

Planning and Transportation Policy Working Group	
Meeting Date	29 th April 2026
Report Title	Built-Up Area Boundary Review 2026
EMT Lead	Emma Wiggins – Director of Regeneration & Neighbourhoods
Head of Service	Joanne Johnson – Head of Place
Lead Officer	Onawale Kuforiji -Principal Planning Officer (Policy) and Emma Gibson - Planning Officer (Policy)
Classification	Open
Recommendations	That members provide comment on and note the Review of Swale's Built-Up Area Boundaries Report.

1 Purpose of Report and Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report presents a review of the built-up area boundaries in Swale. It provides an overview of the methodology and proposed changes to area boundaries which is either expansion or reduction of a built-up area based on set criteria.
- 1.2 The recommended changes will be consulted on as part of the Regulation 19 version of the emerging Local Plan after which it will be submitted for examination in public and adopted as the new boundary with the Local Plan.
- 1.3 A review of the built-up area boundaries was last carried out as part of preparation for the adopted Bearing Fruit Local Plan. Since that time there have been changes to the Borough resulting from approved planning applications and allocated sites in both the Local and Neighbourhood Plans.
- 1.4 The built-up area boundary separates the built-up areas of towns and villages from the countryside, enabling effective application of relevant land use policies. The boundary is a line drawn around a settlement to encompass, and reflect its built form to distinguish it from areas outside the boundary which for planning policy consideration is regarded as countryside.

2 Background, Context and Proposals

- 2.1 At the heart of the planning system is sustainable development. Paragraph 11a of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) requires all plans to promote a sustainable pattern of development. Paragraph 110 also specifies that the planning system should actively manage the pattern of growth with significant developments focused on locations which are, or can be, made sustainable.
- 2.2 The built-up area boundaries help in preventing unrestricted growth and sprawl into the countryside which can be harmful to its intrinsic value. It clearly defines

where presumption in favour of development applies, within which development is considered acceptable in principle subject to other policy considerations¹. Defining the boundary aligns the Local Plan to the sustainable development thrust of National Planning Policy.

Methodology

- 2.3 The review of the boundary was undertaken through a desktop exercise that considered all the current built-up area boundaries based on the specified criteria explained in paragraph 2.4 below.
- 2.4 Each area was assessed for changes under the following five categories:
- a. Changes arising from allocations in the adopted Swale Local Plan;
 - b. Changes arising from allocations in a Neighbourhood Plan;
 - c. Changes arising from development due to planning permissions;
 - d. Built Up Area Boundary in the adopted Local Plan that no longer meet the criteria for definition; and
 - e. Errors/Anomalies in need of correction.
- 2.5 This review builds on and adheres to the established criteria of the previous Built-Up Area Boundary Review 2014 where boundaries were shaped around:
- a. Identifiable physical features, such as roads, hedges or tree belts, wherever possible;
 - b. Existing property lines, unless this would include land which could be subject to development proposals;
 - c. Inclusion of sites on the edge of settlements which have planning permission, or are allocated for development in the Local Plan; and
 - d. Exclusion from the built-up area of predominantly open land uses on the edge of settlements, such as playing fields and utilities.
- 2.6 In addition to the above initial criteria, sites were also considered for inclusion where development was previously excluded from the built-up area boundary as it was remote from it but revising the built-up area (based on the criteria above) now favours its inclusion.
- 2.7 It should also be noted that built-up boundaries do not necessarily correspond to with Town, Parish or Ward boundaries.

Exclusion Criteria

- 2.8 The following help determine when part of a site or boundary should be excluded from the built up area boundary:

¹ Paragraph 11 of the NPPF defines the context in which Presumption in favour of development applies - [National Planning Policy Framework](#)

- a. Boundaries can be drawn to include property but exclude the curtilage where the character is rural and permissible development can cause harm;
- b. Camping and caravanning sites and moorings which are temporary or serve a holiday purpose as well are normally omitted from the built-up area boundary;
- c. Sports, Open spaces as well as recreational facilities which stand on the edge of the built form of settlements (existing or proposed); and
- d. Areas of low density, sporadic development on the edge of settlements and which are separated from the settlement by a visually definitive feature.
- e. This review will also not include sites within the Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (HELAA) where there is not yet a commitment to build.

