



Ministry of Housing,
Communities &
Local Government

Green Belt

An Overview of the December 24 Changes and what next
for planning reform

March 2025



These slides are prepared for discussion purposes and do not constitute Government policy or guidance and does not seek to interpret policy . Please defer to the national policy and guidance on Green Belt.



Green Belt & Grey Belt

The Key Policy Changes

Revised NPPF

- More strategic approach to Green Belt designation and release
- Recognition that lower-quality 'grey belt' land may be needed to meet local housing (and other development) needs
- Release of 'grey belt' will be locally led and primarily managed through local plans process, but also through decision making
- Most valuable Green Belt will still be protected

Changes from Dec 23

- Explicit obligation to review Green Belt where needed
- New definition of 'grey belt' land

Changes from July 24

- Altered definition of 'grey belt' to improve operability
- Tightened circumstances in which land may be released/developed





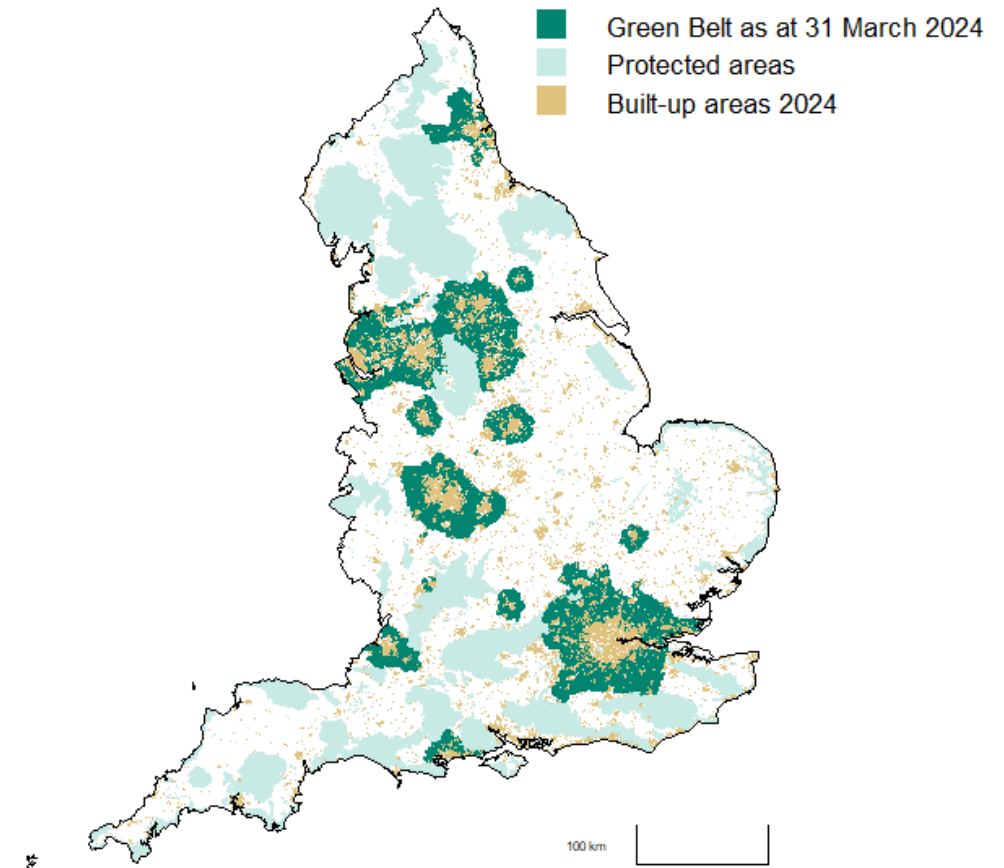
Green Belt guidance

Context

- Consultation sought feedback on whether and what guidance would be helpful
- Strong calls from the sector for further guidance
- Aiming to drive greater consistency whilst acknowledging local application of policies

Scope and Approach

- Guidance seeks to cover a broad range of considerations in relation to Green Belt
- But focused on the most novel changes- e.g. introduction of concept of grey belt





Green Belt Assessment

Why and how to identify Grey belt?

