

Urban Edges and the Green Belt

Draft NPF4 recognises green belts may have a role as a settlement management tool around our towns and cities, helping to focus and direct growth to sustainable locations. As well as enhancing the character and setting of settlements green belts provide outdoor access to the countryside and support green and nature networks.

Local Development Plans should:

- Consider using green belts where appropriate, where there is a significant danger of unsustainable growth of settlements or suburbanisation of the countryside.
- Identify or review green belts.

Planning policies should:

- Only support development proposals within a green belt which are for:
 - development associated with agriculture;
 - woodland creation and existing forestry;
 - residential accommodation required for a worker in a primary industry if that worker's presence is essential to the operation of the industry; or
 - retired workers where there is no suitable alternative accommodation available
 - horticulture, including market gardening and community growing;
 - recreation, outdoor sport, leisure and tourism uses compatible with a countryside setting;
 - flood risk management;
 - development meeting a national requirement or established need, if no other suitable site is available;
 - essential infrastructure which cannot be accommodated anywhere other than the green belt;
 - minerals operations and renewable energy developments;
 - intensification of established uses;
 - The re-use and conversion of historic environmental assets; and one-for-one replacements of existing permanent houses currently in occupation.

Development proposals within the green belt

- will be required to provide a statement:
 - identifying the search area, including site options assessed;
 - details of the existing or proposed activity to which the proposal relates (where applicable) ; and
 - reasons why a green belt location is necessary

- should ensure
 - the development does not undermine the purpose of the green belt
 - is fully compatible with the surrounding landscape,
 - is of a scale, massing and appearance that contribute to the visual character of the green belt and
 - has no unacceptable long-term impacts on the environmental quality of the green belt.

Responses to the Position Statement

There was support for strengthening the approach to protecting and restoring the natural environment, and the role of the green belt, both in its own right and as part of a green network, was noted. A green belt was seen as an important element in connecting habitat and in achieving other elements of NPF4, such as green and blue corridors, the National Nature Network and Central Scotland Green Network.

Policy changes

The proposals in Draft NPF4 build on existing policies and aspirations to offer guidance to planning authorities and developers aimed at enhancing the green belt and the settlements which are protected by it. Draft NPF4 embraces and expands upon the aspirations expressed in NPF3 and the policies outlined in SPP. Draft NPF4 provides greater detail on the uses which may be acceptable in green belts.