

A study on the planning processes and future
directions of the London Green Belt
An investigation of local level planning

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Chapter 1

Introduction

A green belt is an area of open land surrounding a city in which most development, except that related to agriculture, is restricted. The application of this policy in the UK has a long post-War history. Government, researchers and planners alike have begun to question the necessity for a green belt.

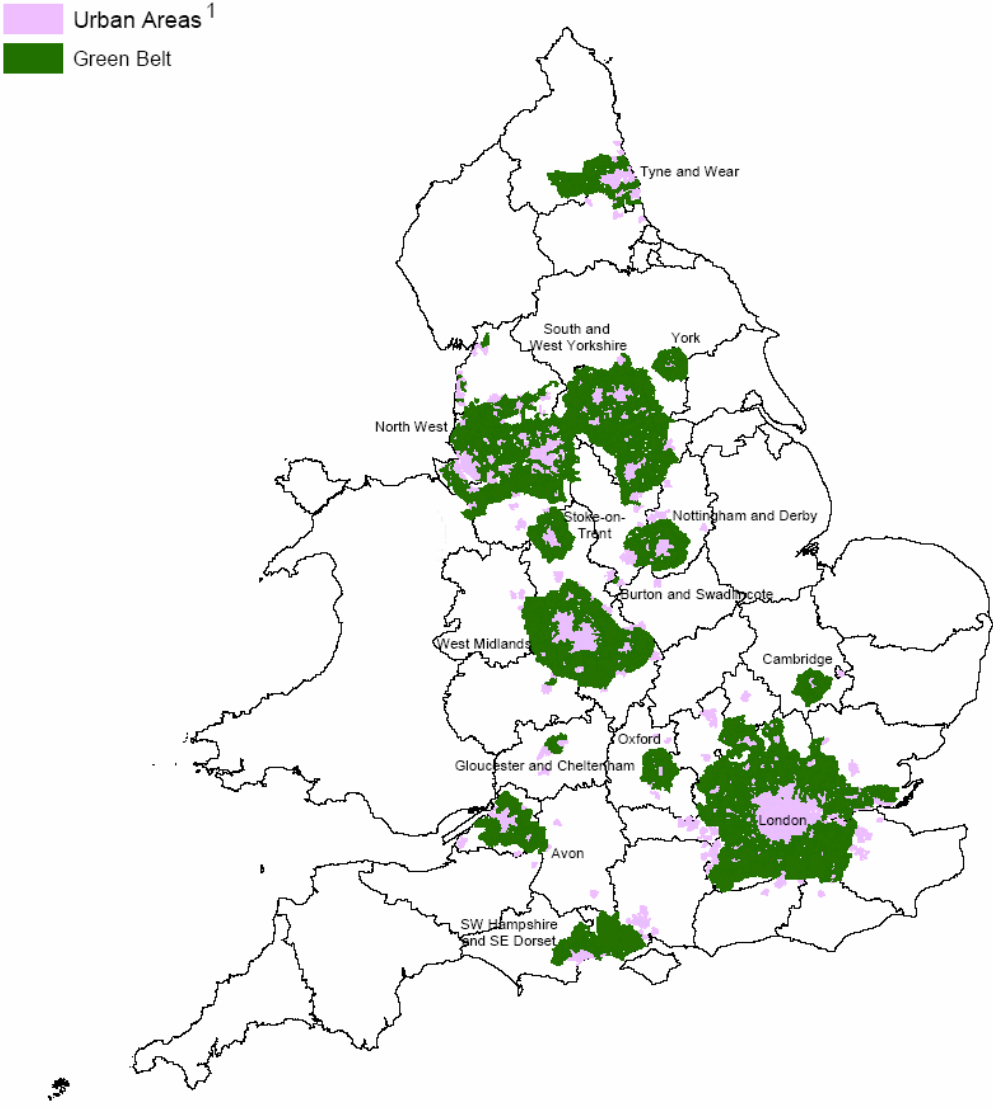
1.1 The green belt as a successful policy

The preservation of a wide band of open space to surround urban areas explains why large UK cities such as London have stopped growing since the Second World War.¹⁾ Using the UK's system of local plans and planning permissions, green belts have been successfully enforced around British cities. Any development that is not related to agriculture is effectively prohibited.

The conservation of land in the green belt brings a number of benefits to residents and local authorities. It allows the preservation of a variety of open spaces such as agricultural areas, tracts of forestry, golf courses and other leisure facilities, which benefit nearby residents. Local authority planners also like green belts because they allow land-use to be easily controlled in the urban fringe. Green belts can ensure that urban areas remain compact, conserving land beyond the urban fringe for development that requires a large amount of space. In the case of London for example, this allowed the completion of the motorway ring road (the M25) in 1986.

The first green belt was implemented in 1945 around London and measured approximately 2000 km²; green belts were then implemented nationally in 1955. Since then the number of cities surrounded by green belts has grown to 13. Table – 1.1 shows

the surface areas of these green belts grouped according to the government’s statistics. Green belts cover approximately 13% of England’s total surface area, with the London and South-East green belt being the biggest at 6,005 km². The green belt surrounding London measures 5,085 km² (Figure – 1.1, Table 1.1).²⁾



¹ Urban areas exceeding 500 hectares and within 10 km of Green Belt land

Figure – 1.1 Designated green belts in England 2003

1.2 The characteristics of the London green belt

The government only produces statistics on the size of the green belt and the area of green belt land that is converted to residential land use. Any estimate of green belt statistics made from other data sources is complicated by the large number of small

towns and villages that are 'inset' (Figure – 1.2).³⁾ In other words small towns and

Table – 1.1 Changes to the green belts in England since 1997

Green belt	Current Area (km ²)	Change since 1997 (km ²)
London and wider South–East	6,005	1.5
of which		
London	5,085	1.5
Oxford and New Forest	920	–
South–West	1,062	2.8
East Anglia	267	-
West Midlands	2,691	-0.3
East Midlands	795	-1.9
Yorkshire and the Humber	2,626	12.9
North–West	2,606	48.5
North–East	663	129.2
TOTAL	16,716	192.7

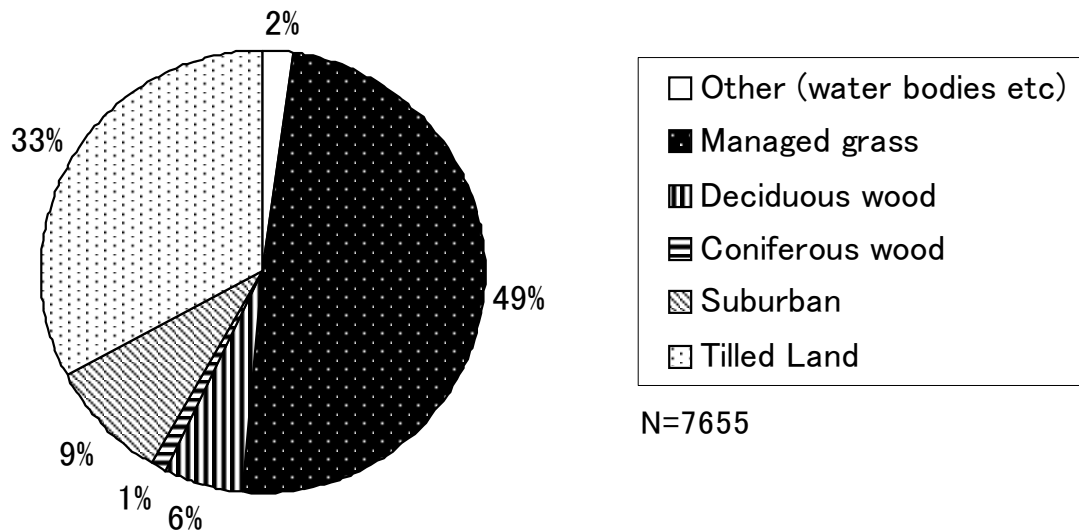


Figure – 1.2 Some small towns or villages are 'inset' into the green belt.

villages are not counted as part of the green belt's surface area and any development within these towns is not subject to green belt control. Figure – 1.2 shows that the boundary of the green belt is precisely drawn around Borehamwood and Potter's Bar that are inset but that Cuffley is covered by the green belt.

Despite a lack of detailed data, we estimated the characteristics of the green belt by taking the statistics for the 58 Local Authorities that contain the green belt.⁴⁾ We then

Land cover in the Green Belt ⁽¹⁾



Other statistics

Population ⁽²⁾	Population density ⁽³⁾ Pop./km ²	Average farm size ⁽⁴⁾ ha
5.2 million	625	43

(1) Data extracted from Countryside Information System www.cis-web.org.uk

(2) Population for the Greater London Metropolitan area (Buck et al. 2002), minus population of central London core

(3) Estimated from Regional Trends 38 (2002) www.statistics.gov.uk. Only includes local authorities that do not contain part of central London's urban core (N=32)

(4) From DEFRA June 2003 Agricultural census www.statistics.gov.uk. Some data were missing so (N=49)

Figure – 1.3 Basic statistics on the London green belt

eliminated the largest urban areas, such as London's urban core and some of the larger towns. The results of this process are shown in Figure – 1.3. This shows that the green belt is largely composed of grassland and land for tillage. Around 82% of the green belt is agricultural with a further 7% of the green belt being forested. The population of the green belt is around 5.2 million people though a large proportion of the residents are likely to live in the inset areas and the larger towns described above. Similarly the insets would also increase the estimated population density. Though 625 people/km² is still much lower than suburban land, if the insets were removed from the data the population

density of the green belt would be lower and much closer to the value for the English countryside (approximately 200-300 persons/km²).

The figure of 43 ha for the average farm size in the green belt hides a large amount of variation between the local authorities. Local authorities closer to London have on average a much smaller farm size. Sutton for example, near London's southern edge has the smallest average farm size at around 6.4 ha. Local authorities further out in the green belt can have much larger farm sizes. North Hertfordshire's average farm size is 112 ha.

Although the green belt is still largely agricultural, statistics and previous studies show that development occurs at a very slow rate. Munton and Goodchild⁵⁾ show that some development occurs in the green belt and that the areas to the West and East of London are largely urban in character. Looking at the latest government statistics, we can see that this conclusion remains the same for the 1990s. Between 1993 and 2001 of all the dwellings built in the South-East on average only 4.3% were built on the green belt. Out of these dwellings on average 51% were developed on land that was already developed (e.g. vacant sites, land for mineral extraction etc.)⁶⁾

The real numbers for development in the green belt are very small indeed. 1,180 hectares of land were converted to residential use in the whole of the South-East per year between 1997 and 2000. Out of this 9.75% (115 ha) occurred on green belts in the South-East.⁶⁾ This represents a loss of green belt land in the South East of only 2.2% per year. This picture of stability is also reflected in central government's official policy towards the green belt. The last planning policy guidance notes on the green belt were issued in 1995 and have not been updated since.⁷⁾

1.3 The reason why the green belt has remained

The main reason why green belts have remained is because of the UK's system of development control. It is also because green belts have been able to survive economic and political changes. The reason for the green belt's longevity has been shown in a number of well-known works.

Because of the number of works that exist on the green belt,⁸⁾ the following only provides the context for and a brief review of major green belt works. Other studies will be reviewed in later chapters where relevant.

The earliest works on the green belt, offer general overviews of the implementation of London's green belt in the 1950s and 1960s.⁹⁾ In the late 1970s the emphasis of the research shifted as local authorities began searching for more 'positive' uses for green belt land. Consequently, Elson¹⁰⁾ and Gault¹¹⁾ focus on more specific issues such as recreation and the implementation of green belts through the planning system.

In 1979 a Conservative government won the election. During what became known as the Thatcher era, power was gradually taken away from the planning system by a government which saw planning as a hindrance to economic development. This led to a fear during the early 1980s that the dismantling of the planning system and the construction of the M25 would increase the development in the green belt. Munton¹²⁾ questioned this fear by conducting a geographical investigation of land-use and the development process in the green belt. However, in 1984 the government issued advice to local authorities in the form of circular 14/84.¹³⁾ This document confirmed the government's commitment to the green belt by stating that the nature of a green belt was its permanence. It seemed that the green belts had entered a new era of stability. To explain the context of this new circular and also to review green belts nationally Elson^{14,15)} investigated green belt planning using a number of case studies in the late 1980s. In 1992 the Department of the Environment considered proposals for a number of new green belts around other UK cities, such as Hull and Norwich. Elson¹⁶⁾ was sponsored by the Department of the Environment to investigate the effectiveness of the green belt. He systematically investigated the green belt's effectiveness in relation to: its purposes; its permanence and its implications for transport. In terms of the green belt's purposes, Elson found on the one hand that green belts were effective in limiting development. On the other hand he found that the evidence for the green belt's effect in other areas was mixed. Compact urban development resulted from green belts, but there was little evidence to show that they helped urban regeneration. This urban development also reduced car use by reducing the size of the urban area. However, green belts also encouraged development to occur further away from the urban core which lengthened journey times.

