



Settlement Boundary Consultation

**Rennington Parish Council:
March 2024**

Settlement Boundary Consultation – Rennington Parish Neighbourhood Plan (March 2024)

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1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This consultation paper sets out a methodology for the proposed definition of settlement boundaries in the emerging Rennington Parish Neighbourhood Plan and seeks feedback from the community with regard to the specific settlement boundaries for the villages of Rennington and Rock. A settlement boundary is not proposed for Stamford.
- 1.2 The neighbourhood plan will plan positively for housing in the area. The assessed housing need for each neighbourhood area is identified by Northumberland County Council. There is no identified housing need for the Rennington Parish Neighbourhood Plan due to the amount of housing that has been delivered in recent years. If sites are taken forward for allocation in the Plan, this will be carried out alongside the identification of settlement boundaries for the two larger settlements in the neighbourhood area (Rennington and Rock). Stamford is also identified as a settlement in the emerging Plan but no settlement boundary is identified due to the dispersed nature of the settlement in the countryside, with layouts of small terraces with open spaces in between.
- 1.3 The delineation of settlement boundaries is considered to be the best mechanism to achieve some of the main elements of the vision and objectives of the neighbourhood plan, particularly those related to landscape protection and supporting the provision of new housing in suitable locations.

2.0 What is a settlement boundary?

- 2.1 In simple terms, a 'settlement boundary' is a dividing line, or boundary between areas of built development (the settlement) and the open countryside. Although a settlement boundary does not preclude all development beyond the boundary, it does give clarity as to where new development (particularly housing) is likely to be acceptable in planning terms. Any proposed housing sites (subject to consultation) will be included within the settlement boundaries.
- 2.2 Inclusion of land within a settlement boundary does not mean that all land within the boundary is automatically suitable for new development. There may be areas of land within the settlement boundary that are not suitable for development due to other constraints, for example, where there is land protected as Local Green Space

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(to be allocated through the neighbourhood planning process) or areas of special character (for example areas that would have an impact on the setting of listed buildings or heritage assets, or areas that have a high nature conservation value). Policies in the neighbourhood plan will clearly define what proposals are likely to be acceptable within the settlement boundary.

2.3 The benefits of establishing settlement boundaries are as follows:

- Ensure development is directed to the most suitable locations in the villages in terms of landscape, the natural environment and the historic environment.
- Protect the special character of the villages and the landscapes around them and maintain their character and distinctiveness.
- Provide greater certainty to communities, landowners and developers regarding where new development is likely to be acceptable.
- Support the plan led approach to development, giving a local context to the strategic intention of providing sufficient housing to meet the needs of the parish.
- Support sustainable development by encouraging growth in appropriate areas, and protecting other areas.

3.0 Planning Context

- 3.1 The Rennington Neighbourhood Plan will propose a general presumption in favour of sustainable development within the settlement boundaries of the villages of Rock and Rennington. The current strategic plan for the neighbourhood plan area is the Northumberland Local Plan (adopted in 2022).
- 3.2 Strategic policy STP1 in the Northumberland Local Plan identifies the most suitable locations for new housing development in the county. Both Rennington and Rock are identified as ‘small villages’, capable of accommodating some limited development at a suitable scale. Both villages have a limited number of facilities: Rennington has a church, a village hall, and a pub. Rock has a church and a well-used cricket field and pavilion.
- 3.3 There is no currently defined settlement boundary for Rock. A boundary was defined for both Rock and Rennington in the old Alnwick District Local Plan. A boundary for Rennington was defined in the Northumberland Local Plan, but it is lacking in detail, and was drawn without site visits and local input. The neighbourhood plan can amend this settlement boundary.

