

<p><b>Overview</b></p> <p>This paper is geared at major development in the Green Belt (GB), not infill or extensions. Undeveloped land in the CVRP is designated as GB (and some smaller developed areas are ‘washed over’). Any proposal for major built development in the GB is regarded as ‘inappropriate’ in principle. The ‘presumption in favour’ of sustainable development does not apply. This paper focuses on GB policy, not the full breadth of planning issues – these will vary site by site. Where ‘paras’ are referred to, they refer to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) – see over.</p>	
<p><b>Planning Applications - the Basics</b></p> <p>Address ‘material <b>planning considerations</b>’<sup>1</sup>          Avoid non-planning matters<sup>2</sup>          Be <b>concise</b> and include a summary of key points.  <b>Comment by deadlines</b></p>	<p><b>Emerging Development Plans and exceptional Circumstances (Local Plans)</b></p> <p>Release of GB land in Local Plans must be supported by ‘exceptional circumstances’ (Para 140).          As a strategic, cross-border policy, LAs should be held to account if proposed development results in encroachment and sprawl in the GB.          Be alert to permanent facilities proposed in Minerals &amp; Waste Plans.</p> <p><b>Change ahead with Planning Reform?</b>  <b>Recent consultation</b>, but GB fundamentals remain. Changes have housing focus - LAs to be not required to review GB to meet housing needs. <i>Note: The CVRP responded, highlighting how GB policy needs tightening up.</i></p>
<p><b>National Green Belt Policy – the basics</b></p> <p>Major Development is fundamentally inappropriate.          GB is a strategic (cross-border) policy “to prevent urban sprawl &amp; keep land permanently open”.          Openness has both visual &amp; spatial qualities.          GB serves 5 purposes (Para 138) – all important!</p>	<p><b>Collaborate</b></p> <p>Brief Councillors (Parish/LA), MP &amp; CVRP early on.  <b>Consider a petition</b> (to indicate the level of concern but always encourage individual submissions).</p> <p><b>Cumulative impact of major development</b>          A difficult one but so important!          If other proposals are not yet approved (and not allocated in a Plan) the Council is v unlikely to consider the cumulative impact. But .... the NPPF only envisages GB alterations only in Plans - would the scale of development prompt a later GB change?</p>
<p><b>Very Special Circumstances (VSC)</b>  <b>Not defined</b> – a judgment for the decision maker (Council/ Inspector). But a very high bar (para 148). A balancing exercise: ‘whether the harm caused, as inappropriate development in the GB, and any other identified harm, would be clearly outweighed by other considerations, so as to give VSC’.</p> <p><b>To negotiate mitigation?</b> A difficult call, but the key thing is to always identify the GB harm clearly.</p>	<p><b>Other material considerations (harm)</b></p> <p>Reference other harms as appropriate e.g. heritage, landscape &amp; visual, area character, ecology, transport .... and consider other local planning policies and parts of the NPPF (see over).          BUT don’t ignore the issues of principle with major development in the GB.          Be aware that challenging ‘technical’ things like traffic impact invariably requires technical evidence.</p>
<p><b>Green Belt policy – often overlooked ....</b></p> <p>Harm to the GB should be assessed broadly, against the 5 purposes (para 148) and more ....          ... Para 140 says GB boundary change only in Plans.          ... Para 145 says LAs should plan positively to enhance the beneficial use of the GB – relevant if a LA is minded accepting VSC (opportunities lost).          Whilst a Local Plan may be old, recent evidence can still be relevant (e.g. S Bucks/ Chiltern GB review)</p>	

<sup>1</sup> e.g. Green Belt/ other planning policies, transport, area character, ecology, agriculture, landscape impact

<sup>2</sup> e.g. loss of property value or a ‘private’ view, covenants, commercial competition

**National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) – some extracts regarding Green Belt policy** (our highlighting)  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework-2> (para. numbers in bold below)

**137.** The Government attaches great importance to Green Belts. The fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by **keeping land permanently open**; the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence.

**140.** Once established, Green Belt **boundaries should only be altered** where exceptional circumstances are fully evidenced and justified, through the preparation or **updating of plans** ....

**138.** Green Belt serves five purposes:

- a) to **check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas**;
- b) to **prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another**;
- c) to assist in **safeguarding the countryside from encroachment**;
- d) to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns;
- e) to **assist in urban regeneration**, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.

**142.** .... Where it has been **concluded that it is necessary to release Green Belt land** for development, plans should give first consideration to land which has been previously-developed and/or is well-served by public transport. They should also set out ways in which the impact of removing land from the Green Belt can be **offset through compensatory improvements to the environmental quality and accessibility of remaining Green Belt land**.

**145.** Once Green Belts have been defined, local planning authorities should plan positively to enhance their beneficial use, such as looking for opportunities to provide access; to provide opportunities for outdoor sport and recreation; to retain and enhance landscapes, visual amenity and biodiversity; or to improve damaged and derelict land.

**147.** Inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in **very special circumstances**.

**148.** When considering any planning application, local planning authorities should ensure that substantial weight is given to any harm to the Green Belt. **'Very special circumstances' will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by its inappropriateness, and any other harm, would be clearly outweighed by other considerations.**"

**149.** A local planning authority should regard the **construction of new buildings as inappropriate in the Green Belt**. *Exceptions include recreation, agriculture, limited extensions, infilling, affordable housing, replacement buildings...*

**150.** Certain other forms of development are also not inappropriate in the Green Belt provided they preserve its openness and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it. This includes *mineral extraction and local transport infrastructure*.

**Remember - other parts of the NPPF** include policy that may be relevant to a particular case e.g. **Section 9** 'Promoting Sustainable **Transport**', **Section 12** 'Achieving **well-designed places**', **Section 14** 'Meeting the challenge of **climate change**, flooding and coastal change', **Section 15** 'Conserving and enhancing the **natural environment**'.

### **Local Planning Policy**

Check your local Council's website. Even when Local Plans are old GB designations will remain in force as they are consistent with national policy.

We encourage you to reference the 2019 Colne & Crane Green Infrastructure Strategy:

<https://www.colnevalleypark.org.uk/project/green-infrastructure-strategy-colne-and-crane-valleys/> The CVRP is working with the local LAs to give this strategy greater 'planning status' and to develop it.

PLEASE NOTE: This toolkit is up to date as of March 2023 but do check that policy etc. has not changed. If you have any queries concerning this Toolkit please contact: [enquiry@colnevalleypark.org.uk](mailto:enquiry@colnevalleypark.org.uk)