2.9 Expanding on paragraph 2.8e above, the built-up area boundary and HELAA are distinct but interconnected elements of Land-use planning. Sites are assessed on several constraint in the HELAA, the proximity or inclusion within built-up area boundaries is assessed as part of the sustainability constraint. Usually, suitability increases closer to the boundary but this can also depend on settlement hierarchy. Suitable HELAA sites which become part of an adopted growth strategy may influence a future adjustment of the built-up area boundary.

Document Presentation

2.10 The study includes an introduction, background and an overview of Swale's built-up areas. It also sets out a detailed methodology of the review before presenting the proposed changes to the boundary areas.

Built-up Boundary Changes

2.11 The changes made to boundaries in the document are listed in tables separated into three categories as follows:

- a. Where the boundary is proposed to be expanded;
- b. Where the boundary is proposed to be reduced; and
- c. Where an error/anomaly is proposed to be corrected.

2.12 Under the above categories, changes are subsequently listed according to settlements.

2.13 The tables contain maps of changes and a short description of changes.

Overview of Changes

- 2.14 There are thirty-two built up areas in Swale which have Built-up Area Boundaries. There were no changes to fifteen of them in this Built-up Area Boundary review. The seventeen built up area boundaries that were changed are listed in table 1 below.

Table 1 Areas with proposed changes to Boundary

	Area	Boundary Expanded	Boundary Reduced	Boundary Error Corrected
1.	Bayview	Yes		
2.	Boughton	Yes		
3.	Bredgar	Yes		
4.	Dunkirk	Yes		
5.	Eastchurch	Yes		
6.	Eastling	Yes		
7.	Faversham	Yes		
8.	Iwade	Yes		
9.	Lewson Street		Yes	
10.	Lynsted	Yes		
11.	Minster	Yes		
12.	Neames Forstal			Yes
13.	Newington	Yes	Yes	
14.	Sheerness	Yes		
15.	Sittingbourne	Yes	Yes	
16.	Teynham	Yes		
17.	Upchurch	Yes	Yes	

3 Recommendations

- 3.1 That members **provide comment** on and **note** the Review of Swale's Built-Up Area Boundaries Report.

4 Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

- 4.1 The alternative is for the document not to be noted by members. This option is not recommended because the review is a reflection of the Council's duty to plan sustainably for the borough. If the built-up boundary is not properly defined, applying the policies of the emerging Local Plan appropriately to

stem unrestricted sprawl of development into the countryside may be more difficult. This can lead to the countryside losing its intrinsic values and usefulness.

5 Consultation Undertaken or Proposed

- 5.1 The proposed changes will be part of the Regulation 19 Local Plan consultation where there will be an opportunity for all stakeholders to comment.

6 Implications

Issue	Implications
Corporate Plan	The built-up area boundary supports the delivery of the Local Plan aligning with priorities: • Environment - To provide a cleaner, healthier, more sustainable and enjoyable environment, and to prepare our borough for the challenges ahead. • Community - To enable our residents to live, work and enjoy their leisure time safely in our borough and to support community resilience. • Economy – To progress a Local Plan with local needs and capacity at its heart
Financial, Resource and Property	The Local Plan work programme is fully funded across a combination of base budget, committed reserves and a contribution from the government's Local Plans Delivery Fund.
Legal, Statutory and Procurement	Preparation of a Local Plan is carried out under a national legislative and regulatory framework.
Crime and Disorder	There are no direct crime and disorder impacts arising from this decision.
Environment and Climate/Ecological Emergency	As part of the Local Plan, there will be a Sustainability Appraisal and Habitats Regulation Assessment at each key stage in decision making and these assess the environmental impact of the Local Plan as a whole.
Health and Wellbeing	The Built-up area boundary will help manage unrestricted development in the countryside leaving it for uses that respect and improve its intrinsic character and beauty which can have a beneficial effect on physical and mental health by reducing stress and encouraging active lifestyle amongst others.
Safeguarding of Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults	No implications identified at this stage.

Risk Management and Health and Safety	No implications identified at this stage.
Equality and Diversity	No implications identified at this stage.
Privacy and Data Protection	No implications identified at this stage.
Local Government Reorganisation	The current Local Plan timetable expects the Local Plan to be submitted for its Examination in Public and to be adopted before local government reorganisation is expected to be complete.

7 Appendices

7.1 The following documents are to be published with this report and form part of the report:

- Appendix I: Review of Swale Built-Up Area Boundary, April 2026

8 Background Papers

None.