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4.0 Methodology for defining settlement boundaries

- 4.1 There is no single established methodology for defining settlement boundaries, and different local planning authorities across the country have taken different approaches to drawing settlement boundaries. Similarly, different neighbourhood plans have used differing methodologies.
- 4.2 Where a methodology has been used the criteria are generally similar from one local authority to another. These include questions such as whether to draw a boundary around clusters of buildings close to but separate from the main settlement; and whether particular uses should be included or excluded from the boundary, where they occur at the edge of a settlement. This methodology has drawn on existing methodologies used in nearby neighbourhood plan areas which is considered to be most appropriate within the context of the sensitive landscapes around Rennington and Rock, and the local context.
- 4.3 Any methodology must be clear, easy to understand, and replicable. The methodology is similar to that used in the production of other neighbourhood plans in North Northumberland.
- 4.4 There is a significant amount of evidence available to the neighbourhood plan Steering Group, and the desk-top element of defining settlement boundaries has drawn on a range of published studies and evidence base relating to landscape, townscape, land ownership and the historic and natural environments including the Design Code work carried out by on behalf of the Parish Council.
- 4.5 The following evidence has been used as background information to inform settlement boundaries, as well as the criteria put forward later in this paper.

Planning applications/approvals in Rennington and Rock

- 4.6 The recently permitted housing sites are included in the settlement boundary. These include the house development at North Farm and the development still under construction at The Grange in Rennington

Consultation with local landowners (ongoing)

- 4.7 Consultation has taken place with local landowners with regard to housing allocations. This information has been presented in full in the Housing Sites

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Allocations paper which should be read alongside this report.

Historic Environment and local character

- 4.8 The historic environment record (HER), and detailed information about listed (and non-listed) buildings provides an idea of the local historic context in Rennington and Rock.

Local Features

- 4.9 Where possible, the settlement boundary should be drawn along defined features such as walls, hedgerows, watercourses, garden curtilages and existing development and roads/footpaths.
- 4.10 Site visits, local knowledge and aerial photographs will be essential to ensure a consistent and accurate approach.
- 4.11 The table below describes what types of development will be included or excluded from settlement boundaries. It is important that a consistent and clearly replicable approach is used to define the settlement boundary.

Include	Exclude
Built development forming the main settlement, including gardens and outbuildings	Isolated housing not well related visually to the settlement. Housing in large plots on the edge of settlements, but not well related to the built form, will be excluded.
Valued green spaces within the built form of the settlement (e.g. village greens, areas of woodland and other green spaces). It may be appropriate to allocate these for protection in some way if they are not suitable for housing.	Paddocks and farmland on the edge of the settlement, woodland on the edge of the settlement.
Community facilities e.g. schools, public houses where they are within the existing built environment	Designated wildlife sites (unless within the built-up area)
Local Green Spaces (designated through the neighbourhood plan) within settlements	Woodlands, orchards and other community green spaces, including cemeteries and churchyards (unless within the built-up area)
Land with planning permission for new development within or well-related to the settlement	Agricultural units (farmyards and farm buildings) including agricultural workers' dwellings, horticultural nurseries, equestrian facilities where they are not well related to the settlement.
Land proposed for housing (housing allocations)	Community facilities or recreational facilities outside the settlement

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5.0 Settlement Boundary Options: Rennington

Option 1: Amend settlement boundary to include a housing site, and allocate Local Green Spaces in other areas valued by the community (see plan below)

