parish Council opposed the development on the grounds that it did not include any employment use and the Council felt that there were too many houses for the site. However, it was felt that the design of the houses as such was acceptable. At the time of writing this report, there is an application for the development of 5 houses at the former Coal Yard opposite the Golden Cross. However, this application has not yet been determined. Molins is not part of South Saunderton and its development history is not considered here.
- 73) Social and natural environment –
- Existing development is primarily for housing, but includes business use at Ministry Wharf and the Golden Cross, on the main road. The mixed use, when considering its location, relates well to the built form of the settlement.
 - No clearly detached small pockets of development and no rural exception scheme sites are included in the settlement.
 - No important amenities are included in the settlement.
 - There are no gaps included in the proposed boundaries, other than potential gaps along Small Dean Lane depending on the final form of the development at the former Coal Yard.
- 74) Landscape Character Areas – The settlement lies in the Wye Chalk River Valley Landscape Character Area. The settlement respects the features of the Area as it does not impact on the fabric and appearance of historic buildings; respects existing field patterns; does not compromise archaeological sites / monuments and their settings and does not impact key views in the landscape to the mausoleum and church on West Wycombe Hill and to the chalk escarpment to the north.
- 75) South Saunderton fulfils all criteria to become a settlement, particularly those related to its “minimum size” and the sense of entering a settlement at the heart of which lies the railway station. As seen by recent applications for development at West Yard and the former Coal Yard, the settlement has opportunities for growth within its existing boundaries. In addition to excellent public transport links on the national rail network and along the A4010 linking Princes Risborough to High Wycombe, the Golden Cross pub provides an important social hub. Accordingly the TG recommends to formalise it as a settlement as per the recommended boundaries.

Bledlow Ridge Village

Options proposed at public events

- 76) Figure 16 contains the options proposed to residents for the potential boundaries of this settlement. Following consultations with Wycombe District Council, the options were drafted widely so that residents could comment on a range of options designed to address the results of the residents’ survey.