1.4 Hypothesis

The above review of statistics and prior studies show that the green belt is stable. Development progresses very slowly and that the government has not made any recent changes to green belt policy. For this reason it is more than ten years since a major study of local planning in the green belt was undertaken. However, the picture of stability shown above hides deep political and economic changes that have taken place during the 1990s that are likely to affect the green belt's future.

Since 1997 the New Labour government have aimed to 'modernise' various aspects of government.¹⁷⁾ Among the changes proposed for the planning system, the most significant are the government's attempts to make the planning system more democratic.¹⁸⁾ In other words, the government is trying to shift planning from a 'top-down' to a 'bottom-up' system. In addition, the UK economy and the South-East in particular have seen important economic changes during the 1990s that will affect the green belt and may even lead to large areas of it being developed.

Before making any so-called reform of the green belt it is necessary to question whether the green belt can be planned from the 'bottom-up' under the present local planning system. Understanding this will enable policy-makers to carry out a reform that responds more effectively to the needs of the residents in the South-East. The most recent studies of the green belt at the local level were those by Elson, written in the late 1980s.¹⁹⁾ Recent changes to the economy and the planning system mean that an updated study on the local planning in the green belt is particularly necessary.

1.5 Aim of the study

Therefore the purpose of this study is to investigate the present state of local planning in the green belt. We aim to question whether it is possible to plan the green belt from the bottom-up. First we investigate the top-down history of the green belt's establishment. Then we investigate how the green belt is planned at the local level. We specifically focus on which factors determine the policies in the green belt and identify the influence from central government. We also investigate whether local groups are involved in the planning of the green belt. Finally, we discuss the future of the green belt

and provide a suggestion on how it could be reformed to incorporate bottom-up planning.

We address the following three questions:

- **How was the green belt established in a top-down manner?** The studies reviewed above all explain why the green belt is a part of the planning system by reference to the green belt's history. However they only emphasise that the green belt was first promulgated by a number of famous planners. We investigate the establishment of the green belt and ask the question; what were the characteristics of this top-down approach and what experience did it impart to the post-War planning system?
- **Is the function of the green belt determined locally in the present planning system?** All of the studies above assume that the green belt's strategic function is smoothly transferred down the chain of government to be implemented at the local level. Despite the size of the green belt the studies assume that the green belt is implemented uniformly. We therefore investigate; does the function of the green belt vary at the local level or not?
- **At the local level are local groups involved in the planning of the green belt?** The studies above assume that the green belt survives because of the actions of vociferous NIMBY (Not-in-my-backyard) groups in the urban fringe. Studies have assumed that these groups are in conflict with developers who wish to make money by purchasing and developing land in the green belt. However, the existence of this conflict does not explain why the green belt survives. In fact, this picture of conflict does not adequately explain what is taking place at the local level in the green belt. We therefore aim to investigate the quality of local level participation in the planning of the green belt.

1.6 Study area

Much of the debate about the future of the green belt revolves around its shape and its flexibility. This is strongly related to how much of the green belt should be developed. To find answers to the questions in 1.5 it is necessary to choose a green belt where the development restrictions have been rigidly enforced for a long time, against high

development pressure. For this reason we select the South-East of the UK and specifically, the green belt surrounding London. The green belt was intended to protect the countryside of South England. This became strongly associated with national identity during the early 20th Century.²⁰⁾ At the same time the South-East rose to prominence as the most important part of the UK's economy.²¹⁾ The following provides a brief historical overview of why the South-East is economically important.

Up until the early part of the 20th Century the engine of the English economy was based in the cluster of cities in the North that had initiated the industrial revolution. Factories were located nearest to the source of energy, which was coal. However, from 1900 the increased use of electricity for manufacturing allowed factories to migrate closer to London. This started a process of clustering and comparative advantage that has continued since. Manufacturers, attracted by the access to capital markets and government, began to move to green field sites along the arterial roads leading of London. Following the Second World War, this clustering of factories and jobs in the South-East continued. The Cold War promoted high-tech defence spending which benefited companies clustered around the Defence Research Establishments in the Thames Valley. These companies attracted other companies who were also attracted by the proximity of Heathrow airport. At the same time, the government's Location of Offices Bureau began to decentralise routine back-office activities into outlying cities such as Reading, a process which continued until the late 1970s. The government-supported service industry and the proximity of a well-educated workforce meant that the region's economy made the transition to a service-based economy more easily than the rest of England during the late 1970s and 1980s.²²⁾

The comparative advantage of the South-East continues today. Bennett et al.²³⁾ show that the South-East is one of the UK's most important 'mega-clusters' of concentrated and overlapping businesses. Mason and Harrison²⁴⁾ showed that during the 1990s venture capital investments in the UK remained highly concentrated in London, the South-East and Scotland. The latest government figures show that between 1989-2002 the South-East contributed 16.4% to the Gross Value Added (GVA) of the UK's economy, the highest of all regions and higher than London.²⁵⁾ In 2001 London and the South-East combined contributed 34% to the UK's total GVA, even though these areas occupy only 9% of the UK's surface area.⁴⁾

1.7 Thesis framework

The framework of the thesis is shown in Figure – 1.4. In Chapter 2 we describe some of the drivers that are causing the government to make changes to the planning system. Chapters 3, 4 and 5 detail the main results of the thesis. In Chapter 3 we investigate the history of the green belt’s establishment using primary historical sources. In Chapter 4 we explain the pattern of local policies in the green belt. In Chapter 5 we describe the results of a survey and interviews with the different groups that control planning in the green belt. Chapter 6 discusses these results. We first answer the questions posed in 1.5 and then relate the findings to the changes that the government is making to the planning system described in Chapter 2. As an alternative to the green belt we detail some of the other conservation measures that exist in the UK. Finally, as a contribution to the green belt’s reform we describe some other ways of achieving the objectives of the green belt using a series of international examples.

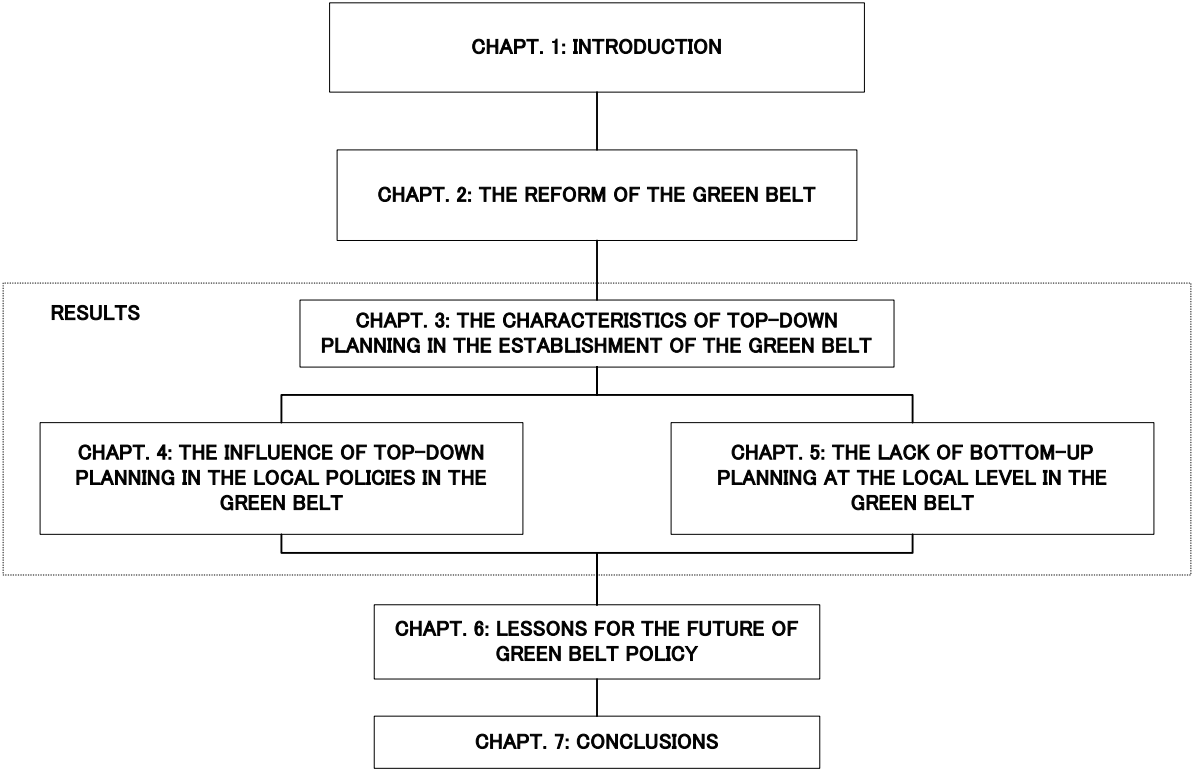


Figure – 1.4 Framework of the thesis

Chapter 2

The reform of the green belt

2.1 Introduction

The government's recent plans to widen London's orbital M25 and expand Heathrow and Stansted airports, represent an acknowledgment of the importance of the South-East as an 'engine' of the UK's economy. This is a symptom of a number of changes that the government is making to the planning system and the planning of the London green belt.

The objective of this chapter is to explain the origin of these changes in greater detail. The following chapter reviews the changes that the government is making to planning policy (2.2). We show how the UK government is reversing its post-War UK policy of balancing development in the UK because of European spatial planning (2.2.1) and the demand for new housing (2.2.2). In section 2.2.3 we describe the government's latest reforms to the planning system.

We then review the arguments from the research literature on the green belt (2.3). We show that the green belt has: led to an unfair distribution of benefits (2.3.1); failed to fulfil its original objectives (2.3.2) and led to a number of undesirable environmental consequences (2.3.3). Finally, in section 2.4 we review the recent green belt reform proposals and summarise the chapter in our conclusions (2.5).

2.2 Government policy shift

Since the early 1990s English planning has undergone a number of changes. These changes have had an important effect on the green belt policy. The following reviews some of these and shows how the UK government is increasingly questioning the need

for and the function of the green belt.

2.2.1 The South-East in the European Context

For the major part of the post-War period the UK government has been committed to redistributing the economic development of the South-East to less advantaged areas.¹⁾ This policy was made an integral part of the post-1947 planning system by the 1940 Barlow Report which recommended a balanced redistribution of industry to other parts of Great Britain. The tight green belt around London was an important part of this policy.²⁾

