



The Civic Society  
for Reigate, Redhill  
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## **PROTECTING THE** **GREEN BELT** **Plus an** **ADDENDUM;-**

The continual and persistent application by developers for permission to build on a shrinking **green belt** and the costs to Local Authorities (LA) of defending appeals needs urgent attention. It appears to be unrealistic for The Government Ministry to claim that responsibility rests with the LA when the Ministry responsible for the Act sets housing targets and advises the Inspectorate.

A cost and time saving solution to this problem is needed now.

In protecting the Metropolitan Green Belt from further erosion it is recognized that an element of flexibility is required, but that the total area protected by the **GREEN BELT** - around large conurbations - **should be maintained in accordance with the original intentions of the Act.**

**It is therefore proposed that;-**

**THOSE SEEKING TO TAKE GREEN BELT LAND FOR DEVELOPMENT be required to provide replacement land from;-**

- A. Brown field sites ( Restored to Green Belt ) or**
- B. Arrange for other land areas or White Land to be transferred to the Green Belt.**

In administering such a rule the Minister with the approval of Parliament may give guidance to others using similar objectives as set out for the protection of common land in the COMMON ACT 2006;-

- Section 16 (3) Replacement Land and
- Section 17 (3) Deregistration and Exchange ; Orders.

The objective of this proposal is to ;-

- C. Maintain a Green Belt for the long term benefit of the population.**
- D. Reduce LA costs and expenditure on frequent and repetitive planning applications, inquiries and appeals.**
- E. Simplify and reduce Government administration.**

JOHN CHITTENDEN

For and on behalf of the Reigate Society Transport Committee.

ADDENDUM AUGUST 2015;-

## Green Belt faces unprecedented threat of destruction, Sir Andrew Motion warns

*Government policies have inadvertently declared 'open-season' on the Green Belt with 226,000 houses planned, Campaign to Protect Rural England warns*



Sir Andrew Motion, CPRE President Photo: DAVID ROSE

Britain's precious Green Belt land is facing an unprecedented threat of destruction from a "staggering" quarter of a million homes, the Campaign to Protect Rural England warns today.

Sir Andrew Motion, the CPRE President and former poet laureate, says that new planning guidelines have inadvertently declared "open season". Estimating that 226,000 homes will be built on the protected land over the next few years, the CPRE is calling on ministers to do more to protect it from development.

David Cameron pledged earlier this year that "the Green Belt is protected with us", saying: "The line remains scored in the sand – that land is precious."

But, writing in the *Telegraph* on the 60th anniversary of the Green Belt's creation, Sir Andrew argues: "The Prime Minister's passion is being undermined by planning guidelines that, with their emphasis on meeting unrealistic housing numbers and supporting economic growth, have inadvertently declared 'open-

season' on the Green Belt.”

He says: “It seems that the man in Whitehall is able to overrule localism to speed up economic growth, but less willing to intervene in the face of the destruction of our Green Belt.”



Two-thirds of the public want the Green Belt to be protected, polling by Ipsos MORI for CPRE today shows – with support strong among city-dwellers as well as rural residents.

Yet the land “it is under greater threat than it has been in its 60 year history”, CPRE chief executive Shaun Spiers argues.

“A growing number of think-tanks, developers and business groups are gunning for the Green Belt, arguing with very little evidence that we need to build on it in order to tackle the country’s housing crisis,” he says.

“Of course the country needs more homes, but we can get them without trashing the Green Belt.”

Sir Andrew, who has recently moved to Baltimore to take up a teaching position, says his experience of “urban sprawl” in America has shown why England’s Green Belt is so crucial.

“We should feel forever indebted to the wisdom and foresight of the campaigners

who forged a consensus against urban sprawl and behind the benefits for health and wellbeing that Green Belt brings,” he says.



Yet despite Mr Cameron’s rhetoric that the Green Belt is safe, “local authorities find themselves squeezed on one side by planning inspectors demanding that housing targets are met, and by powerful developers pushing speculative developments on the other”, he says.

Sir Andrew calls for three key changes.

Firstly, ministers must “intervene when authorities attempt to justify the relaxing of Green Belt boundaries as necessary for economic growth”, he says.

The CPRE highlights cases including Sutton Coldfield, where Birmingham council wants to use its local development plan to carve out space in the Green Belt to make way for 5,000 new homes. Recent reports suggest the national planning inspectorate is likely to approve the plan.

CPRE says this shows that the Government must “be more specific on the limited circumstances in which Green Belt boundaries can be changed through local plan”.

Secondly, Sir Andrew calls for the Government to “make better use of its powers to direct local authorities to refuse applications for Green Belt development”.

Local authorities are currently supposed to refer applications for major development in the Green Belt to the Government, if they are not already identified in existing local or neighbourhood plans. But CPRE argues that some proposals are being allowed to slip through the net.

It is currently urging ministers to “call in” a case where Newcastle council has approved plans for 72 new homes to be built in land near Woolsington Hall, as part of a plan to redevelop the grade II listed building.

Thirdly, he calls for more Government cash to help redevelop the minority of Green Belt land that is “neglected” – often land in “the most strategically important parts of the urban fringe”.

“The solution to enhancing Green Belts is not to pour concrete over them, but to plough public funding into them,” he says.

“By turning neglected sites into community parks, allotments or nature reserves, and creating new footpaths to improve access, we can further enhance the public’s strong support for Green Belt and secure its vital protection for the next 60 years and beyond.”

**A Number 10 source** described Sir Andrew's concerns as unfounded, saying: “Protecting the Green Belt is a manifesto pledge and we will stick to it.

**If local councils want to build on Green Belt land they must designate other areas as Green Belt. There will always be parity. The Green Belt is safe under this Government.”**



Brandon Lewis, Housing Minister

Housing Minister Brandon Lewis added: “We have placed local plans at the heart of our planning system, giving local people a far greater say over the future development of their area.

“The figures released by CPRE are from potential developments that have not yet been agreed by their local communities, have not gone through the rigour of the planning system and are not planning permissions.

“We have put strong protections in place for the Green Belt, which mean that apart from land reclassified as National Park, there were 34,000 more hectares in the Green Belt in 2013/14 than in 1997.”

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