

Dear Clerk,

## **Review of Village Housing Development Boundaries**

I am writing to you with an update on the Placemaking Plan progress and to invite you to extend your involvement in planning for the future of your Parish or Town Council area.

As you are aware B&NES are currently working on the Placemaking Plan (part two of the new B&NES Local Plan). The Placemaking Plan will complement the Council's Core Strategy by allocating sites for development for specific uses and setting out the development aspirations and the planning requirements for the delivery of these sites. It will also review and update the planning policies used in the determination of planning applications.

In order to inform the Placemaking Plan Options document each Town & Parish Council has been asked to examine the character of their settlement and to identify assets to be protected and potential sites for development. To facilitate this approach, Parish Councils were provided with two Planning Toolkits. The Planning Toolkits enabled a methodical approach to be taken in assessing the character, availability and suitability of land being considered for development and assets to be protected in the Placemaking Plan.

All character and site assessments received from local communities are being reviewed by BANES prior to them informing the Placemaking Plan Options document. This review is a two staged process. Stage 1 will ensure that the Planning Toolkit methodology supplied to Parish/Town Councils has been applied correctly and to ensure that there are no fundamental planning reasons why a site cannot be taken forward into Stage 2.

Stage 2 is the phase when the remaining sites/assets to be protected will be subject to a site appraisal and more detailed analysis by BANES. B&NES will feedback to the parishes and then following this phase sites will be included in the Placemaking Plan Options Document which is expected to go out for consultation in the Autumn 2014 for six weeks.

As we have a great response from Parishes wanting to get involved in the Placemaking Plan process and because the evidence gathered by the Parishes has been very useful informing the Placemaking Plan, I would like to invite your Parish to become involved in the review of the Housing Development Boundaries (HDBs).

To enable your Parish to become involved in the Placemaking Plan process below is information on the principles behind HDBs and what they should seek to achieve, a methodology and a program.

## **Purpose of HDBs**

Housing Development Boundaries (HDBs) should be delineated to enable appropriate housing development to come forward within the policy framework of the Core Strategy, reflecting the roles of each settlement. This includes identification of sites and facilitation of appropriate windfall sites in line with the Core Strategy. They also enable sites for affordable housing as an exception to normal policies of restraint. They also therefore help to resist development on inappropriate sites.

HDBs are not the same as '*Settlement Boundaries*'. Settlement Boundaries are broader and define the extent of a settlement, whereas HDBs enable greater specificity and control of areas that are appropriate for housing development. Further the Council's Core Strategy document references Housing Development Boundaries and confirms a Policy commitment to Housing Development Boundaries through the Placemaking Plan process.

## **National Planning Policy Framework**

In drawing up Local Plans, Local Planning Authorities must have regard to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the principles of sustainability. The NPPF outlines a presumption in favour of sustainable development and includes a number of Policies that provide the national framework guiding the location and form of residential development. The NPPF encourages the effective use of land by reusing land that has been previously developed (brownfield land), provided that it is not of high environmental value and safe guarding the Green Belt. The NPPF sets out the importance of protecting and maintaining Green Belts and establishes policies for appropriate and inappropriate development within them (please see the Green Belt section below).

The elements of the NPPF that are relevant to and support the use of HDBs are outlined below:

- Paragraph 17 states that Local Plans should "*take account of the different roles and character of different areas*".
- Further, Paragraph 17 always seek to secure high quality design and a good standard of amenity for all existing and future occupants of land and buildings;
- The NPPF, Paragraph 55, states that "*local planning authorities should avoid new isolated homes in the countryside unless there are special circumstances*".
- *Paragraph 58 of the NPPF, states that Local Plans should "respond to local character and history, and reflect the identity of local surroundings and materials, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation"*.
- *NPPF Paragraph 109, "protects and enhances valued landscapes, geological conservation interests and soils"*.
- Paragraph 157 of the NPPF states that Local Plans should "*identify land where development would be inappropriate, for instance because of its environmental or historical significance*".

## **The Green Belt**

Villages ‘*washed over by the Green Belt*’ are subject to a slightly different approach to definition of HDBs. Under paragraph 89 of the NPPF, the HDB is defined to enable “*limited infilling in villages, and limited affordable housing for local community needs*”. The Core Strategy has already established which villages are washed over by the Green Belt and which villages are inset (holes) in the Green Belt. Under Paragraph 86 of the NPPF. The task for those villages washed over by the Green Belt is to review their HDBs in light of the requirements of Paragraph 89 of the NPPF.