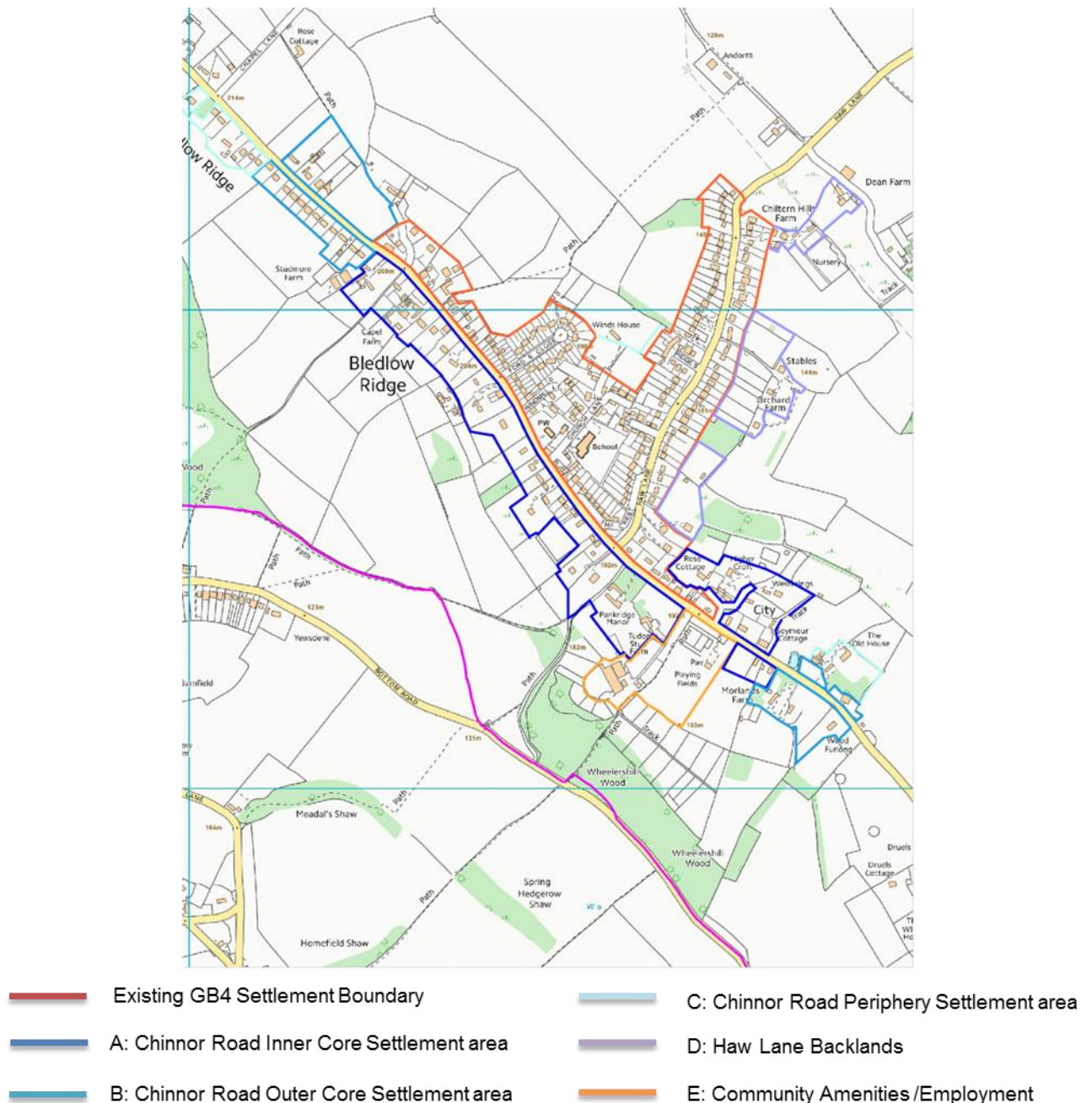


Figure 16 – Bledlow Ridge; proposed options for settlement boundaries

77) The written feedback received was as follows:

- No further extension of GB4 - 23
- Option A – 15 in favour, 6 against
- Option B – 11 in favour, 7 against
- Option C – 8 in favour, 7 against
- Option D – 0 in favour, 34 against

78) On 23rd March 2016 a workshop with residents of Bledlow Ridge who had specifically expressed a willingness to be involved in discussing the potential boundaries of the settlement took place. The main results were that the group acknowledged that some future growth was inevitable (and even desirable) provided it was limited and sympathetic to the existing character of the village. They preferred that the decision on where new housing should go be taken by residents of the parish through the Neighbourhood Plan rather than centrally through High Wycombe or

by speculators. They also felt that an extension of the GB4 boundary to the other side of Chinnor Road was the most sensible option provided that new development was restricted to limited infill and protected views from Radnage. There was strong support for protecting open views (including the field adjacent to the Boot) and excluding less well-knit areas such as the City back land area. The Task Group believes that, given the protections that already exist for development within GB4, the revised proposals will carry broader support within the community. The Task Group also felt that expanding GB4 would mean taking some housing outside the area covered by the 50% rule, when combined with some of the modification proposed by the Design Task Group for modifying how that rule applies, could have a beneficial effect where families wish to extend their properties to allow for growth within the family.

Recommendation

79) Bledlow Ridge is the largest settlement in the parish and the only settlement with a designated boundary. This boundary is set out in the Local Plan policy GB4 and occupies the north-eastern side of Chinnor Road and both sides of the upper part of Haw Lane. However existing housing and other development extends, on both sides of Chinnor Road to the north-west towards Wigans Lane and to the south-east towards West Wycombe. The whole of Bledlow Ridge falls within the Green Belt and the Chilterns AONB.

80) The proposal is to extend the existing GB4 boundary to a limited extent to enclose the existing built up area, particularly on the south-west side of Chinnor Road, in a way that will allow modest opportunities for new housing in infill sites between existing houses (Figures 17 and 17A). In practice, this proposal is a modified version of combined Option A and Option B in figure 16 and one which more closely follows the methodology for housing development in the parish used elsewhere in this report.