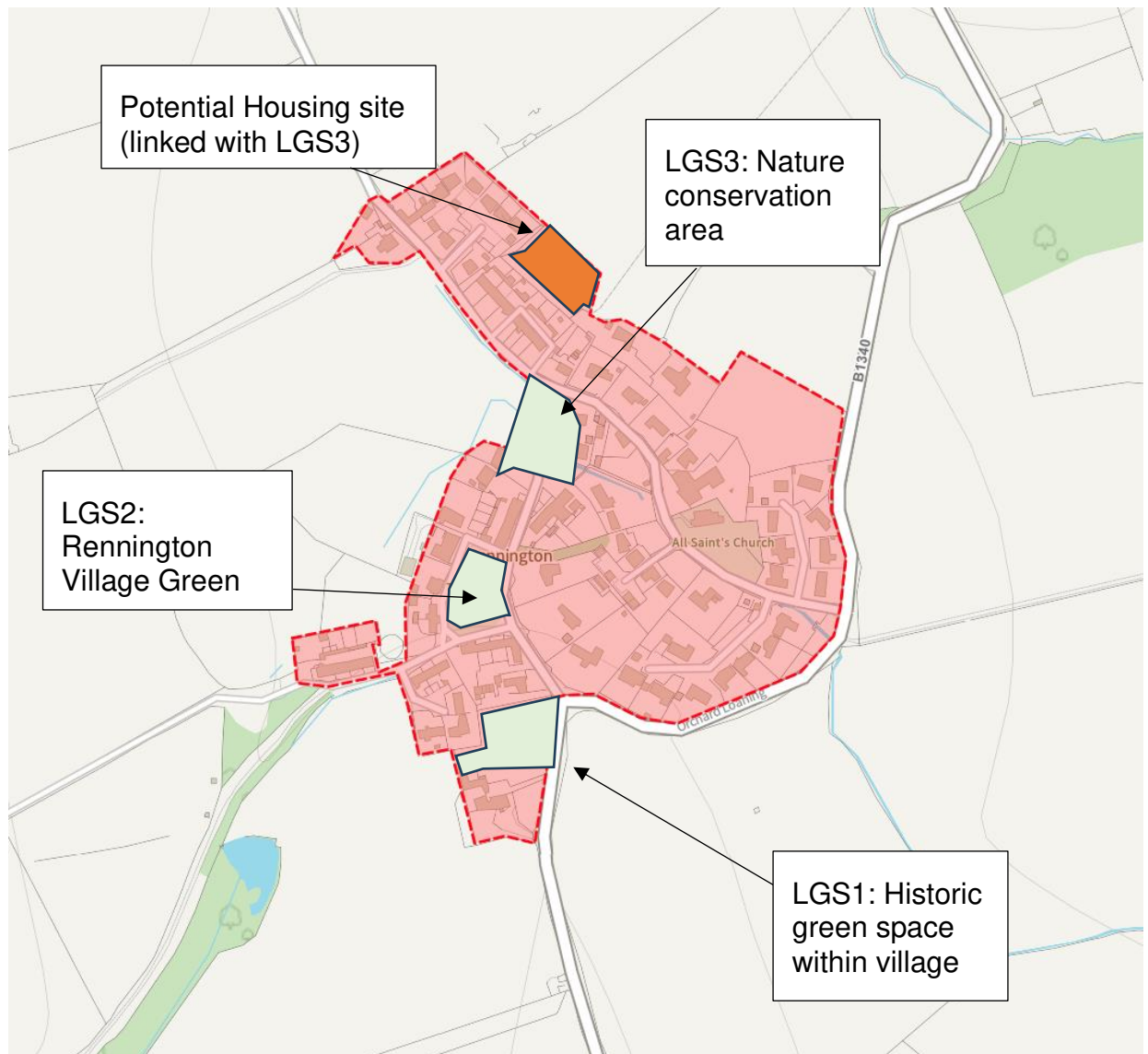


Figure 1: Settlement boundary for Rennington including potential allocated housing site (subject to community consultation)

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Option 2: Retain existing settlement boundary already proposed in the NLP (see Figure 1 below).