Since the 1990s the institutions of the European Union have begun to exert an

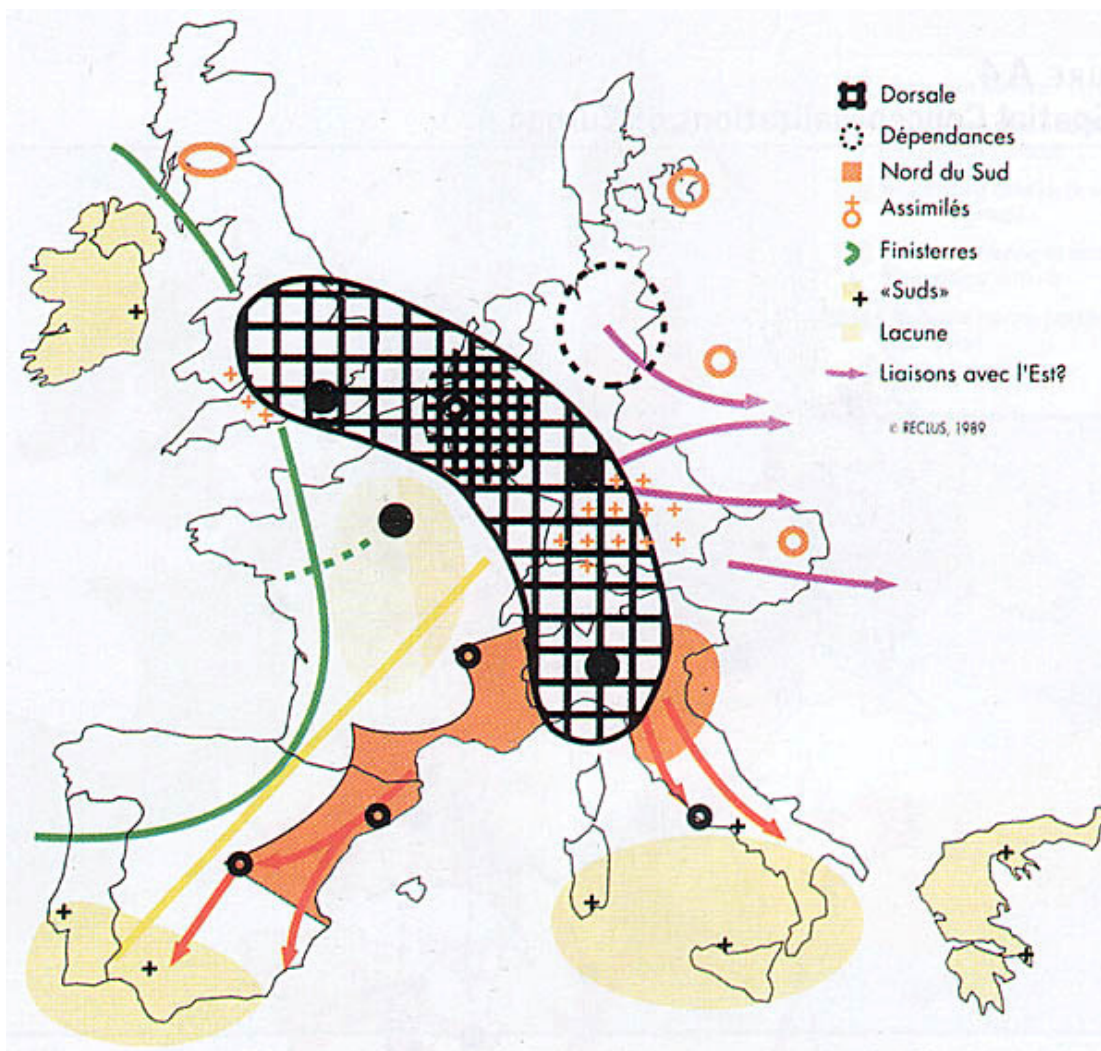


Figure – 2.1 Conceptualizing the EU territory. The Blue Banana indicating the core area with most cities with more than 200 000 inhabitants (1989)

increasing influence on the development of UK spatial planning through a series of reports. These reports were largely geographical at first.³⁾ They aimed to highlight the similarities between certain areas in the EU.⁴⁾ This is exemplified in the famous ‘blue banana’ concept which was used to describe the concentration of urban development in the late 1980s (Figure – 2.1). In 1999, the European Commission published the European Spatial Development Perspective (ESDP). This was the first document to define a set of planning policies for the whole of the EU. The plan cannot be implemented, but only applied. In other words, it does not present a statutory set of policies but is only intended to have influence over the planning system. Nonetheless, Faludi’s study has shown that the ESDP had influence over planning by shaping the minds of the actors involved in the planning process.⁵⁾

The ESDP’s 60 so-called ‘policy-options’ try to encourage cross-border cooperation in spatial planning. These policy-options encourage the creative management of cultural landscapes, development along transport corridors and polycentric urban development.⁶⁾

The form of development and the economic integration advanced by the European Commission are relevant to the green belt’s future. Firstly the type of urban growth advocated in the ESDP questions the suitability of maintaining a green belt around London. The main justification for implementing a green belt is to concentrate urban growth in a large city and direct the urban growth to outlying New Towns. The ESDP advocates planning for polycentric urban development and development along transportation corridors. Such a policy is influential because it is more pragmatic than the dominant post-War policy. Polycentric development already exists near London despite the existence of the green belt. For example, the so-called ‘Golden Triangle’ of development to the West of London covers Heathrow in the centre, Hertford in the North, Reading to the West and Gatwick airport to the South. This represents a London version of an ‘Edge City’.⁷⁻⁹⁾ Similarly, the main motorways in this area, the M4 and the M40 both act as growth corridors.

Secondly the document also contains plans for economic integration across large areas, e.g. the central 20-40-50 pentagon which includes the UK’s South-East (Figure – 2.2). These policies contradict the idea of restricting development in the South-East to balance development in the UK. The ESDP plan shows that the South-East’s economic development is important for the EU as a whole. In addition, cross-border economic

integration means that the South-East will be competing with other areas in the pentagon (e.g. Munich) instead of other areas in the UK (e.g. the North-West). The reason why the

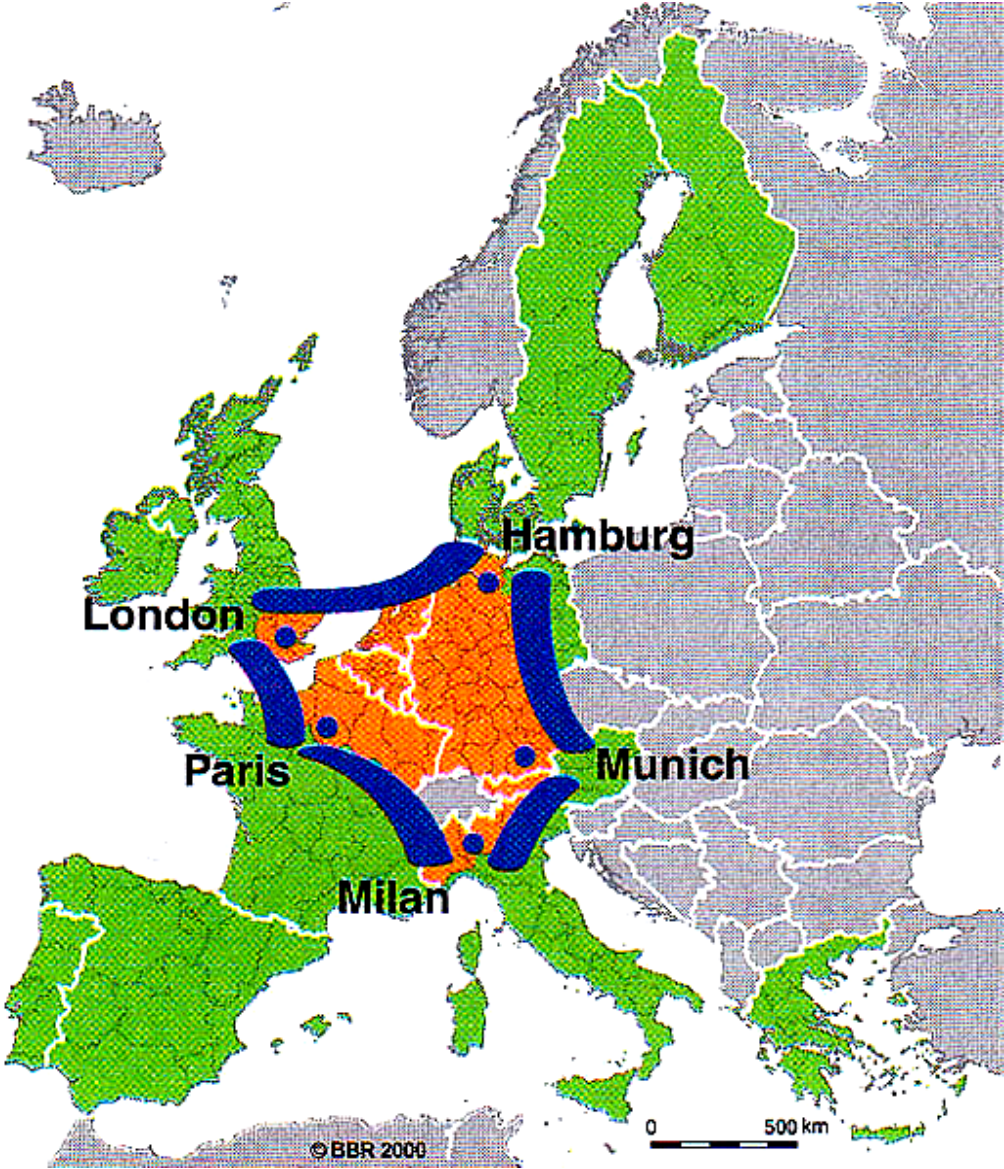


Figure – 2.2 The ESDP "20-40-50" pentagon, just one global economic integration zone in the EU (2000) South-East is in a different league of competitiveness compared to other parts of the UK is because of a number of historic advantages described above in 1.4. The ESDP's inclusion of the South-East as part of a region of European prosperity is a more influential policy than balancing development in the UK because it is more pragmatic. The dominance of the South-East in the UK economy has occurred despite the government's best efforts. A plan that reflects the integration of the UK's economy with that of Europe's will be more widely understood and accepted (Figure – 2.2).

2.2.2 Need for new houses

Even though the government's decentralisation has been ineffective, the green belt has nonetheless limited urban growth. The South-East's economic advantages combined with a restrictive green belt policy have created a huge unmet demand for housing. This demand has been demonstrated in a number of studies. For example, in 1996 the demand for new housing in the South-East was estimated to be 32,000 dwellings. However the actual number of houses completed was only 20,900 dwellings.¹⁰⁾ This deficit in housing has an effect on society. Between 1989 and 1999 for example, the building land price was 53% higher in the South-East than in the rest of England.¹¹⁾ Such a price difference restricts labour mobility. The average price of a home in the South-East is £124,596 (approximately ¥24.6 million). Therefore, it has been estimated that the annual income required to purchase a house in the South-East is £39,455 (approximately ¥7.8 million). This sum is almost double the annual income of young teachers, junior doctors, nurses and other workers in essential services.¹²⁾ The deficit in housing is not confined to the South-East but is part of a general trend. The number of houses built per year in England as a whole has remained stable at 150,000 dwellings. The year 2000 for example, saw the lowest rate of house-building in England since 1924.¹²⁾

In future the unmet demand for housing will grow unless the government changes its policies. This has been shown in a number of well-known studies.^{13,14)} Between 1993 and 2011 the population of England (48.5 million) is set to increase through natural growth and migration by 2.9 million (6.0%). Of this increase the South-East's population of 17.7 million is expected to increase by 1.3 million (7.1%). This population increase is the largest factor explaining the estimated growth of new households, which will rise by 4.4 million (23%) in England between 1991 and 2016. The reason why the growth rate of households is so much larger than the population growth is because of three additional factors. England's population is getting older, more affluent and more frequently divorced. These three factors explain a predicted rise in the number of one-person households by 67.7% between 1991-2016. Furthermore as Breheny argues, this population of new households will prefer and be able to pay for, detached houses in a rural setting.¹⁴⁾

The mounting evidence of unmet demand and its effects on society have prompted two government-sponsored reports. These reports show that new development on open land in the countryside is inevitable and they also carry clear implications for green belt policy. The Urban Task Force estimated in 1999 that just 60% of the projected growth in households could be accommodated on previously developed or 'brownfield' land.¹⁵⁾ More recently the treasury's Barker report identified the supply of housing land as being one of the main causes for the low number of houses being built.¹⁶⁾

2.2.3 The new planning framework

The pressure for changing the green belt also comes from the government's new planning framework. Out of a number of changes to the planning system that have occurred during the course of this research, two are worthy of further explanation: the 2004 Planning and Compulsory Purchase Bill (PCPB) and the 2003 Sustainable Communities Programme. These changes are summarised in the following three points.

Firstly, because of the PCPB more power will be transferred to the local authorities. Up to now County Structure plans have been the main tool for strategic planning in the UK. County Structure plans have been open to deposit, consultation and review in the same way as local development plans (this is described in more detail below, see 4.3). The PCPB introduces Regional Planning Bodies (RPB) that will draw up Regional Spatial Strategies (RSS). Under the new Bill, the RPB can enter into 'agency arrangements' with, for example, Unitary, County or National Park authorities to decide on sub-regional issues such as the location of new housing.¹⁷⁾

Secondly, the PCPB encourages the local authorities to adopt a higher level of public involvement in plan-making. Local authorities will have to draw up Local Development Frameworks (LDF) as opposed to the Local Development Plans that are currently used. These LDF must be accompanied by a Statement of Community Involvement (SCI).¹⁸⁾ The aim of a SCI is to detail how the local authority intends to involve different groups when preparing an LDF. It should explain which groups it will consult with formally and informally. It should identify which community groups have to be involved and how to involve these groups effectively. The SCI has to be independently approved by a government inspector. When the local authority submits an

LDF for approval the government inspector must also ensure that the local authority followed the requirements of the SCI. This procedure is designed to ensure a much higher quality of public participation than at present.

