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XX 2015

Dear Parish Council,

**RE: VILLAGE SETTLEMENT BOUNDARIES**

We are continuing to prepare the new Guildford borough Local Plan. As indicated in the timetable contained in the recently approved Local Development Scheme, we expect to undergo further consultation on a pre-submission version of the Local Plan in June to July 2016. As part of preparing the plan, we are considering our approach to village settlements. In accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), we are required to consider whether villages should be inset, or taken out, of the Green Belt based on whether or not they contribute towards the openness of the Green Belt (paragraph 86).

In the draft Local Plan that we consulted on in summer 2014, we included two categories of villages; inset and identified. The latter remained washed over by the Green Belt designation however included an identified settlement boundary within which the proposed policy stated that limited infilling could occur, in accordance with the NPPF (paragraph 89, 5<sup>th</sup> bullet). A recent Court of Appeal ruling (Julian Wood v. The Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government and Gravesham Borough Council [2015]) found that in that case the inspector had misdirected himself by accepting the Local Plan boundary as being conclusive as to whether or not the site appeared to be in the village. Instead, the inspector was required to consider whether, as a matter of fact on the ground, the site appeared to be in the village. If the site is considered to be within the village, then a consideration should be made as to whether the proposal constitutes limited infilling.

This change in interpretation has led us to reconsider this policy and the way in which we address this through the emerging plan. We still consider that it would be beneficial to identify what we consider to constitute a village (as opposed to an urban area or hamlet) and where possible to identify the extent of the village, as a matter of fact on the ground. This would help give certainty to residents and developers regarding the extent of the village although, based on the ruling, this would not be definitive and applications outside the boundary would still need to be considered on a case-by-case basis.

It is important to stress that merely being contained within the settlement boundary would not necessarily mean that any proposal within it would be considered to constitute limited infilling. Instead it will form a

starting point for considering whether the site is within the village. However this is only the first part of the process following on from which the decision-maker would need to additionally determine whether the proposal constitutes limited infilling.

Yours sincerely

A black rectangular box redacting the signature of the Planning Officer.

Planning Officer (Policy)