## **Core Strategy**

### **Somer Valley**

The strategy in the Somer Valley is to locate new development in the most sustainable locations and therefore the priority is to steer growth to brownfield land in urban areas of Bath, Keynsham and the larger settlements in the Somer Valley. As part of that strategy the Somer Valley Policy Area is to deliver 2,400 homes, with 350 on greenfield sites adjoining the HDB. These 350 have already been permitted and there are 2,100 other units that will be delivered within the HDB Subject to Inspector’s Report no additional greenfield allocations will need to be made in the Placemaking Plan. The HDB will need to be reviewed and amended to reflect these permissions.

### **Keynsham**

Keynsham is a historic town that occupies a strategically important location between Bristol and Bath and is therefore well placed to improve and attract investment. It will continue to act as a market town and service centre for the surrounding area. Keynsham is surrounded by the Green Belt and the current HDB reflects this. The B&NES Core Strategy removed two sites from the Green Belt sites and allocates them for development; therefore the Green Belt boundary and the HDB will be reviewed accordingly. Opportunities to further amend the HDB in other parts of Keynsham will be limited due to the Green Belt and any additional development in Keynsham will be limited to the urban area.

### **Rural Areas overlaps with GB section above**

In line with national policy and sustainability principles, new development in ‘*rural areas*’ will be restrained in comparison with the urban areas, although provision is made to meet local needs, such as affordable housing, and to benefit the rural economy. New development is focussed at those settlements which have a range of local facilities, good public transport access and community support. The strict controls in the Green Belt will continue to apply to large parts of the rural areas and there is restraint on development that would be out of scale or harm the character of the open countryside.

## **HDB Review Methodology**

The methodology for reviewing the housing development boundaries is outlined in detail below:

1. B&NES will conduct an initial desk top review of the HDBs using aerial photography and GIS maps. Then B&NES will apply the four principles and will also look at records of the unimplemented planning permissions for residential development and come to an initial view as to whether and where the HDB should be amended. Where it is considered that the boundary may need to be altered this will be recorded. The desk top review will result in a set of draft boundaries.
2. Following the desk top review, B&NES will contact the Parish/Town Councils and ask them to review the boundaries and where necessary suggest adjustments. Any adjustments must take into consideration the HDB principles (detailed above) and must follow the existing housing limits of the village and exclude valued landscapes, nature conservation sites and must be in accordance with the character of the settlement.
3. B&NES will then use the desk top exercise results and the parishes' comments when going out on site visits to look at the form and character of the village, take photographs to illustrate decisions and make recommendations on the HDB revision.

### **The four HDB guiding principles:**

The following principles must be used when reviewing the HDBs:

#### **Principle 1:**

The HDB will be defined tightly around the housing of the village.

#### **Principle 2:**

HDBs will be defined to include:

- a) Existing commitments for built development i.e. unimplemented planning permissions and allocations
- b) Land within residential curtilages except large gardens or other open areas which are visually detached from the settlement.

#### **Principle 3:**

HDBs will exclude:

- a) Playing fields or open space at the edge of settlements (existing or proposed)
- b) Isolated developments which are physically or visually detached from the village (including farm buildings or agricultural buildings on the edge of the settlement which relate more to the countryside than the settlement)

- c) Large gardens and other open areas which are visually open and relate to the open countryside rather than the settlement
- d) Large gardens or other areas whose inclusion or possible development would harm the structure, form and character of the village
- e) Areas where development and intensification would harm the character of the village or would have an unacceptable impact on the highway or on the character and landscape
- f) Significant employment sites that are important in providing sources of local employment

**Principle 4:**

HDBs do not need to be continuous. It may be appropriate given the nature and form of village to define two or more separate elements.

The key dates are as follows:

Key deadlines	
11 <sup>th</sup> July 2014	Parish/Town Councils express an interest in collaborating with B&NES
25 <sup>th</sup> July 2014	B&NES will conduct the desk top review and send the maps out to the Parishes
22 <sup>nd</sup> August 2014	All Parish/Town Council HDB maps once revised need to be delivered to B&NES
1 <sup>st</sup> September 2014	B&NES will review the HDB maps submitted by the parishes
1 <sup>st</sup> September 2014	Site visits to be conducted by B&NES if necessary
8 <sup>th</sup> September 2014	B&NES to out the HDB recommendations
Autumn 2014	Placemaking Plan Options Document with revised HDBs out for consultation

As you will appreciate B&NES are working to an extremely tight timetable to prepare the Placemaking Plan as soon as practical after the adoption of the Core Strategy document. Therefore I would request that an expression of interest in this process is received by 11<sup>th</sup> July 2014.

To assist with this process, B&NES will be able to provide 2x A1 current HDB village boundaries and a map with all granted planning permissions since 2011.

If you do not wish to take an active part in this process, please let me know and I will continue to consult you in accordance with the B&NES adopted Neighbourhood Planning Protocol (My Neighbourhood) ([Neighbourhood Planning Protocol](#)).

If you have any queries please do not hesitate to contact me on 01225 477684.

Yours faithfully,

Julie O'Rourke

Policy Planner