Thirdly the Sustainable Communities Programme proposes a much more flexible green belt than what has been permitted up to now.¹⁹⁾ The statement contained in this programme contains the clearest indication that the government is planning to reform the green belt by making it more flexible. Under the section 'Protecting the countryside' the government intends to define a target area of the amount green belt within a region. The government is committed to maintaining the same or to increasing the surface area of green belt land. However, this plan gives the government greater flexibility than it has enjoyed up to now. A target area of green belt for a region would permit the government to allow development on the green belt in one area (e.g. the urban fringe) while it would have to add more green belt further out in the countryside. This concept has given rise to the term 'rolling green belt'.²⁰⁾

The above review shows that there are two aspects to the government's implementation of bottom-up planning. One aspect is that more power will be given to local authorities to make planning decisions. Local authorities will be encouraged to form new regional links. Another aspect is that local authorities will have to involve more groups and people at the local level in the plan-making processes.

However, at the same time this move towards bottom-up planning could go even further. It should be noted that un-elected officials will make the real decisions over the location of housing and where to develop the green belt. In addition, the complexities of public participation^{21,22)} mean that at the local level little guarantee actually exists that participation will be improved by the SCI.

2.3 The negative impacts of the green belt

Despite the contradictions in the government's position the above review shows that in coming years, the green belt will undergo profound changes. The government is willing to accept the importance of the South-East's role in the National economy and relax the green belt's restrictions. To achieve this, the government is proposing to take strategic planning away from the public gaze while implementing a 'rolling green belt'.

To further understand why planners may desire a fundamental change to the green belt it is necessary to understand what problems are linked to it. The following section aims to show that although the green belt has been fully implemented it has failed to adequately respond to the present-day demands of the planning system.

2.3.1 Unfair distribution of the public benefit from green belts

Firstly, the green belt has been shown to be a generator of avoidable poverty. It limits the amount of developable land, which drives up the price of housing.²³⁾ Thus the residents of the green belt's suburbs and villages around London, benefit from the green open space at the expense of higher house prices in the rest of the South-East.

Other studies tell a similar story. In the UK the welfare and distributional effects of land-use planning can be large.²⁴⁾ The green belt guarantees that nearby open space will remain undeveloped. This benefits homeowners on the urban fringe meaning that the price of houses near the green belt attract a premium.²⁵⁾ Furthermore, a number of case studies have shown that these homeowners are usually well-organised and are able to block any proposals for nearby development^{26,27)} These NIMBY groups of homeowners prevent the supply of affordable housing by stridently protecting the green belt.²⁸⁾

As well as benefiting homeowners, the green belt also benefits landowners. Existing landowners may benefit from a higher price for their land. Those landowners that eventually gain planning permission can make an enormous profit. Goodchild and Munton²⁹⁾ calculated that at least a 50 to 100 fold increase on the value of land can be hoped for, net of tax when permission to develop has been granted on former green belt land.

2.3.2 Failing to achieve the original objective of the green belts

The original purpose of a green belt was to protect the countryside. The green belt was originally intended to function jointly with a New Towns policy, which was there to relieve development pressure, by moving development beyond the green belt. Peter Hall³⁰⁾ showed that development did indeed move beyond the green belt, but that this had mainly taken place through small town and village expansion by private developers,

rather than by public development in the New Towns. This trend has continued up to now as shown in subsequent works and is set to continue³¹⁾ Therefore the green belt has limited London's growth but it has not protected the countryside.

2.3.3 The negative environmental impact of green belts

Green belts impact negatively on the environment in two ways: transport and landscapes. The private development resulting from the green belt's failure impacts on the environment by increasing car reliance.³²⁾ The private development that leap-frogs the green belt is far from transport services. The green belt also increases the commuting time and distance for people working in London.

In addition, ecological and landscape planning arguments exist against the green belt. Davidson and Wibberley describe how the land in the green belt is in many cases not so 'green'.³³⁾ Yet, the green belt land enjoys higher protection than wasteland in the city. Such wasteland may have a higher recreational and ecological value. In fact, the green belt may cause such wasteland to be developed sooner by turning the development pressure inwards towards the urban areas.^{34,35)} Similarly the form of the green belt has been questioned. Green wedges for example, bring the countryside further inside the city and offer a more efficient distribution of public benefits such as better access.³⁶⁾

2.4 Proposals for reforming the green belt

The combination of changes to the planning system and the criticism of the green belt have led to two proposals for green belt reform. In 2002, the Town and Country Planning Association (TCPA) and the Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) both issued proposals to reform the green belt.^{37,38)}

Both organisations recognise the need to retain the green belt in some form, because abolishing the green belt policy is not politically feasible. Both statements propose alternatives to the green belt such as green wedges, or ways of improving the environmental quality of the areas that are currently conserved. Finally, both recognise the need for a more subtle planning tool to manage the urban fringe. However the statements also differ in their approach.

The RTPI claims that the public often think that green belts are inviolable. It stresses that such misconceptions leave the public confused about the location of new development. There is an implication here that a confused or misinformed public is much more likely to resist any kind of development. This is based on an assumption that the public will always oppose new housing. This implication may not necessarily be true. A recent survey by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation showed that the public's attitude towards development is complex but not implacably negative. For example 40% in the survey agreed that their region must be allowed to grow.³⁹⁾

More cogently, the RTPI also argues that the green belt is a simple 'blanket' solution to what are often very subtle and complex problems of planning in the urban fringe. Not all of the green belt is necessarily 'green' and not all of the land is worthy of level of protection it receives.

Before we accept this proposal for reform it is important to qualify it. Elson⁴⁰⁾ notes that this proposal is based on the voluntary opinions of RTPI members. Groups that have an incentive to reform the green belt, e.g. developers, are more likely to express their opinions. This explains the largely pro-development stance of the RTPI's proposal.

The TCPA's statement focuses on another result of the green belt policy: its negative impact on rural areas. The TCPA argues that the green belt's large area prevents new forms of development over large areas in the countryside. The TCPA proposes eco-belts instead. These eco-belts could encourage mixed organic farming and community woodland schemes for example. In other words the TCPA takes a more positive attitude towards the planning of the green belt. It sees the green belt as an opportunity to implement policies that will actively benefit rural areas. At the same time, it calls on the government to review the green belt and make an appraisal of the extent to which the green belt hinders the agricultural sector and rural economies.

2.5 Conclusions

The above sections show that in the next few years the UK planning system will dramatically change. The pressure for these changes is coming from a number of different directions. The EU is increasingly having a supra-national influence over UK planning. As a result of this influence the traditional emphasis on dispersing development

to the rest of the UK has changed. At the same time a growing population and changing lifestyles are expected to worsen the already severe housing shortages.

The government's new planning framework contains indications that in the face of such changes it is willing to implement 'bottom-up' planning in the green belt. The PCPB will result in important changes to the current system of public participation. The Sustainable Communities Programme lays the foundation for implementing a different kind of green belt. These changes are a partial response to the need for housing but also to the criticism that the green belt has been subjected to over the years.

Despite the existing pressure to reform the green belt, its history of surviving changes to government and economic circumstances suggests it will remain a central part of the UK planning system (Chapter 1). So far the current research is insufficient to explain how the green belt could be reformed. The following three chapters look at the local planning in the green belt as a way of understanding its future.

Chapter 3

The characteristics of top-down planning in the establishment of the green belt

3.1 Introduction

One way of understanding why the green belt is such a central part of the UK planning system is to look at the history of its establishment. This chapter will investigate the restrictions that the green belt's implementation encountered and show how these restrictions were overcome between 1920 and 1938.

In the following sections, we first review previous studies on the history of the green belt and define the aim of this chapter (3.2). Next, we detail the method used in the investigation (3.3) and describe the historical and legislative contexts to the green belt's establishment (3.4). The fifth section describes the results of the study (3.5). We first describe the failed attempts that were made to implement the green belt during the early 1930s (3.5.2 and 3.5.3). We then focus on the London County Council's (LCC) 1935 green belt scheme, which allowed the green belt to be successfully implemented. However we focus on the restrictions that still existed within this scheme (3.5.4). Using primary historical sources we show how land was successfully conserved by the LCC's 1935 scheme despite the restrictions that existed at the time (3.5.5 and 3.5.6). The final section discusses the green belt's implementation in relation to past studies and the current green belt debate. These results are based on two prior works.^{1,2)}

3.2 A review of green belt histories

It seems that no textbook on the history of post-War UK planning is complete without an account of the green belt's successful implementation. The history of the green belt reads, as Gault notes, like a who's who of UK planning with famous planners such as Howard, Abercrombie and Unwin each making significant contributions.³⁾ A number of well-known studies describe the green belt's implementation in such terms.⁴⁻⁶⁾

In Japan, where UK planning has been a long-standing topic of research, the role of famous planners has been similarly emphasised. During the 1950s a number of general works aimed to introduce this role through articles on the history and latest developments in UK planning.^{7,8)} Since the 1970s however, this research has tended to focus on more specific issues. Tashiro⁹⁾ explained the context of the post-War planning system focusing on amenity and the conservation of open space from the late 19th Century and Nishiyama¹⁰⁾ looked at the history of the Royal Town Planning Institute. More recent works have looked specifically at the role of Howard,^{11,12)} Unwin and Abercrombie.^{13,14)} Overall, these studies emphasise how the ideals of these famous planners led to the creation of the post-1947 planning system and the successful implementation of the green belt.

Though the conclusions of these UK and Japanese authors are correct, they are incomplete. For example, the role of these famous planners cannot be the only explanation for why the green belt was successfully implemented. The green belt was established in 1935 during a period of high urban growth and weak planning control. The existence of these circumstances, which acted as a severe constraint on efforts to conserve land, implies that the role of these famous planners was not the only characteristic of the green belt's implementation.

To identify whether a top-down approach existed in the establishment of the green belt, it is first necessary to define what evidence will show whether this top-down approach existed. The first evidence we investigate is whether a specific group of

landowners or planners allowed the green belt's implementation (3.5.5.1). The second evidence we investigate is whether this group shared the same views about the green belt (3.5.5.2). The third evidence we investigate is whether this group freely shared information with other landowners about the green belt (3.5.5.3 and 3.5.6).

We assume that landowners in England are motivated principally by profit. We show how the landowners' profit motive acted as a restriction on the implementation of the green belt. Then we show and discuss how these restrictions were overcome. None of the studies mentioned above address this issue.

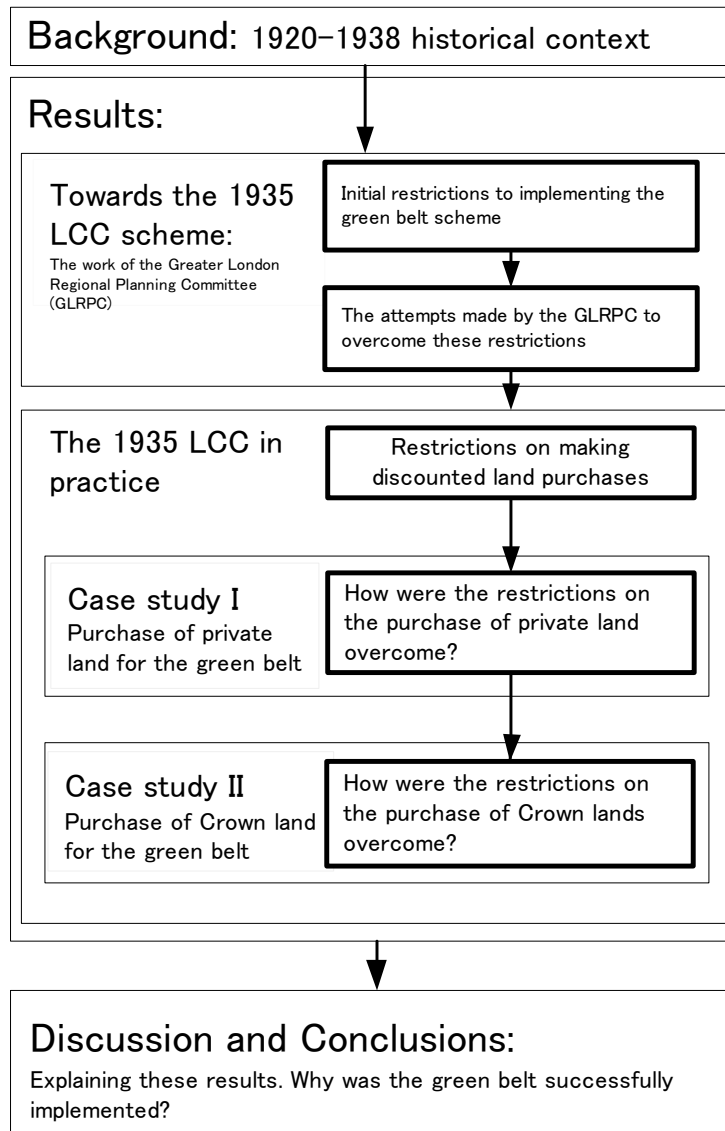
The present study investigates the years 1920 to 1938 to explain the lead-up to and the implementation of London's inter-War green belt. At both stages, the aim is to describe the restrictions that the green belt's implementation encountered and to describe how these restrictions were overcome.

