Policy Title:
LP2 - Settlement Boundaries

Existing Policies Which adopted Core Strategy or Policies Sites and Places (PSP) policy would eventually be replaced	**Core Strategy Policy CS5 - Location of Development** **Core Strategy Policy CS34 - Rural Areas**
Non-Strategic / Strategic	**Non-Strategic**

Purpose

Settlement Boundaries around urban areas, market towns, and some rural villages have been defined on the Policies Map. This policy assists the Local Plan strategy for development through providing a framework that:

1. Supports new development proposed in South Gloucestershire's most sustainable locations where services, facilities, employment opportunities, and public transport links can be conveniently, safely and accessibly reached by Active Travel means;
2. Protects the distinctive character of rural villages and the open countryside from development of inappropriate scale and/or quantum, and avoids creating the next generation of commuter settlements where the majority of new journeys would be made by private vehicle;
3. Supports well-designed infill and windfall developments within the settlement boundaries where they are of a scale and quantum appropriate to the location, and where they would not detrimentally impact upon their surroundings; and
4. Sets out exceptional circumstances upon which development proposals outside of the settlement boundaries and site allocations may be supported.

Policy wording

Development proposals within the Settlement Boundaries

1. **New development proposed within the Settlement Boundaries, as shown on the Policies Map, will be acceptable when:**

   a) **It would protect, conserve and enhance the distinctive character, landscape, biodiversity, heritage, visual and residential amenity, and operation of other nearby uses within the settlement as a whole and the location proposed to be developed; and**

   b) **For residential development that the scale and quantum would be proportionate to the locality, taking into consideration appropriate distances to conveniently, safely and accessibly reach key services, facilities, employment opportunities, and public transport links (which can include those within a nearby urban area, market town, or village) by Active Travel means; and**

   c) **For non-residential development that it would enhance the availability of key services, facilities and/or employment opportunities in the locality, and manage its off-site impacts including upon the environment and the highway network; and**

   d) **It would comply with other relevant Local Plan policies.**

Development proposals outside of the Settlement Boundaries

2. **New development proposed outside of the Settlement Boundaries as shown on the Policies Map, and which is not within Site Allocations supported by the Locational Strategy, the Severnside Employment Area, or other rural Safeguarded Employment Areas, will be strictly controlled and considered against relevant national and local policies covering development in the open countryside including for Green Belt and the Cotswold National Landscape.**

3. **Exceptionally, residential development proposals that are adjacent and/or well connected to the settlement boundaries will be supported where:**

   a) **The council's published housing delivery monitoring shows that sites allocated in the Local Plan are not delivering the number of homes as anticipated; and**

   b) **A sufficient housing land supply cannot be demonstrated through alternative sites; and**

   c) **The requirements of criterion 1 a), b) and d) are complied with; and**

   d) **It would not lead to the merging, or perceived merging, of one settlement with another; and**

e) **There is sufficient capacity within local primary schools to support demand for additional school places arising from the proposal, or alternatively that the proposal would provide for expansion of a specific local primary school or for a new local primary school with a realistic prospect of this being delivered within a timescale to meet the demand; and**

f) **The site lies within appropriate distances of key services, facilities, employment opportunities, and public transport links (which can include those within a nearby urban area, market town, or village), with routes to these being convenient, safe and accessible to reach by Active Travel means.**

4. **Residential development proposals meeting the requirements of criterion 3, where the location is adjacent and/or well connected to rural villages will additionally be required to demonstrate that the scale and quantum of the proposal would be proportionate when considered cumulatively with other completed and approved residential development in the village over the preceding 15 years.**

Supporting text

Definition and Approach

1. The Settlement Boundaries define the spatial extent of South Gloucestershire's urban areas, Market Towns, and some rural villages, and are shown on the Policies Map.
2. The Settlement Boundary Amendments Topic Paper (February 2025) sets out the methodology and approach used to define these settlement boundaries.
3. **Key Services and Facilities** and appropriate distances to reach these by Active Travel means are defined in Saved Policies Sites and Places Plan Policy PSP11 - Transport Impact Management (until replaced). Key Services and Facilities, and public transport links, must be able to be conveniently, safely and accessibly reached by such means.
4. **Public Transport links** excludes non-timetabled services such as Demand Responsive Transport (DRT) since these do not provide predictable journey times and are therefore not a reasonable alternative to private car use.
5. **Active Travel** means modes of travel which involve a level of activity, including walking, wheeling and cycling. Wheeling encompasses a range of modes such as trips made by wheelchair, mobility scooters, adapted cycles, e-cycles, scooters, and cycle sharing schemes.[1]
6. **Site Allocations supported by the Locational Strategy** are those set out in Policy LPS2 - Spatial Strategy for South Gloucestershire.
7. The **Severnside Employment Area** is defined in Policy LP14 - Severnside Employment Area, which includes additional requirements for new development proposed in this area.

