

9. Green Belt Review

9.1. Introduction

- 9.1.1. A significant area of south-east Dorset falls within the South East Dorset Green Belt. The fundamental aim of the Green Belt is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open; the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence. Once a Green Belt boundary is established, it should only be altered where exceptional circumstances are fully evidenced and justified through the preparation or updating of local plans.

9.2. Our approach to Green Belt release

- 9.2.1. Our approach to identifying opportunity sites for development has reflected the approach in national policy, that ‘all other reasonable options²³’ for accommodating growth need to be considered before releasing Green Belt. This includes making as much use as possible of suitable brownfield sites, maximising the density of development in town centres and locations well served by public transport and having discussions with neighbouring authorities about the distribution of development. The assessment of reasonable options also needs to be undertaken in the context of the need to promote sustainable patterns of development²⁴.
- 9.2.2. We are looking to promote the reuse of brownfield land as set out in Section 8 however as this section explains, there is insufficient brownfield land in Dorset to meet the needs of the area. We therefore need to consider undeveloped land to meet the area’s needs. We have identified a number of opportunities for development outside the Green Belt as set out in Section 4 of this report and within the accompanying Opportunity sites for housing (Appendix A). However, as we want to promote sustainable patterns of development, we anticipate that we will want to release some land from the Green Belt.
- 9.2.3. Recent revisions to national policy have introduced grey belt land. Grey belt land is defined as land in the Green Belt that is either previously developed or which does not contribute strongly to the purposes of the Green Belt.

²³ National Planning Policy Framework, December 2024, paragraph 147

²⁴ National Planning Policy Framework, December 2024, paragraph 148

- 9.2.4. Grey belt excludes land where the application of the policies relating to the areas or assets of particular value²⁵ (other than Green Belt) would provide a strong reason for refusing or restricting development. The emphasis within national policy is that grey belt land should be released as a priority over land elsewhere in the Green Belt that strongly contributes to Green Belt purposes.
- 9.2.5. We are working with BCP Council to review the boundaries of the Green Belt, following the recent updates to national policy. This review will identify land that could be identified as grey belt and therefore inform where we might sustainably release Green Belt to meet our increasing housing need. Sites included in this consultation are currently regarded as sustainable locations for development but the final sites that we propose to release from the Green Belt will be informed by the review that we are undertaking and the application of National Policy.

Question 30: To what extent do you agree with taking land out of the Green Belt to help meet our development needs?

- a. Agree
- b. Partially agree
- c. Neutral
- d. Partially disagree
- e. Disagree

Please provide any further comments or reasoning...

²⁵ As set out in footnote 7 of the National Planning Policy Framework, December 2024