3.3 Methods and data sources

The results are divided into two main parts. First, we describe the lead-up to the green belt. In particular we focus on the efforts of the Greater London Regional Planning Committee (GLRPC) to implement the green belt. Second, we describe the implementation of the LCC's 1935 green belt scheme and the restrictions that existed on the purchase of green belt land through two case studies (Figure—3.1).

The data used were mainly briefings, letters, memos and minutes of meetings from the Public Records Office, London. This primary data is only open to the public after thirty years, once the file has been archived. None of the files used in this study, have been referred to in the above works. Part of the reason for this is because the files could have been accessed by the authors when the studies were written (Table—3.1).

In addition we also employed data from the Council for the Preservation of Rural England Archive, at the University of Reading, the County of Surrey archives at the Surrey History Center, Woking and the London Metropolitan Archives.¹⁵⁾



Figure—3.1 Study Framework

Table—3.1 Files used in the study and their opening years

File title	Public Record Office Code	Year opened
Bath and Bristol JPC	HLG 4/3129	1959
Mid Surrey JPC	HLG 4/3353	1968
Green belt bill	CRES 36/89	1968
Surrey CC Acquisition	HLG 79/1074	1974
Effect of Open space on land price	HLG 51/50	1978
Open spaces	HLG 4/3242	1980
Surrey CC Bill 1931	HLG 54/175	1982
Thames Valley JTP conference	HLG 4/3764	1983
Fairlop: proposed sale of land	CRES 35/665	1983
Proposed GB and open spaces	CRES 35/668	1983
GLRPC General File	HLG 4/3239	1983
London Regional JPC	HLG 4/3241	1984
London Regional. JPC 1937	HLG 4/3243	1988
NW Surrey JPC	HLG 4/3507	1989
GLRC Open spaces reservation	HLG 52/1217	1991

3.4 Historical Background: 1920-1938

The following points, regarding landownership and changes in society, are relevant to the study. Because of a decline in agriculture from 1880, rising tax and death duties, and the death of heirs after the First World War, large farming estates continued to be sold and broken up during the 1920s and 30s. This increased the fragmentation of land ownership. In 1914 10% of agricultural land in England and Wales was occupied by owners. In 1927 this figure had risen to 37%. In other words, around 27% of the land in England was bought and sold during this period.¹⁶⁾ This buying and selling of land represents a rapid fragmentation of large estates that had previously dominated the countryside and largely prevented development. The rapid fragmentation of large estates released land for building. This caused the area under urban land use in England and Wales to increase from 6.7% to 8.0% between 1931 and 1939, a rate not seen before then or since. The high demand for land, was caused by a rising standard of living, a shorter working week and improved transport, during the 1920s and 30s. These factors fostered a demand for access to the countryside for leisure (e.g. holidays and rambling) and habitation. The weak planning system at the time also meant that a large amount of the development that took place was sprawl and ribbon development.¹⁷⁾ To summarise, as a 1926 report for the mid-Surrey Joint Town Planning Committee explains, this was a time when the ‘natural restraints imposed by distance and the difficulty of obtaining land are now largely swept away’.¹⁸⁾

3.5 Results: Implementing the green belt during the inter-War Period

3.5.1 The system for conserving land during the inter-War period

Before 1947, UK planning was laissez-faire. To counter this lack of control, the Ministry and local and county councils were able to offer loans for the purchase of open space.¹⁹⁾ Throughout the early 1930s, counties around London had been active in buying land for preservation. The Ministry of Health had assisted purchases over five years, with loans to allow councils to buy 1,465 ha of land (Table—3.2).²⁰⁾ In 1935, the London County Council (LCC) accelerated this process by establishing a loans scheme to buy

Table—3.2 Cost of loans sanctioned by the Ministry of Health and area of acquired land

Year	Total loans sanctioned to buy land (£)	Total area of land acquired (ha)
1930–31	447,101	528
1931–32	291,311	440
1932–33	237,720	361
1933–34	167,137	136
TOTALS	1,143,269	1465

land for conservation in the green belt. In the space of 14 months, agreements had been reached to buy 4,650 ha of land – a significant contribution (19%) towards implementing Unwin’s green girdle scheme.²¹⁾

During the inter-War period the Ministry of Health was charged with planning. However, a large number of groups were also engaged in determining the aim of the green belt. Among these, were Joint Planning Committees (JTPCs). These were described as having a ‘purely advisory’²²⁾ function, taking a broader view of town planning. These JTPCs benefited planning by allowing the different local authorities to reach agreements and to exchange ideas on a wide range of issues. By joining these JTPCs, local district councils could participate in determining the aim of the green belt

and other regional open space schemes. By 1923, 16 JTPCs had been established in the whole of the UK, 4 of which were in the London area.²³⁾ Three years later, there were

Table—3.3 Responsibility for the Green Belt in London 1920-1938

Responsibility for the Green belt		Proximity to Central Government →				
		Ministry of Health	Large County Councils	GLRPC	Other JTPCs and County Councils	Local District Councils
↓	FINANCIAL Lends money		(London CC from 1935)			
	ADVISORY Formulates aim of green belt				(by joining a JTPC)	
	EXECUTIVE Able to buy green belt land					

eight such committees around London alone.²⁴⁾ The largest and most influential of the JTPCs at the time was the Greater London Regional Planning Committee (GLRPC). This was established in 1927 and was composed of 138 local authorities, controlling an area of 2952 km².²¹⁾ In addition to these, some influential amenity societies such as the Council for the Preservation of Rural England and the London Society were able to formulate the aim of the green belt. Finally, the actual purchase of green belt land could be made by County Councils, local district councils and even amenity societies such as the National Playing Fields Association (NPFA) (Table—3.3).

3.5.2 Initial restrictions on implementing a green belt

Though the anti-urban movement existed in the 1920s, it was still confined to a small number of professionals. In 1926, Neville Chamberlain, the then Minister of Health, noted to a deputation of the Greater London Regional Planning Committee that the idea that urban growth was a problem, was not a universally shared feeling.²⁵⁾ In the same year, the Ministry of Health had undertaken a feasibility study of the cost and the

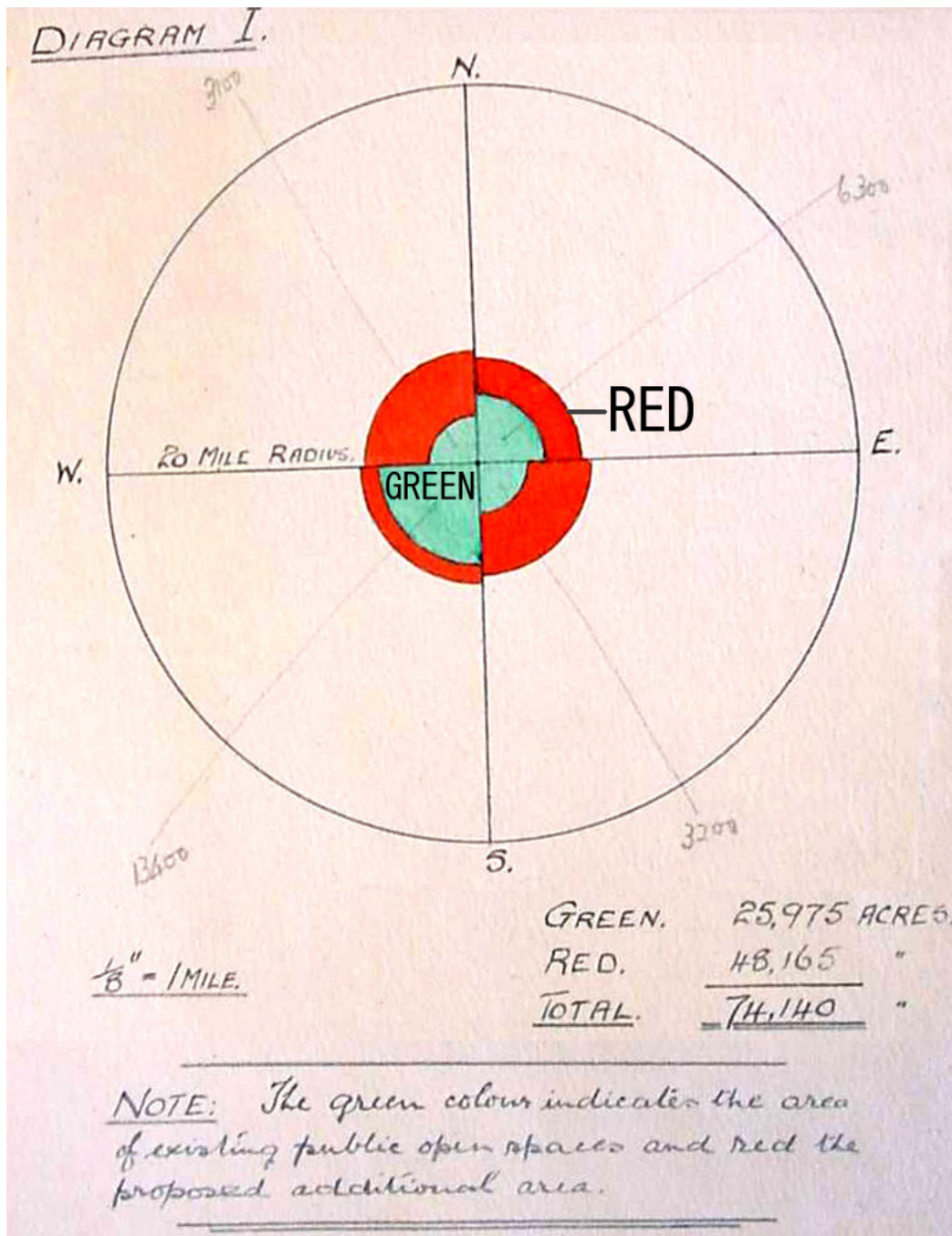


Figure - 3.2 Green belt location in relation to the need for open space (1926) (Text reads: “Note: The green colour indicates the area of existing public open spaces and red the proposed additional area”)

location of the green belt, in relation to the areas that were most in need of open space (Figure—3.2). This distribution was based on estimating the amount of open space in London (green) and simply buying extra land (red) to fairly distribute open space. 48,165 acres (19,492 ha), were thought to be necessary using this method. More pragmatically, a line was drawn where the cost of land was known to be around £100/acre. This price was

assumed to be the appropriate price of good agricultural land. Land outside this line was assumed to be cheaper and so, affordable for green belt (Figure—3.3).²⁶⁾

Therefore, two restrictions to the green belt's implementation can be identified: (1)