- Identification of grey belt is needed for both plan making and decision making purposes.
- In plan making, policy asks authorities to review and potentially alter Green Belt boundaries where necessary to meet need. As part of this, authorities should give priority to the release of grey belt over higher performing Green Belt land.
- In order to identify grey belt land, authorities should produce a Green Belt assessment, informed by PPG.
- In decision making, determining whether land is grey belt informs whether development is not inappropriate in the Green Belt.

Green Belt Assessment

- Performing a Green Belt assessment will entail:
 - Deciding on assessment areas
 - Evaluating the contribution assessment areas make to Green Belt purposes
 - Considering application of policies relating to restrictive areas or assets
 - Considering the impact of release/development on remaining Green Belt

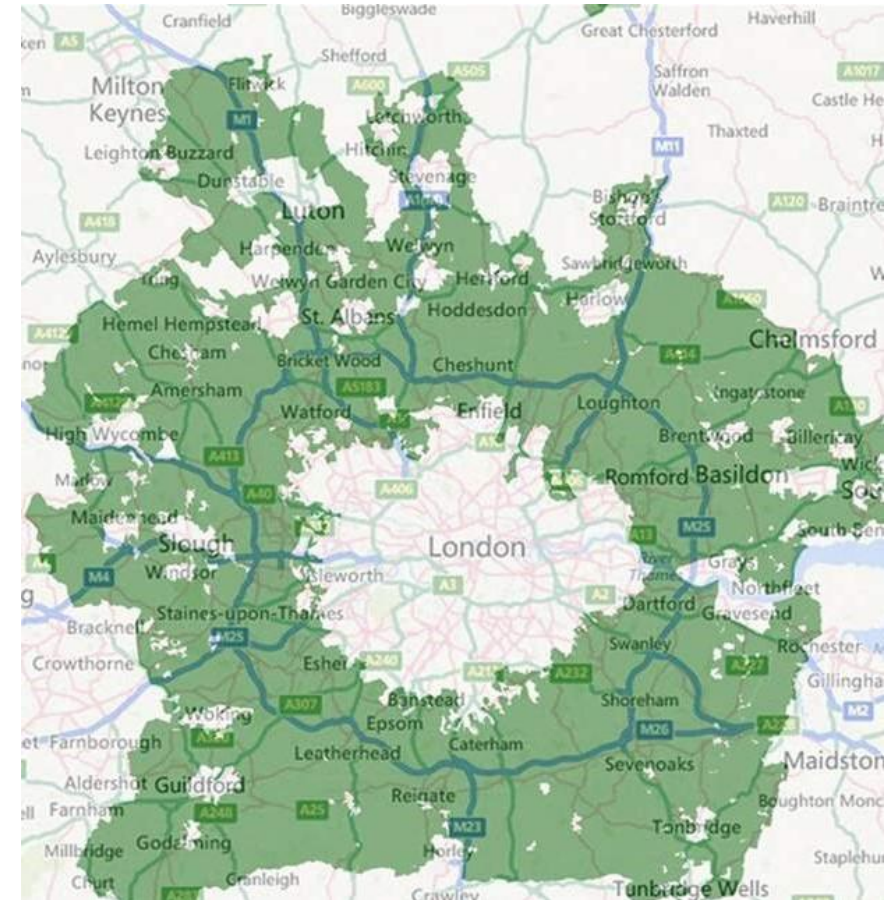




Q: Defining Assessment Areas

Q: What size should assessment areas be?

- Local context relevant in determining exact shape and size of assessment areas, and there may be reasons for sizes to vary
- Broadly, we expect authorities to:
 - Consider all Green Belt
 - To draw out expected variations in Green Belt purposes
 - To avoid a small number of large assessment areas in most circumstances
 - To consider varying the size of assessment areas based on local circumstances.





Restricting Sprawl

Stronger Contribution:

- undeveloped land
- adjacent to large built-up areas
- Lacking other features to restrict sprawl
- Would lead to incongruous pattern of development

Weaker Contribution:

- Not adjacent to a large built-up area
- Contain existing development or urbanising influence
- Close to other features that restrict sprawl
- Partially or largely enclosed by development

Preventing merging

Stronger Contribution:

- Undeveloped land
- Forming a substantial part of a gap between towns
- Would lead to the loss of visual separation

Weaker Contribution:

- Do not form part of a gap, or only a small part
- Development wouldn't lead to loss of visual separation

Safeguarding Historic Towns

Stronger Contribution:

- Undeveloped Land
- Form part of the setting of the historic town
- Of considerable importance to the special character of the historic town

Weaker Contribution:

- Does not form part of the setting of a historic town
- Lacking an important relationship to the historic the town, e.g due to being separated from historic aspects of the town



Other Considerations

Protected areas/ assets

- Definition of grey belt excludes land where the application of policies listed in footnote 7 provide a strong reason for refusal or restriction.
- It may only be possible to provisionally identify land as grey belt ahead of more detailed proposals.