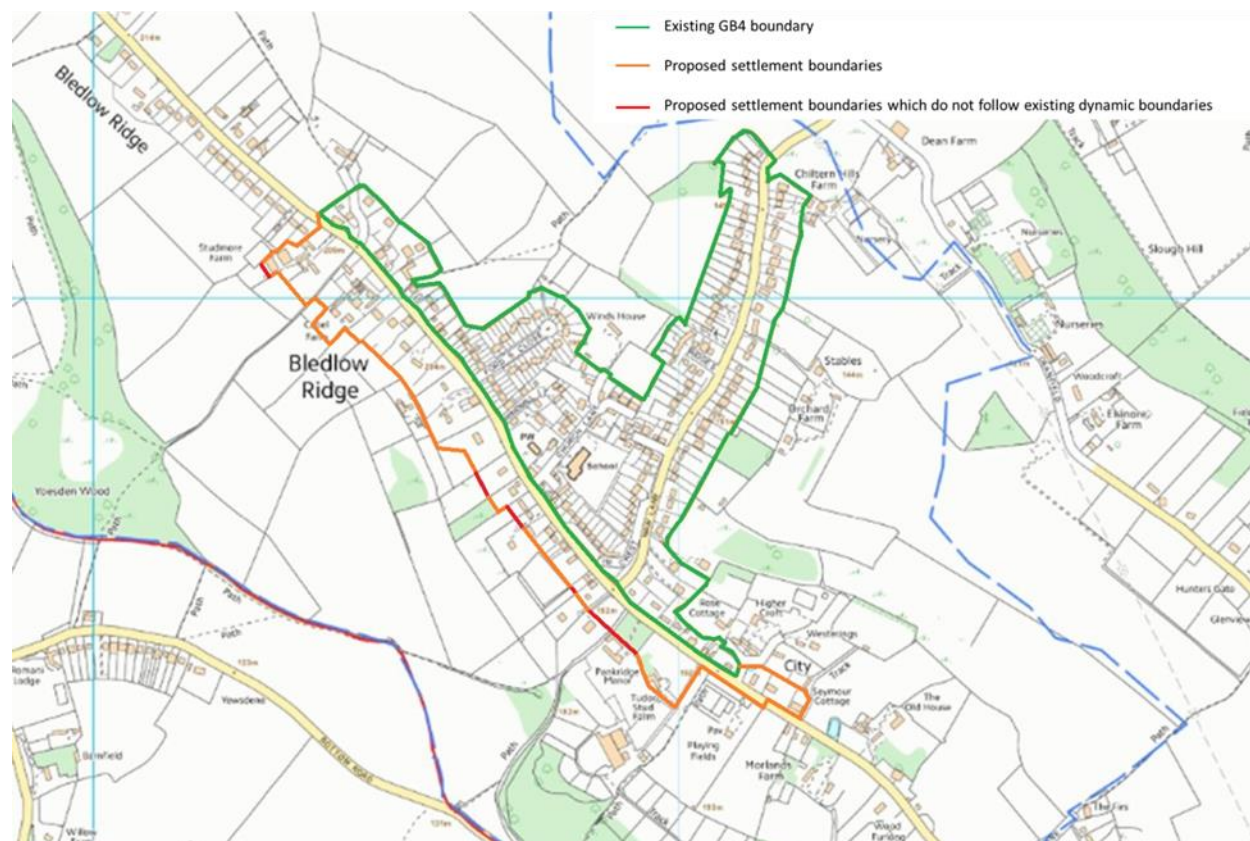


Figure 17 – Bledlow Ridge; recommended settlement boundaries



Figure 17A – Bledlow Ridge; aerial view of recommended settlement boundaries

Assessment (using the retained methodology)

81) Minimum size – Bledlow Ridge has in excess of 300 buildings and is the largest settlement area in the parish. It comfortably exceeds the minimum size for a settlement. The village also has a church, a village hall, a shop, a school and bus services to High Wycombe, Chinnor and Princes Risborough. Furthermore, there is a playground, a cricket club and a tennis club.