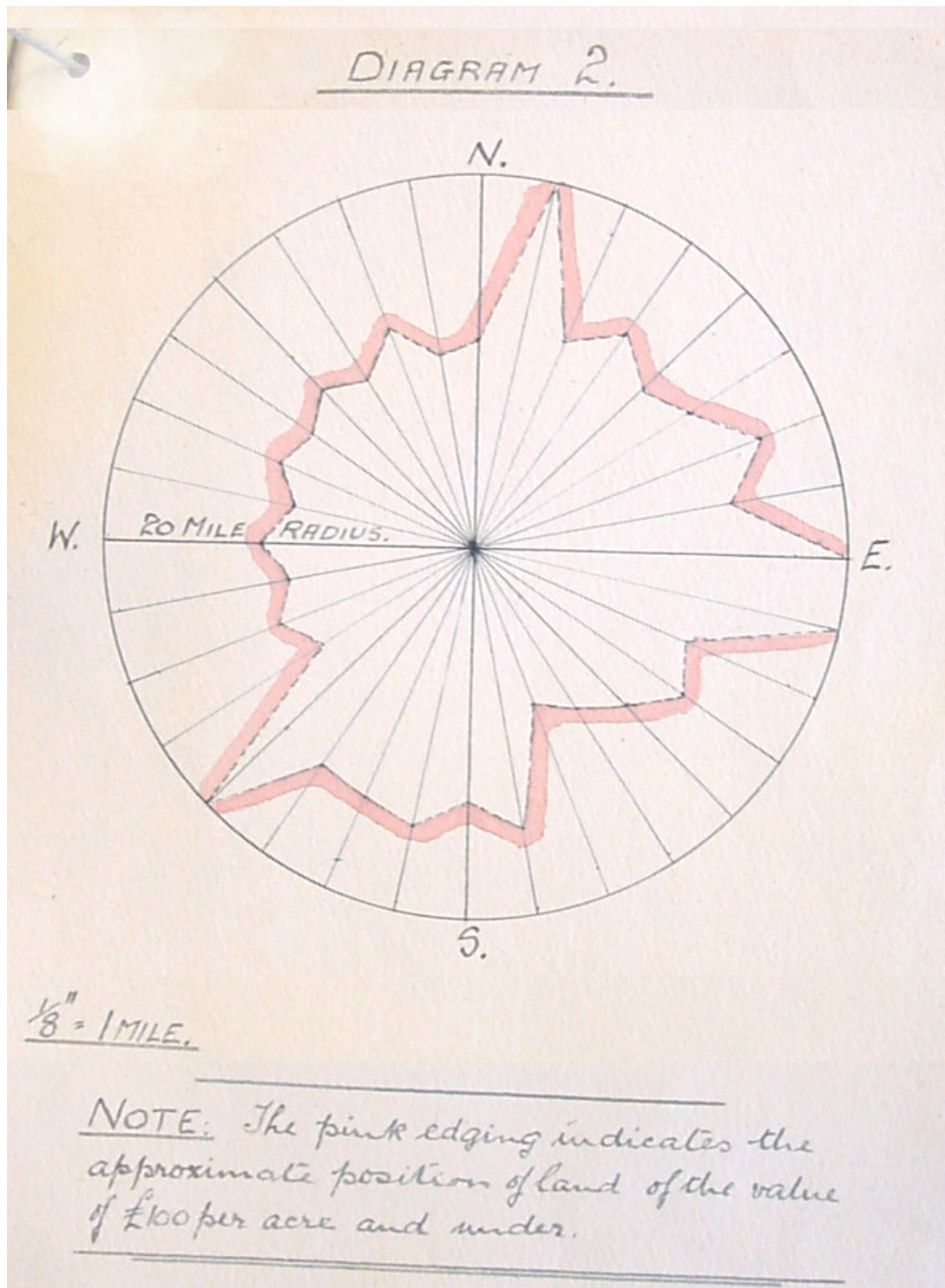


Figure - 3.3 Green belt location depending on the feasibility of purchasing it (1926) (Text reads: “Note: the pink edging indicates the approximate position of land of the value of £100 per acre and under”)

finding someone to pay for the green belt and (2) finding a way to reduce the cost of green belt purchases. The following explains the steps that the GLRPC took to try and overcome these restrictions, and how the problem of the green belt's cost and the arguments for its necessity were related.

3.5.3 Attempting to overcome the restrictions on the implementation of a green belt

3.5.3.1 Finding someone to pay for the green belt

The first green belt purchases were made as part of the founding of Letchworth Garden City in 1909, where 500 ha of agricultural land were purchased as a buffer between Hitchin and Baldock.²⁷⁾ Howard's green belt was meant to have an agricultural function to supply produce for the town. This aim was later repeated in the London Society's plan for London,²⁸⁾ which also assumed that the green belt could be paid for through agricultural rents.

In 1927, the Greater London Regional Planning Committee (GLRPC) began to question the purely agricultural function of the green belt. A more flexible use was proposed, i.e. the use of land for playing fields as well as for institutions such as mental hospitals. Nor was the green belt meant to be continuous. In some places, development could be permitted, such as that required for arterial roads.²⁹⁾

To argue for the necessity of having a green belt and to find a way of paying for it, the GLRPC changed the green belt's aim four times in ten years. By changing its aim to playing fields, London's residents – those most in need of open space – or the National Playing Fields Association (NPFSA) could be asked to pay for green belt purchases. Changing the aim of the green belt to playing fields was a rational act since the provision of playing fields was an issue that was high on the political agenda.³⁰⁾

The GLRPC were willing to seek support from other sources as well. As their 1927 report above stated, there was probably 'room for obtaining a large revenue from the

provision of private open spaces for playing fields...’ In 1929, London was showing a ‘willingness to contribute to a substantial extent to the cost of land for open spaces outside its own area’.³¹⁾

However, the aim of the green belt changed in 1934. When lobbying the Treasury its implementation became a ‘national concern’.³²⁾ Following this, the GLRPC suggested that the green belt might be useful to Air and Army Ministries in time of war. Accordingly, the aim of the green belt switched to providing space for aerodromes and barracks.³³⁾ Later we show that this aerodrome function was influential in making a land purchase for open space. For the time being however, the appeals to obtain funding from these Ministries for the green belt were sympathetically received but were unsuccessful.

Though the London County Council had been concerned with the amount of playing fields around London since 1924,³⁴⁾ and a speech by Chamberlain in 1926, had noted that playing fields were the best land for building, and were disappearing fastest,³⁵⁾ there is little evidence that the NPFA actually funded any green belt purchases. The same was true for the Treasury. There was difficulty in justifying that the conserved land had to be in the form of a belt around London. The Treasury’s, logical response to a request for green belt funding, highlighted this. Not only could they not give sole priority to London, but felt that ‘What is important, [compared to providing a belt] is that large areas of open land should be reserved within a reasonable distance of the thickly inhabited parts of Greater London’.³⁶⁾ The Air and Army Ministries on the other hand had powers to acquire land in the event of a national emergency.³⁷⁾

3.5.3.2 Finding a way to reduce the cost of green belt purchases

In 1927 the Ministry of Health had tried to produce an estimate of the positive effect of open space reservation on neighbouring land and house prices. No firm conclusions could be drawn from this study.³⁸⁾ Despite this, the assumed effect of open space on the value of neighbouring house-prices was important in enabling the purchase of green belt land as the following example shows.

In a report for the GLRPC in the same year, Unwin discussed legally ‘sterilizing’ the land which involved entering into a compensation agreement to buy the future developed value of the land. He noted that it might be possible to discount the benefits of preserving the land, from this cost. As he explained, this appeared to suggest a re-distribution of the rights over land. In a situation where many landowners exist, a landowner adjoining the reserved land will benefit, whereas the landowner with reserved land will suffer. In a situation where there is one landowner, the benefits and dis-benefits will cancel themselves out. “Is it possible for the same results to be achieved, and, if so, by what measures, where the land is in a number of ownerships, in order that the community may not suffer from this adventitious fact?” he asked.²⁹⁾ Though Unwin had the idea of pooling the benefit from preserving the land, the pre-1947 problem of interfering with land rights, remained.

Estimating the cost of the green belt also proved to be an insoluble problem. For example, in 1929, Unwin estimated that the cost of reserving an area of land of 154 square miles (246 km²) would amount to around £2 million.³⁹⁾ A month later however, Unwin revised this estimate arguing that it was impossible to calculate the exact cost of the green belt, because so many factors affected the land price.⁴⁰⁾

3.5.4 Land purchases under the 1935 London County Council Scheme

3.5.4.1 Overview of the scheme

Despite the arguments and the attempts to estimate the green belt’s cost, its implementation eluded the Greater London Regional Planning Council. Herbert Morrison, the Chairman of the London County Council (LCC) from 1934, believed in the benefits of depopulation into satellite towns and the role of the green belt for this purpose.⁴¹⁾ Thus the LCC was able to take the initiative and in early 1935, proposed the loans scheme for purchasing green belt land. The conditions of this scheme were as follows:⁴²⁾

- Loans were available for up to 50% of the cost of purchase or legally

‘sterilizing’ the land.

- In total, £2 million was available over three years.

Interestingly, the LCC’s loans scheme contains no specification of the green belt’s aim. When clarification was requested by Surrey County Council in late 1935, the LCC explained the aim in the broadest terms: if playing fields were bought, they must not be reserved for the use of local players only, otherwise the land should be designated for people to ‘roam about in’.⁴³⁾ In general these people were assumed to be town dwellers. Who was allowed to roam on the green belt and where, were questions that were never properly discussed. This inevitably resulted in conflicts that are discussed further below.

Under the LCC’s 1935 scheme three levels of authority controlled the green belt purchases. The local Rural District Council (RDC) or Urban District Council (UDC) would first select and propose sites. The County Council would vet or support sites according to whether it thought the London County Council (LCC) would approve the site for inclusion in the green belt. Finally, the LCC would choose from the proposed sites which one would receive a grant for the purchase. A period of negotiation would then ensue during which the proportion of money to come from the local, County and London County Council would be decided.

Though the LCC never lent more than 50% of the land’s purchase cost and often lent much less,⁴²⁾ it had considerable influence over whether land was purchased or not. As well as having a financial influence, the LCC’s grant legitimised the expenditure of public funds for preserving land. Land that was bought with an LCC loan could be said to form part of the green belt with all the benefits of regional and rational planning that this implied.

In selecting sites for the green belt, the London County Council loosely followed a particular method. Sites that were not used or valued by the public, or not likely to be urbanised, could not be included in the scheme. The use of this method explains why Richmond Deer Park and the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew were not purchased for the green belt in Surrey despite being promoted as suitable sites by Richmond Borough.⁴⁴⁾

These sites were sufficiently well-known areas to be protected from development without having to be included in the green belt.

Ease of access and proximity to the centre of London were the most important criteria for purchasing land in the green belt. Access could either be by public transport, as in the case of Morden,⁴⁵⁾ or it was sufficient that the land should be connected with footpaths to other areas.⁴⁶⁾ The GLRPC encouraged the LCC to prioritise the purchase of land within the originally designated green belt area. Though this “linking-up” land was occasionally considered as a criterion for purchase, access for Londoners remained the most important criterion.⁴⁷⁾

3.5.4.2 Restrictions on implementation: Private Land

Though the LCC scheme partly removed the problem of cost associated with the green belt’s implementation, key figures in some local authorities still considered the purchase of green belt land an unnecessary expense. These key figures tried to block purchase of land for the green belt. For example, in Eton Rural District Council in 1935, a Chairman of the Council saw no benefit from the conservation of land apart from a loss of rates.⁴⁸⁾ In 1936, the Clerk of Kent County Council was said to be ‘particularly obstructive’. This provoked the suggestion that the Minister of Health at the time ‘as a Kentish man’ should intervene. However this course of action was eventually decided against.⁴⁹⁾

In addition to the problem of cost, local authorities resisted central government interference. A reason for this can be seen in a difference of opinion that these local authorities and central government held about the function of preserved open space. In a 1935 letter from an official at the Ministry of Health to J. A. N. Barlow at the Treasury, the local authorities were said to be doing “tolerably well in providing sufficient space for public health necessities (i.e. recreation grounds and playing fields) but when it comes to large areas of the country which are wanted more for their ‘amenity’ value than for actual use, the authorities are more diffident about the expense involved. Yet from the

point of view of planning, this is of first importance”.⁵⁰⁾ Central government was concerned about the control of land-use over large areas for aesthetic or ‘amenity’ reasons. Local authorities were more concerned about the function of the open spaces. This is understandable considering they were accountable for these green belt purchases to their ratepayers.

The preservation of open space also provoked some opposition from landowners. There were some direct complaints to the Joint Town Planning Committee in Mid-Surrey for example, from a landowner who wished to extract minerals from his land. However, such complaints were described as not being representative.⁵¹⁾ In Buckinghamshire, negotiation had to be extensively used to convince landowners to reserve the land as open space.⁵²⁾

3.5.4.3 Restrictions on implementation: Crown land

Not only was the purchase of land for the green belt restricted by cost on private land, but also on so-called Crown land. Crown land was owned by the State. This land differed from “public land” because it was considered a National asset. In other words, any revenue generated from this land (e.g. from selling or farming) went to the Treasury to benefit the Nation as a whole. The land was owned by a branch of the government’s Crown Agents and managed by a civil servant known as the Chief Commissioner of the Crown Lands.

The 1925 Settled Land Act and the Crown Lands Act 1927 both legislated that the Chief Commissioner of Crown Lands had to sell land to the highest bidder and that the ultimate proceeds would go to the Exchequer.⁵³⁾ The highest bidder was unlikely to be a local authority and much more likely to be a developer. Even if the highest bidder were a local authority, the above Acts meant that the land’s purchasing price would be increased. If the Crown Agents were to sell land to a local authority at a discount, no matter how worthy the cause, this would have represented a national subsidy to a local authority and

would have set a precedent for other localities. In addition, giving land to local authorities would ‘put large sums of money into the pockets of adjoining landowners...some of whom would be members of the local authority responsible for putting the suggestion to [the Crown Agents]...’.⁵⁴⁾ The Chief Commissioner’s legal and moral responsibility was to deal with the local authorities as with any purchaser of land.⁵⁵⁾ The sites owned by the Crown Agents ranged in the 1930s from Central London locations such as Trafalgar Square to Windsor Castle and other estates throughout the UK. They also owned several pieces of land on the outskirts of London.⁵⁶⁾ Therefore suitable Crown land could not be easily included in the green belt scheme, in fact such land was likely to be very costly for local authorities to purchase.