Impact on remaining Green Belt

- A Green Belt assessment should also consider the extent to which release or development of Green Belt land would fundamentally undermine the purposes (taken together) of the remaining Green Belt across the Plan area.
- This shouldn't require a parcel by parcel assessment of the remaining Green Belt in the plan area.
- Should consider whether release or development would affect the ability of remaining Green Belt from serving all purposes in a meaningful way.

Sustainable Locations

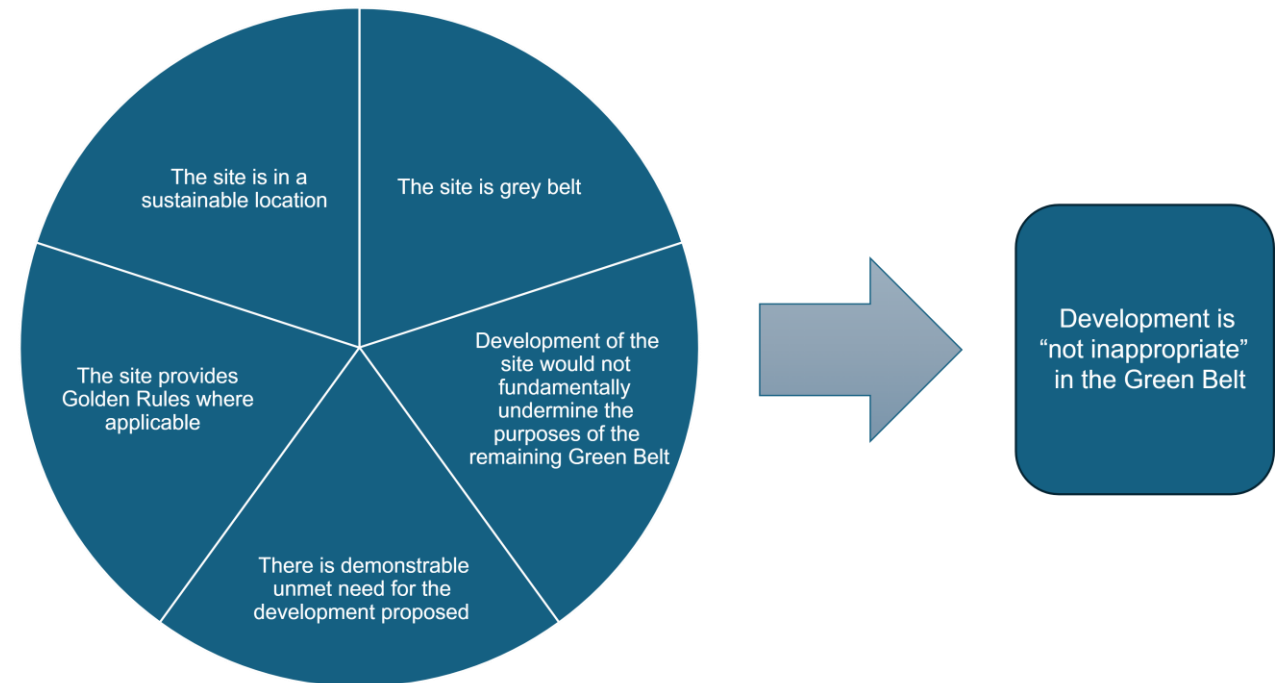
- Release or development considered against policies and guidance on sustainable locations.
- This should be determined in light of local context and site or development specific considerations.
- Should consider opportunities to maximise sustainable transport solutions.



Q: Making Decisions

Q: What if I receive applications before I have completed a Green Belt assessment?

- Should consider available evidence on how the site contributes to Green Belt purposes a, b and d, and meets other relevant policy considerations.
- This may include evidence provided by the applicant or relevant evidence from previous assessments, in light of the considerations set out in the guidance





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Any Questions?