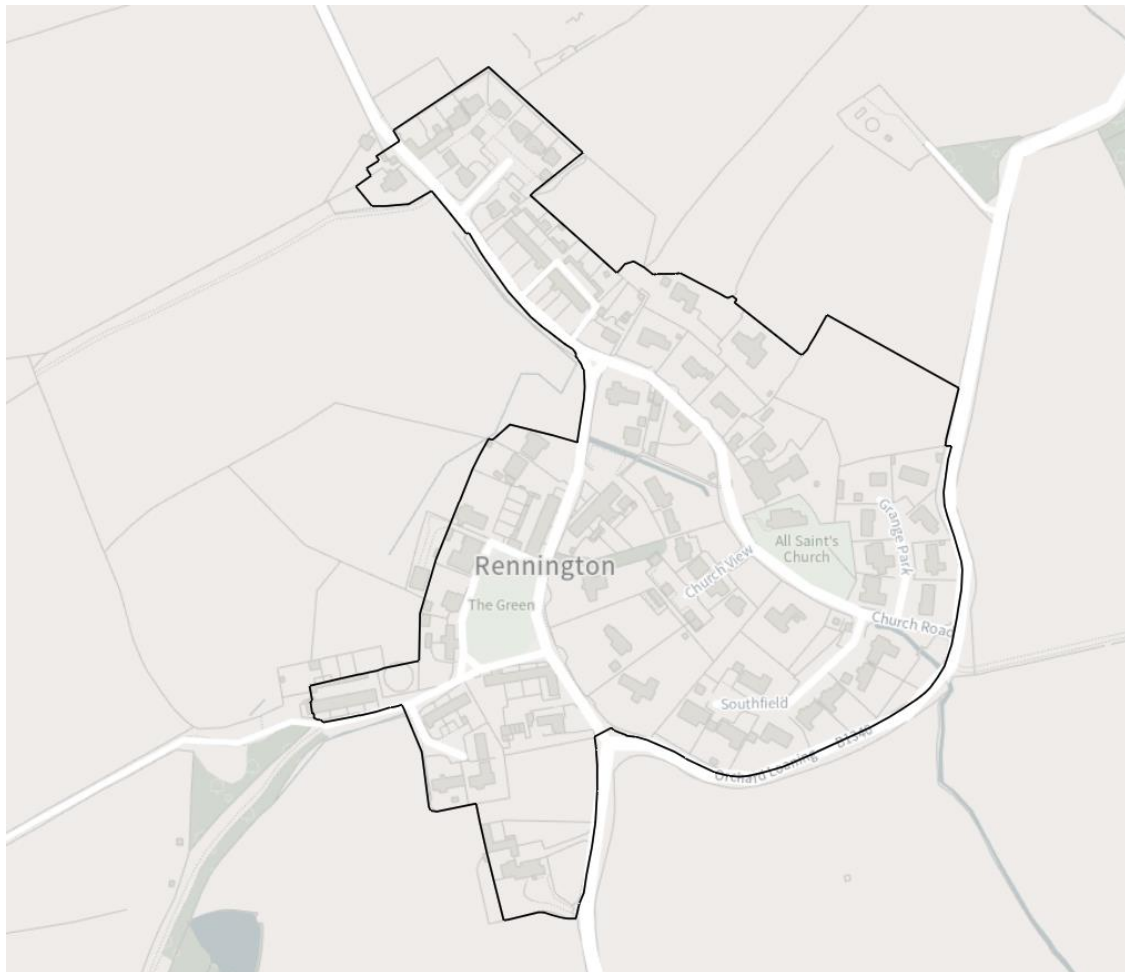


Figure 2: Current defined settlement boundary for Rennington

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6.0 Settlement Boundary Options: Rock

Option 1: Define settlement boundary (as suggested below) to include main built-up part of village including potential housing site. Consider LGS or other designations in green parts of the village to ensure that development is directed to the most suitable locations:

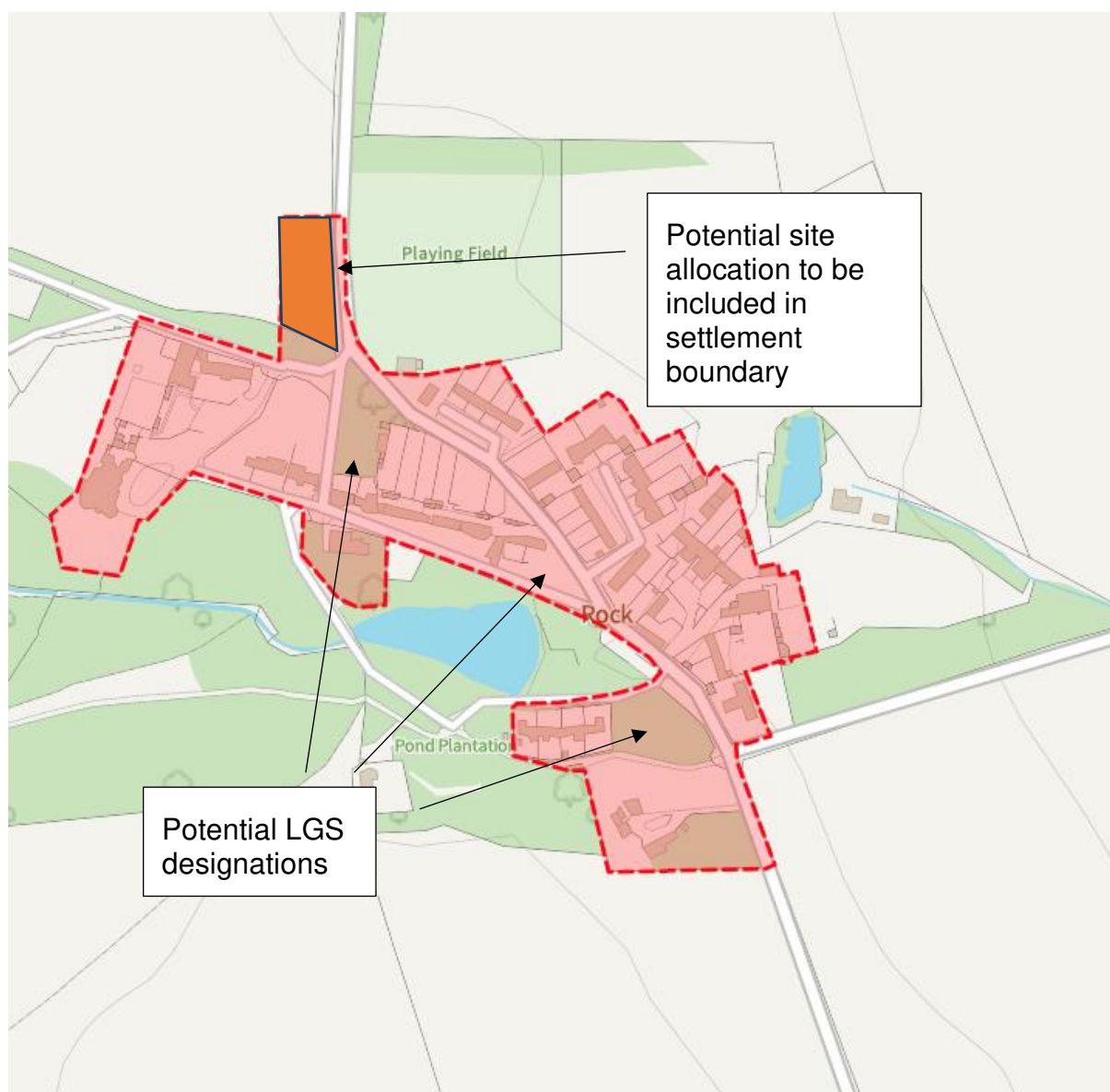


Figure 3: Proposed settlement boundary for Rock (including potential housing allocation)

- 6.1 The proposed settlement boundary for Rock includes the allocated housing site (if supported by the community in the consultation). It is drawn tightly round existing development and isolated dwellings close to the village are excluded to clarify that these spaces are not suitable for new housing. There are also a number of LGS

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designations in Rock (many of which are also allocated as open space in the Northumberland Local Plan). The cricket pitch is allocated as a recreational space, and a community facility. The plan contains a specific policy to support the redevelopment of the cricket pavilion.