3.5.4.4 Restrictions on the purchase of green belt land

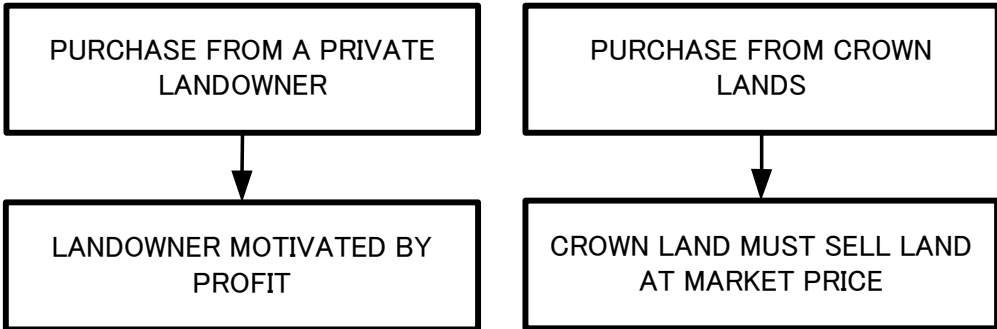


Figure - 3.4 Official restrictions on purchasing land for the green belt

To summarise, the restrictions on purchasing green belt land related to the land’s cost. In terms of private land, landowners would have restricted the purchase of green belt land by expecting to maximize the profit of their land sales. In terms of Crown land the law restricted the freedom to sell land at a discount, even if it were for a good cause such as preserving land for the green belt (Figure – 3.4).

The following case studies show how these restrictions were overcome. We show how a mixture of consensus, negotiation and commonly held professional values among seemingly opposed groups enabled green belt land to be purchased. For private land we

selected data in Middlesex and Surrey. For Crown land we investigated two sites whose purchase became a source of controversy during the 1930s.

3.5.5 Purchasing private land in the green belt

3.5.5.1 The role of the aristocracy in allowing the purchases of green belt

The following section aims to investigate what kind of landowner sold land for inclusion in the green belt. To enable this, we first define the area for investigation. We then define how the landowners can be identified. Finally we interpret the data.

3.5.5.1.1 Defining the study area and the data set

Data were collected from the London Metropolitan Archives and the Surrey History Centre. Green belt land that had been bought by the Counties of Middlesex and Surrey were chosen because the Counties are to the North and South of London. In addition, both Counties are well-known for having been actively involved in implementing the green belt. Both Counties used around 44% of the total London County Council money that was spent on the green belt purchases.⁵⁷⁾ For the County of Middlesex we employed the records that were kept of the area, price and name of the land that was purchased for the green belt.⁵⁸⁾ For the County of Surrey we employed the Green Belt Sub-Committee's report of the minutes of their meetings.⁵⁹⁾

In total, the purchases that were analysed for this section of the thesis cover 4787 ha. This represented 17% of all green belt purchases that were made by 1938 and can be regarded as representative of the green belt situation as a whole (Table – 3.4).⁵⁷⁾

Table – 3.4 The origin of land for the green belt in Middlesex and Surrey between 1935 and 1938

No.	County	Purchase name	Land type (*)	Land area (Ha) A	Purchase price (£) P	P/A
1	Middlesex	Enfield Chase Duchy of Lancaster Lands	○	811.4	318400	392
2	Middlesex	Lord Stratford's Land	○	265.2	163500	616
3	Middlesex	Trinity College Land	○	237.5	150000	632
4	Middlesex	Breakspear Estate	○	231.7	30800	133
5	Middlesex	Moor Park Rickmansworth	○	140.1	142800	1019
6	Middlesex	Denham Court Estate	○	123.8	42000	339
7	Middlesex	Newdegate Estate	○	90.1	18000	200
8	Middlesex	Bentley Priory Estate	○	76.1	94750	1245
9	Middlesex	Pelham Clinton Estate	○	65.0	14500	223
10	Middlesex	Ankerwycke Estate	○	44.6	12296	276
11	Middlesex	Harrow Grims Dyke Estate	○	44.5	45000	1011
12	Middlesex	Grove Estate Little Stanmore	○	25.5	23900	936
13	Middlesex	Bentley Priory Estate Clamp Hill	○	3.2	3850	1189
14	Middlesex	Huntsmoor Park Estate	○	2.6	1674	656
15	Surrey	Shabden Park Estate Chipstead	○	271.1	90000	332
16	Surrey	Epsom Common	○	173.2	4000	23
17	Surrey	Gatwick Farm, Sir William Jones	○	151.8	56250	371
18	Surrey	Ockham Common, Lady Lovelace	○	140.4	24000	171
19	Surrey	Nonsuch Park	○	114.1	125000	1095
20	Surrey	The Sheep Leas, Lord Crewe, B C Guinness	○	106.4	8000	75
21	Surrey	Banstead Wood Estate	○	99.6	35500	357
22	Surrey	Morden Park	○	64.3	159000	2471
23	Surrey	Ham House	○	56.9	107000	1882
24	Surrey	Cooper's Hill, Lady Cheylesmore	○	43.3	8200	189
25	Surrey	Morden Park Hall	○	42.1	104000	2471
26	Surrey	Merstham Manor	○	29.7	200	7
27	Surrey	Banstead Wood and Mansion	○	28.3	10000	353
28	Surrey	Hill Park Estate	○	23.5	5900	251
29	Surrey	Glebe Lands	○	20.6	10200	494
30	Surrey	Grange Estate	○	19.4	57500	2965
31	Surrey	Fairdene Heights Estate	○	15.5	200	13
32	Surrey	Glebe Lands	○	12.6	200	16
33	Surrey	Prew's Farm, Merton College	○	6.9	-	-
34	Surrey	Bucclough House	○	1.0	6000	5931
35	Surrey	Land from Admiral Goodenough	○	1.0	-	-
36	Middlesex	Mad Bess Wood Ruislip	●	75.3	28000	372
37	Middlesex	Copse Wood Ruislip	●	63.0	23350	370
38	Middlesex	Old Redding	●	35.2	30450	865
39	Middlesex	Harrow Land in Oxhey Lane	●	17.1	12600	737
40	Middlesex	Prentice's Land	●	13.9	19290	1386
41	Middlesex	Oxhey Lane	●	10.9	12516	1145
42	Middlesex	Tilbury's Land	●	9.3	16886	1809
43	Middlesex	Grove Field	●	6.5	8500	1313
44	Middlesex	McGladdery's Land	●	6.5	4407	681
45	Middlesex	Harrow – Land at Brockley Hill	●	5.1	15625	3089
46	Middlesex	Fenny Slade	●	5.1	4620	913
47	Middlesex	Clarke's land	●	4.1	2000	490
48	Middlesex	Land between Cuckoo Hill and Catlins Land	●	2.5	4150	1675
49	Middlesex	Enfield chase, Longford Farm	●	2.3	3000	1312
50	Middlesex	Harrow, Oxhey Lane Farm	●	0.4	4185	9308
51	Middlesex	Enfield Chase land in ridgeway, New Cottage	●	0.3	565	2053
52	Surrey	Agricultural Lands, Guildford Borough	●	216.1	40000	185
53	Surrey	Devils Jumps	●	100.0	-	-
54	Surrey	Chertsey Meads	●	67.6	11000	163
55	Surrey	King's Wood	●	60.7	17940	296
56	Surrey	Dean Farm	●	40.5	-	-
57	Surrey	Purbright Site	●	35.2	-	-
58	Surrey	Tyting Farm	●	31.0	5915	191
59	Surrey	Warren Farm Mickleham	●	26.7	-	-
60	Surrey	Devilsden Wood	●	23.9	8400	352
61	Surrey	Riddlesdown, Caterham	●	19.4	11000	566
62	Surrey	Millstock	●	19.4	-	-
63	Surrey	Land on Hawkthirst Road	●	13.8	-	-
64	Surrey	Land adjoining Riddlesdown	●	10.5	-	-
65	Surrey	Foxley Wood	●	9.3	-	-
66	Middlesex	Fulwell Golf Course	⊙	85.3	132520	1554
67	Middlesex	Pinner Hill Golf Course	⊙	55.4	39200	707
68	Middlesex	Stanmore Golf Course	⊙	44.5	50000	1123
69	Middlesex	Warren Farm (Part of Golf Course)	⊙	31.3	6810	217
70	Surrey	Coulsdon Court Golf Course	⊙	56.7	65000	1147
		TOTAL		4787.9		

(*) Estate = ○; Other = ●; Golf Course = ⊙

The name of the land was entered into a database and keywords used to classify the land. Table – 3.4 shows the data that were used. Land bought from Estates originally formed part of much larger private land holdings. The owner of the Estate might be a titled aristocrat (Duke, Lord, Lady or Sir etc.). The aristocratic origins of the purchase could also be indicated by the use of ‘Park’, ‘Manor’ or ‘House’ in the title. The ‘Park’ in this case refers to the large grounds that surround a Country house such as a Manor House. As well as being an aristocrat, the owner of the Estate could also be an Oxford or Cambridge University College or the Church of England. In the case where the owner was the Church, the land was known as Glebe Land. The data also show that Golf Courses were purchased for the green belt. Any land titles that could not be classified into either one of the above categories were classified into the ‘Other’ category. This category contained land comprising woods, fields and farms (Table – 3.4).

3.5.5.1.2 Data interpretation

Table – 3.4 already shows some patterns emerging in the data. Land that came from the Estates came in much larger pieces than land from other categories. The largest purchase of land was the 811 ha of Duchy of Lancaster land purchased in Enfield Chase. Table – 3.5, confirms the indication that land from Estates was purchased in larger pieces. Here we can see that the average size of land bought from Estates was around 105 ha, the average size of land bought from the Other or Golf Courses categories was 30 ha and 54 ha respectively. In terms of price neither the Estates land or the land in the Other category differ from each other a great deal. Golf courses at the time were more notably

Table – 3.5 Summary statistics for the land purchased for the green belt in Middlessex and Surrey

Land purchased	Total area of land purchased (Ha)	(%)	Average area of purchase (Ha) A	Average price of purchase (£) P	P/A (£/ha)
Estate	3583.2	(74.8)	102.4	56746	554
Other	931.4	(19.5)	31.0	12927	416
Golf Course	273.3	(5.7)	54.7	58706	1074
TOTAL	4787.9	(100.0)			

expensive at the time, at 1074 Pounds/ha. Considering that the average size of land purchases in Estates was much larger, it is not surprising that as much as 75% of the land in the green belt had been bought from these aristocratic landowners (Figure – 3.5).

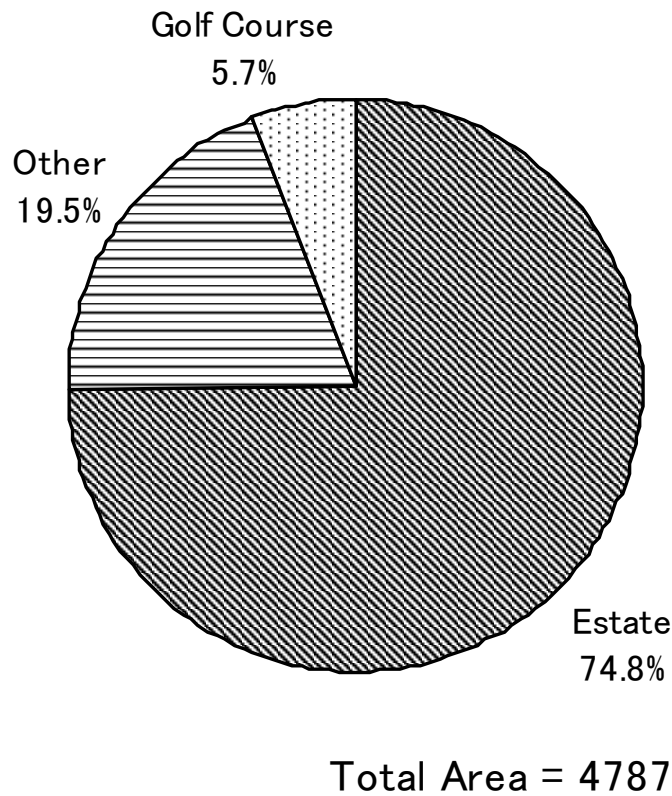


Figure – 3.5 The proportion of land purchased from Estates for the green belt in Middlesex and Surrey

This data shows the important role of the aristocratic landowners in providing land for the green belt. This is a strong indicator of the presence of top-down planning in the green belt. The following sections investigate further how land was purchased from these landowners in practice.