82) Typology of boundaries

- Static boundaries: the main static boundaries are formed by Chinnor Road and Haw Lane which form the frontage along which most of the housing in the settlement has been built. In addition there are a number of side roads including the Crest, Church Lane and Ford's Close. To the north-east of Haw Lane the land falls away towards South Saunderton and to the south-west, the land falls away sharply towards Radnage. The topography of the area in both of these areas forms a natural static boundary which limits further development on these slopes.
- Dynamic boundaries – in most cases the proposed settlement relate well to the physical features. Where this is not the case (red lines in Figure 17) the exceptions are justified by the need to limit future development to frontages and/or areas with access from the road and to limit the impact that development might have on cherished views onto the ridge from Radnage and South Saunderton in particular.

83) Planning environment – the effect of the settlement being in the Green Belt has been to limit brand new housing development to the area defined by GB4. Applications for development outside this boundary are, in accordance with policy GB1 and the NPPF, presumed to be inappropriate and therefore have been turned down (with the exception of a couple of conversions). New development over the last 10 years has been limited to infill (Haw Lane and Church Lane), the redevelopment of land previously used for business (Bird & Tole and Ridge Service Station) and conversion of agricultural buildings (Studmore Farm and Morlands Farm). Furthermore, expansion outside of GB4 has been restricted in size and scale by the so-called “50% rule” which limits extensions and replacement dwellings to 150% of the size of the original.

84) Social and natural environment –

- Existing development is primarily for housing, but includes business use, primarily in agriculture but also with a shop. The mixed use, when considering its location, relates well to the built form of the settlement.
- No clearly detached small pockets of development and no rural exception scheme sites are included in the settlement.
- There are no local amenities included in the recommended extension of the current GB4 boundary.
- Most of the village within the 30mph speed limit has a continuous built up form, although on the south-west side of Chinnor Road the houses tend to be larger and more spread out. The proposed settlement boundary ends before the first significant gap on the north-east side of Chinnor road heading north. Locally this field (adjacent to the Boot public house) is sometimes referred to as the “bonfire field” and forms too large a break in the built up form of the village to properly constitute an infill site. For that reason it is not part of the proposed settlement. Heading south, the first significant gaps are after the City on the north-east side and Morlands Farm on the south-west. For similar reasons, the proposed settlement boundary ends at this point.

85) Landscape Character Areas – the settlement lies within the Bledlow Ridge Dip Slope with Dry Valleys Character Area and respects the features of the Area. There are extensive views up onto the ridge from both the north east and the south west. Also the land to the south west falls steeply down towards Radnage. The TG is particularly sensitive to the need to protect these landscape features so that any future development respects these views.

86) Bledlow Ridge Village fulfils all criteria to become a settlement and would offer some opportunities for future infill development. Accordingly the TG recommends to formalise it as a settlement as per the recommended boundaries.

Residential Development - General

87) The overall aim of these guidelines is to encourage appropriate residential development which is sympathetic to the existing rural nature of a parish comprising villages and hamlets in an open countryside environment, in line with Wycombe District Council Core Strategies CS1, CS2, CS7, CS17, CS18 and CS19, its relevant saved Policies and the results of the parish survey.

88) All development:

- Must be sensitively integrated into the landscape through careful siting.
- Must not cause harm or adversely impact on the setting of neighbouring Listed Buildings.

- Must achieve high standards of energy efficiency (including appropriate on-site renewable energy features and/or energy consumption minimising measures), provide on-site parking space, incorporate permeable surfaces that prevent surface water flooding and be designed for mobility access.
- Must limit the impact of light pollution from artificial externally visible light sources in order to retain the parish current “dark skies” status.
- Should include a connectivity statement for broadband.
- Which includes 2-3 bedroom homes and/or homes designed for the elderly will be looked upon favourably.