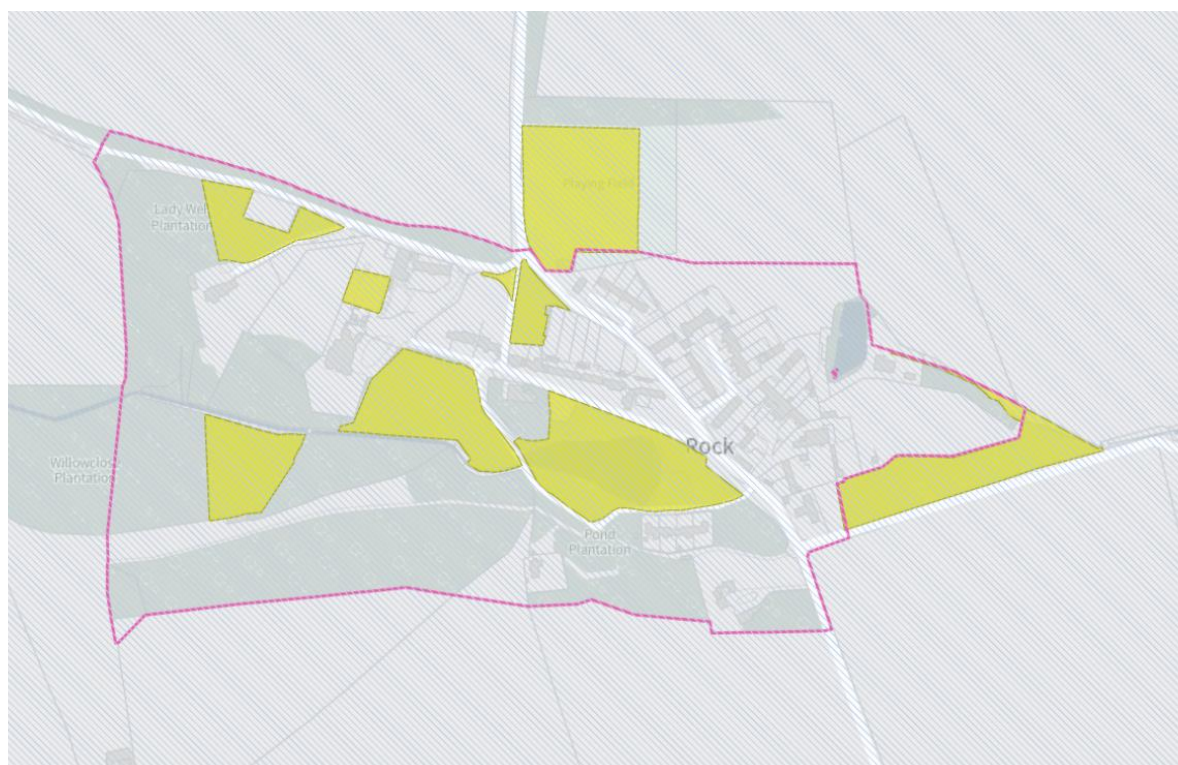


Figure 4: Protected Open Spaces and conservation area in Rock (from Northumberland Local Plan)

Option 2: Do nothing and do not define a settlement boundary for Rock

7.0 Next steps

7.1 This paper be used as a background paper to explain proposed settlement boundaries in the next public consultation. The consultation will present two options for each settlement: 1. Do nothing (i.e., retain existing SB in Rennington, and/or propose no new settlement boundary for Rock), or propose tightly drawn settlement boundaries for both to include land for housing as per the housing site allocations consultation. These boundaries will be amended following consultation with the community, and site visits to be carried out to ensure the definition of the boundaries is accurate.