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Guidance

Green Belt

Advice on the role of the Green Belt in the planning system.

From:

[Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities](#)

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Published

22 July 2019

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What factors can be taken into account when considering the potential impact of development on the openness of the Green Belt?

Assessing the impact of a proposal on the [openness of the Green Belt](#) (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/national-planning-policy-framework/13-protecting-green-belt-land>), where it is relevant to do so, requires a judgment based on the circumstances of the case. By way of example, the courts have identified a number of matters which may need to be taken into account in making this assessment. These include, but are not limited to:

- openness is capable of having both spatial and visual aspects – in other words, the visual impact of the proposal may be relevant, as could its volume;
- the duration of the development, and its remediability – taking into account any provisions to return land to its original state or to an equivalent (or improved) state of openness; and
- the degree of activity likely to be generated, such as traffic generation.

Paragraph: 001 Reference ID: 64-001-20190722

Revision date: 22 07 2019

How might plans set out ways in which the impact of removing land from the Green Belt can be offset by compensatory improvements?

Where it has been demonstrated that it is [necessary to release Green Belt land for development \(https://www.gov.uk/guidance/national-planning-policy-framework/13-protecting-green-belt-land\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/national-planning-policy-framework/13-protecting-green-belt-land), strategic policy-making authorities should set out policies for compensatory improvements to the environmental quality and accessibility of the remaining Green Belt land. These may be informed by supporting evidence of landscape, biodiversity or recreational needs and opportunities including those set out in local strategies, and could for instance include:

- new or enhanced [green infrastructure \(https://www.gov.uk/guidance/natural-environment#green-infrastructure\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/natural-environment#green-infrastructure);
- woodland planting;
- landscape and visual enhancements (beyond those needed to mitigate the immediate impacts of the proposal);
- [improvements to biodiversity \(https://www.gov.uk/guidance/natural-environment#biodiversity-geodiversity-and-ecosystems\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/natural-environment#biodiversity-geodiversity-and-ecosystems), habitat connectivity and natural capital;
- new or enhanced walking and cycle routes; and
- improved access to new, enhanced or existing recreational and playing field provision.

Paragraph: 002 Reference ID: 64-002-20190722

Revision date: 22 07 2019

How can the strategic policy-making authority ensure that compensatory improvements to the environmental quality and accessibility of the Green Belt will be secured?

Identifying the scope for compensatory improvements is likely to require early engagement with landowners and other interest groups, once the areas of land necessary for release have been identified. Consideration will need to be given to:

- land ownership, in relation to both land that is proposed to be released for development and that which may be most suitable for compensatory improvements for which contributions may be sought;
- the scope of works that would be needed to implement the identified improvements, such as new public rights of way, land remediation, natural capital enhancement or habitat creation and enhancement, and their implications for [deliverability \(https://www.gov.uk/guidance/viability\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/viability);
- the appropriate use of [conditions \(https://www.gov.uk/guidance/use-of-planning-conditions\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/use-of-planning-conditions), [section 106 obligations \(https://www.gov.uk/guidance/use-of-planning-conditions#negatively-worded\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/use-of-planning-conditions#negatively-worded) and the [Community Infrastructure Levy \(https://www.gov.uk/guidance/community-infrastructure-levy\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/community-infrastructure-levy), to secure the improvements where possible. Section 106 agreements could be used to secure long-term maintenance of sites.

Paragraph: 003 Reference ID: 64-003-20190722

Revision date: 22 07 2019

Published 22 July 2019

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