89) The Parish Council:

- Will monitor the development of the National Planning Policy Framework consultation on “starter homes in the green belt” to assess the applicability of its outcomes to the parish and take the necessary steps
- Following the adoption of the Neighbourhood Plan, will undertake a specific housing needs survey and, based on its outcomes, take the necessary steps in order to develop a parish-specific approach to affordable housing.

Residential development within Green Belt settlement boundaries

90) Saved applicable GB policies (and in particular GB4, GB5, GB6 and GB7)(as amended by the Neighbourhood Plan) will regulate any development in South Saunderton settlement and Bledlow Ridge village.

Residential development within non-Green Belt settlement boundaries

91) General principles:

- The settlement boundary represents the limit for development.
- New housing should follow the existing building line. No development is permitted outside the building line envelope of the settlement where this has the effect of pushing development into the open countryside.
- The layout, scale and form of any development must be compatible with the established building pattern, the predominant character of the established housing in the area and the prevailing existing density of the settlement.
- Visual separation between houses must be maintained.

92) Extensions/Replacements of existing houses are allowed within the parameters defined by Wycombe District Council (e.g. Reserved Policy H17) but as these rules may be amended following recommendations from the Design Task Group.

93) Infill in settlements is permissible when:

- It is sited in a gap in an otherwise continuous built up frontage (typically suitable for no more than 4/5 houses).
- It is of a scale and form comparable to adjoining development.
- Backland infill may be permitted only when:
 - The plot size allows the combined existing and new development to be of a scale and form comparable to adjoining development
 - Appearance, massing and percentage area covered does not detract from the character of the surrounding area

- The number of access roads is kept to a minimum.

Residential development outside settlement boundaries

94) General principles :

- The design and character of development need to complement the existing character of the area in which the development is sited, in order to preserve and enhance the overall character of the Chiltern landscape (as defined by the current Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plan and the Wycombe District Landscape Character Assessment).

95) Extensions/Replacements:

- Extension to and replacements of existing houses is allowed within the parameters defined by Wycombe District Council (e.g. Reserved Policies GB5, GB6 and H17)(as amended by the recommendations being made by the Design Task Group).
- When appropriate, planning conditions for re-development should be defined to ensure that existing unsympathetic or “cluttering” features are removed or at least appropriately mitigated as part of the re-development.
- No backland development will be allowed.
- Redevelopment of semi-permanent and insubstantial buildings such as sheds will not be permitted unless they remain ancillary to the main dwelling.

96) Brownfield development:

- Subject to all other applicable policies (including GB9), could be permitted on land which is or was occupied by a permanent structure, including the curtilage of the developed land (although it should not be assumed that the whole of the curtilage should be developed) and any associated fixed surface infrastructure.
- Is not allowed on land that is or has been occupied by agricultural or forestry buildings, although the possible conversion of such buildings may be acceptable (i) if in line with all applicable policies and (ii) if it can be demonstrated beyond reasonable doubt that the buildings can no longer be used for their current purpose.
- Is not allowed on land that was previously developed but where the remains of the permanent structure or fixed surface structure have substantially disappeared into the landscape in the process of time or on land that is or was occupied by semi-permanent and insubstantial buildings.

97) Infill:

- Where groups of existing houses are located in the open countryside, infilling of small gaps which are capable of accommodating no more than 1 or 2 houses of a similar size and scale to the surrounding houses within an otherwise continuously built up frontage (normally of at least six houses) may be acceptable provided that:
 - The development will not result in a significant material change to the character of the area, or
 - The development does not set a precedent for further development which would materially change the area’s character, and
 - The existing adjacent dwellings are not the subject of agricultural occupancy conditions or obligations, and
 - The gaps where the infill would take place do not form an important feature from a landscape perspective and lead to the loss of an established view.
- No extension to existing ribbon development will be allowed.

References

1. Wycombe District Landscape Character Assessment – October 2011
2. 2011 Census data
3. Buckinghamshire Housing and Economic Development Needs Assessment 2015 – Report of Findings. Consultation Draft: January 2016
4. See Wycombe District Council planning decision on App no 12/07404/FUL para 5.3

Attachments

- Parish Housing Planning Application History (last 10 years)