8. **Other rural Safeguarded Employment Areas** means those other than the Severnside Employment Area listed in table 2 of Policy LPS7 - Safeguarded Employment Areas, that are not within the Settlement Boundaries. Their extents are shown on the Policies Map and Policy LPS7 - Safeguarded Employment Areas provides requirements for supported uses which may take place within them.

Development Proposals within the Settlement Boundaries

9. New development proposed within an urban area, market town or village settlement should respect the characteristics which define the locality, its assets and constraints, including its character, landscape, historic and the natural environment, residential and visual amenity, and operation of nearby occupiers. It must also comply with other relevant Local Plan Policies.
10. When considering the scale and quantum of residential development proposed, the accessibility criteria of Saved Policy PSP11 - Transport Impact Management (until replaced) should be referenced, however additional clarifications in this policy to the definitions of Key services and Facilities and Appropriate Public Transport Service (the latter as referenced under Public Transport Links definition above) should take precedence.
11. Until replaced, the Policies, Sites and Places Plan policies PSP8 - Residential Amenity, Policy PSP11 - Transport Impact Management, Policy PSP21 - Environmental Pollution and Impacts, and Policy PSP27 - B8 Storage and Distribution Uses provide additional requirements for managing off-site impacts. These would particularly apply to new non-residential development.
12. Proposals within Site Allocations should adhere to the relevant development considerations or Strategic Urban/ Village Extension policy.

Development Proposals outside of the Settlement Boundaries

13. Other than Site Allocations supported by the Locational Strategy, the Severnside Employment area and other rural Safeguarded Employment Areas where requirements for supported uses are covered by other Local Plan policies, areas beyond the settlement boundaries, including villages which continue to have no boundary, will be treated as the open countryside and development will be strictly controlled. These areas are more susceptible to harmful impacts upon their character, including their historic pattern and heritage assets, green infrastructure, biodiversity, and sense of place. Many areas beyond the settlement boundaries also lie within the Green Belt and/or are within, or contribute to setting of, the Cotswold National Landscape.
14. However, there are some exceptional circumstances where development proposals outside of the settlement boundaries complying with the following other Local Plan policies, may be supported.
    - Policy LP17 - Rural Exception Sites and Community-Led Development;
    - Policy LP3 - Residential Development in the Countryside;
    - Saved Policy PSP41 - Rural Workers Dwellings (until replaced);
    - Saved Policy PSP28 - Rural Economy (until replaced).

Additional exceptional circumstances for development proposals adjacent and well-connected to the Settlement Boundaries

15. Where the requirements of criterions 3 and 4 are met in full, this policy supports consideration of land adjacent to the existing settlement boundaries, as the next most sustainable locations prior to land in other areas. In doing so this also act to safeguard against development which is inherently unsustainable, would result in urban sprawl and/or detrimental impacts upon local character, the historic and/or natural environments.

16. Proposed locations should be immediately adjacent to the settlement boundaries and well-connected to the settlement by Active Travel means via convenient, safe and accessible routes including those that are existing, improved and/or provided as part of the proposal.

17. Whether the scale and quantum of new development proposed adjacent to the Settlement Boundaries of rural villages is proportional must be considered cumulatively with those of other completed and approved (and extant) housing developments in the village within the preceding 15 years. In groups of smaller settlements, one village may support services of another village nearby, however this consideration should only be made where such services can be reached by Active Travel means via convenient, safe and accessible routes.

18. The merging of a settlement with another will be considered as the proposal, including its open space and boundary features, abridging the gap between two settlements. The perceived merging will be considered as the proposal having the appearance of abridging the gap between two settlements. Supporting information, such as a Landscape Visual Impact Assessment, should be submitted with the proposal to evidence compliance with criterion 3 d).

19. The tests of inappropriateness of development proposed within the Green Belt, as well as considerations relating to the Cotswold National Landscape and the open countryside will still apply to proposals considered under criterions 3 and 4.

Future Reviews

20. The Settlement Boundaries will be kept under review, with any wider updates taking place through Local Plan Reviews and/or an updated Local Plan.

[1] 'What Active Travel Means' https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/active-travel-local-authority-toolkit/active-travel-local-authority-toolkit

Additions	
Key evidence	Settlement Boundary Amendments Topic Paper (February 2025)
Other relevant policies to cross-reference?	LPS2 - Locational Strategy for South Gloucestershire LPS7 - Safeguarded Employment Areas LP3 - Residential Development in the Countryside LP14 - Severnside Employment Area LP17 - Rural Exception Sites and Community-Led Development Saved Policy PSP8 - Residential Amenity (until replaced) Saved Policy PSP11 - Transport Impact Management (until replaced) Saved Policy PSP21 - Environmental Pollution and Impacts (until replaced) Saved Policy PSP27 - B8 Storage and Distribution Uses (until replaced) Saved Policy PSP41 - Rural Workers Dwellings (until replaced) Saved Policy PSP28 - Rural Economy (until replaced)