3.5.5.2 An overview of private land purchases in Surrey

In 1930 Surrey was the richest county in the UK and in the process of undergoing profound changes as a result of urbanisation. For example, the population rose from 845,578 people in 1911 to 1,180,878 in 1931 (40%) as a result of the construction of a new railway line and a growth in the number of commuters. Surrey was also a convenient destination for London-based holidaymakers and day-trippers.¹⁹⁾ Surrey was chosen for

the study because it suffered from high urbanisation pressures.

In 1931, parliament passed the Surrey Local Act in response to the above urban growth pressures. Sections 70 and 71 allowed the Council to enter into agreements with landowners to allow the purchase of land for preservation. The minutes of the County Council meetings during the 1930s show an increase in the importance of planning matters and with this an increase in the planners' discretionary behaviour at the time.⁶⁰⁾ Planners and local officials used this discretion to develop a number of strategies to purchase land under the green belt scheme. Though some of these strategies were employed in exceptional cases it is important to understand and report them because they show the extent to which planners and local officials were prepared to push the limits of law and planning practice to implement the green belt.

3.5.5.2.1 Attaching covenants or agreements: Instead of a straight-forward purchase, the local authority could enter into a covenant with the landowner not to build on the land.⁶¹⁾ Various conditions could be attached to such a covenant. For example allowing the landowner to live in a house on the land until death, at which point the land would be transferred to the local authority and become part of the green belt.⁶²⁾

3.5.5.2.2 Transferring agricultural rights to the land: In an exceptional case, Richmond Borough Council proposed to have an Order issued by the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries to transfer Lammas rights (rights related to the agricultural use of the land) from one piece of land that the local authority were not interested in, to one which they planned to buy. As long as these rights, to allow the grazing of animals were held, the land could not be developed and the price was estimated to reduce by £10,000.⁶²⁾

3.5.5.2.3 Neighbouring Contributions: Cost reductions were also obtained by encouraging neighbouring landowners' to contribute to the land's purchase as it was

widely understood that such neighbours stood to gain from having the green belt nearby (see 3.5.3.2). In some cases the contributions were as high as 16.7% of the total purchase price, as the results from a Public Local Inquiry inspector's report show at the time (Table – 3.6).⁶³⁾

Table – 3.6 Contributions for the purchase of green belt land from neighbours

Site purchased	Area ha	Purchase Price (£)	Neighbouring Contribution	% Neighbours' contrib. as a total
Ockham Common	142	24000	4000	16.7
Warren Farm	27	4000	400	10
Norbury Park Estate	526	85000	3000	3.5
Redlands Wood	97	1550	0	0
Hill Park Estate, Tatfield	23	5900	0	0
Nonsuch park, Ewell	114	113000	0	0
Buccleugh House	1	6000	0	0

3.5.5.2.4 Early negotiations with sympathetic landowners: In the 1930s estates agents in Surrey were in the practice of forwarding information about any piece of land that was for sale to the local authorities.⁶⁴⁾ Local authorities therefore had a privileged access to information which they could use to enter into early negotiations. This may have enabled, Beddington and Wallington UDC for example, to hear that builders had entered into negotiations with a landowner to purchase an Estate for £65,000 and erect 500 small houses on it. The local authority immediately negotiated with the landowner and were able to purchase the land for £57,500.⁶⁵⁾ Although this would seem like a large discount, it was not unusual for the time. A landowner such as Sir Jeremiah Coleman for example, was said by his agent to have refused an offer of £500 an acre for his land. This land was eventually offered to the council for £250 an acre.⁶⁶⁾

3.5.5.2.5 Secret bargaining: If an agreement could not be reached, the Council was permitted to employ a compulsory purchase order to force the landowner to sell the land. However to allow this a public inquiry had to be held after which the Minister of Health would decide whether the purchase was permitted to go ahead.⁶⁷⁾ As much as possible

authorities avoided such a situation as it would involve a lengthy procedure and the publicity generated would raise the price of other potentially suitable areas of land. To avoid such a situation they conducted what were known as ‘secret bargains’ with the landowner. Further details of this negotiation method are given in a case study below.

3.5.5.3 Purchasing Ockham Common for the green belt

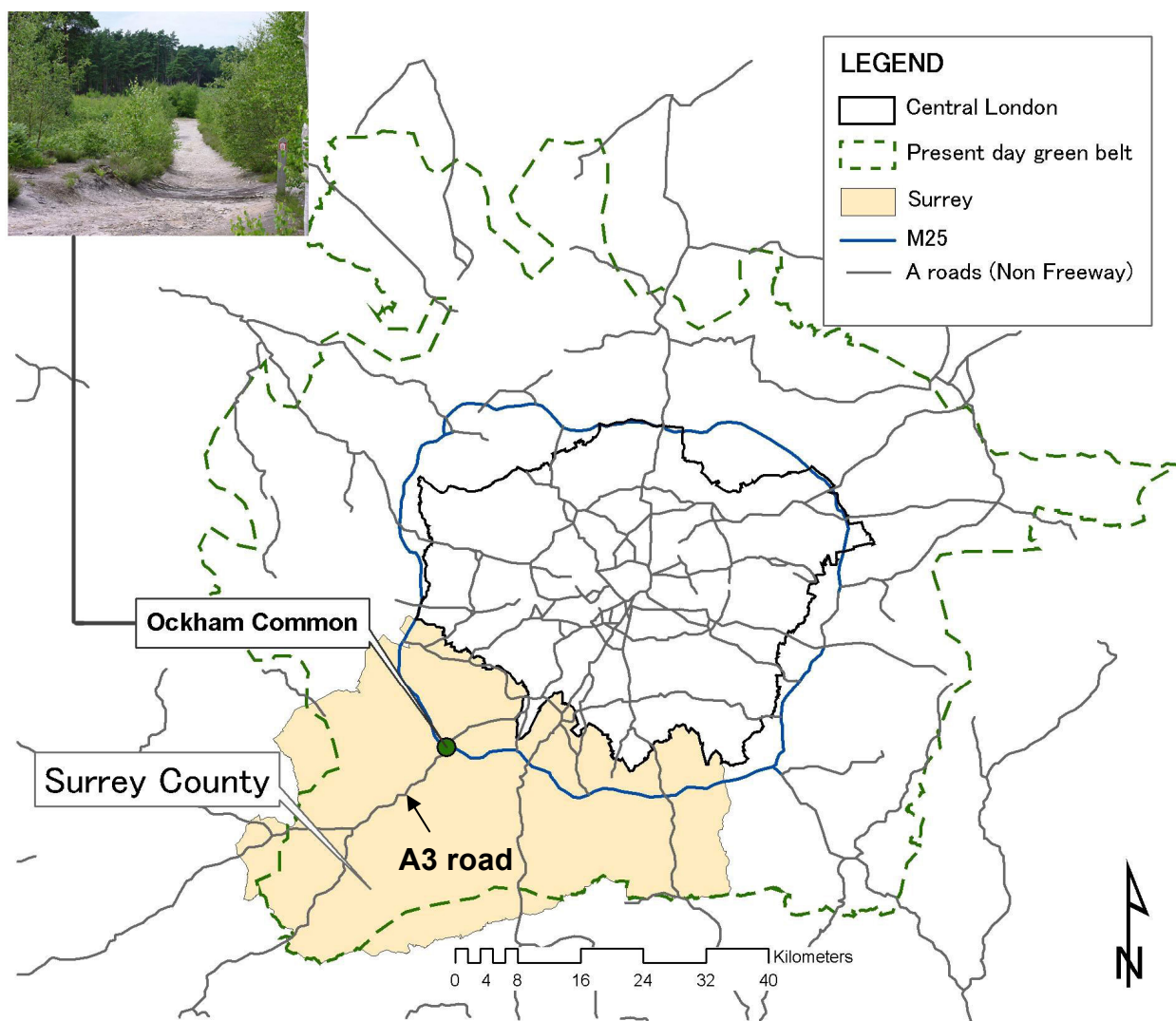


Figure – 3.6 Location of Surrey and Ockham Common

The case of Ockham Common was selected to illustrate the impact of this negotiation on the purchasing price of the land (Figure – 3.6). Ockham Common comprised 141 hectares of private land located 30 km to the South West of London. It

had a combination of a location on a major road out of London (the London-Portsmouth road, currently the A3 road), a frontage of 1.2 km on either side of the road, and a dry soil of non-agricultural land-use. This made it ideal development land in an area of rapid urbanisation. For this reason the area was chosen for the study to expose the roles played by the local authority, land-owners and central government (Figure— 3.6).

3.5.5.3.1 The role of local officials in the secret bargain

Surrey County Council was pressed to buy Ockham Common because of the three year limit on the London County Council loans' scheme. However, in trying to purchase this and other land for the green belt, the council required a £100,000 additional loan from the Ministry of Health.⁶⁸⁾ Such loans could be granted, but this was only possible after a public inquiry.

Up to that time, Surrey County Council had used a method that they termed the 'secret bargain' to purchase land cheaply from landowners. This involved secretly negotiating with the landowner to convince them to sell the land. Secrecy was necessary to ensure that the negotiation did not raise the price of other land.⁶⁹⁾ Where this method could not be used, i.e. where the landowner refused to sell the land, a compulsory purchase order would be employed under Sections 70 and 71 of the 1931 Surrey Act. Table— 3.7 shows the effect of this secret bargain on the cost of the land. Ranking all the areas bought using the Ministry's loan reveals a significant difference between Ockham Common and Nonsuch Park. Both were bought at the same time and were similarly suitable for development. However, Nonsuch Park had been bought with a compulsory purchase order.⁶⁹⁾

Such was the need for secrecy that the Deputy Clerk of Surrey Council went to the Ministry of Health in December 1935 to ask for a block loan and to 'dispense with the need for a public inquiry'.⁶⁸⁾ Though this was held in March 1936, the Ministry encouraged the Council to remain vague about the site they wished to purchase.⁷⁰⁾

Table – 3.7 Comparing Ockham Common and other sites – the effect of the secret bargain on the land price

	Area (A) (ha)	Price (P) (£)	P/A (£/ha)
Chertsey Meads	74	12000	161
Ockham Common	142	24000	169
Shabden Park, Banstead	271	67000	247
Further areas in Coulsdon	223	60000	270
Kings Wood, Coulsdon	53	15000	285
Banstead Wood	128	46000	360
Riddlesdown, Caterham	19	11000	566
Land West of Ham House	12	12000	988
Nonsuch Park, Ewell	114	121000	1060

3.5.5.3.2 The role of the landowner in the secret bargain

In addition to the actions of Surrey County Council, Ockham Common's landowner and neighbouring landowners played important roles. The owner of Ockham Common, Lady Lovelace, was offering the site for purchase at £24,000. It was widely thought to be a 'gift' at such a price.⁷¹⁾

In four articles published in the local newspaper during a six month period in 1935, landowners adjoining Ockham Common were encouraged to contribute to its purchase. One article sub-titled 'An Appeal to Neighbouring Owners', noted that though contributions had been received, it hoped that 'still further contributions towards the purchase price would be received'.⁷²⁾

Table—3.8 shows how the price of Ockham Common was shared between the different actors.⁷³⁾ Not only are the neighbouring landowners' contributions larger in total than one of the local authorities but one landowner is said to have contributed £2,500. Though the contribution was large, the act of contributing was not unusual as Table – 3.6 has already shown.

Overall the results show that the local authority used its discretion to purchase land as inexpensively as possible. However, on private land the role of the landowners was equal to if not more important than the planners. These private landowners had the flexibility to weaken or trade their rights related to land and offer land for the green belt at a discount.

Table— 3.8 Neighbouring contributions to the purchase of Ockham common

	Contribution to Ockham common purchase	
	(£)	%
Surrey County Council	12,000	50
London County Council	6,000	25
Neighbours	4,000	16.7
Guildford Rural District Council	2,000	8.3
Total	24,000	100

3.5.6 Purchasing Crown land in the green belt

The following describes the case of a Crown land purchase where the landowner (i.e. the Crown Agents) did not have the flexibility to offer land at a discount (see 3.5.4.3). The actual amount of land purchased in this way for the green belt was small when compared to the total. However the case is worthy of investigation since it illustrates the measures that officials were prepared to take to implement the green belt and how far the ideal of planning the green belt had already penetrated into other areas of government.

3.5.6.1 Site description

The Chief Commissioner of the Crown Lands was involved in a controversy over two land sales between 1934 and 1936. The land was described as a belt of land, to the East of London in Essex measuring 1.6 km in width and 9.7 km in length covering 1400 hectares and connecting Hainault and Epping forests (Figure – 3.7).⁷⁴⁾

The land itself was flat and ideal for development. Its use was largely agricultural

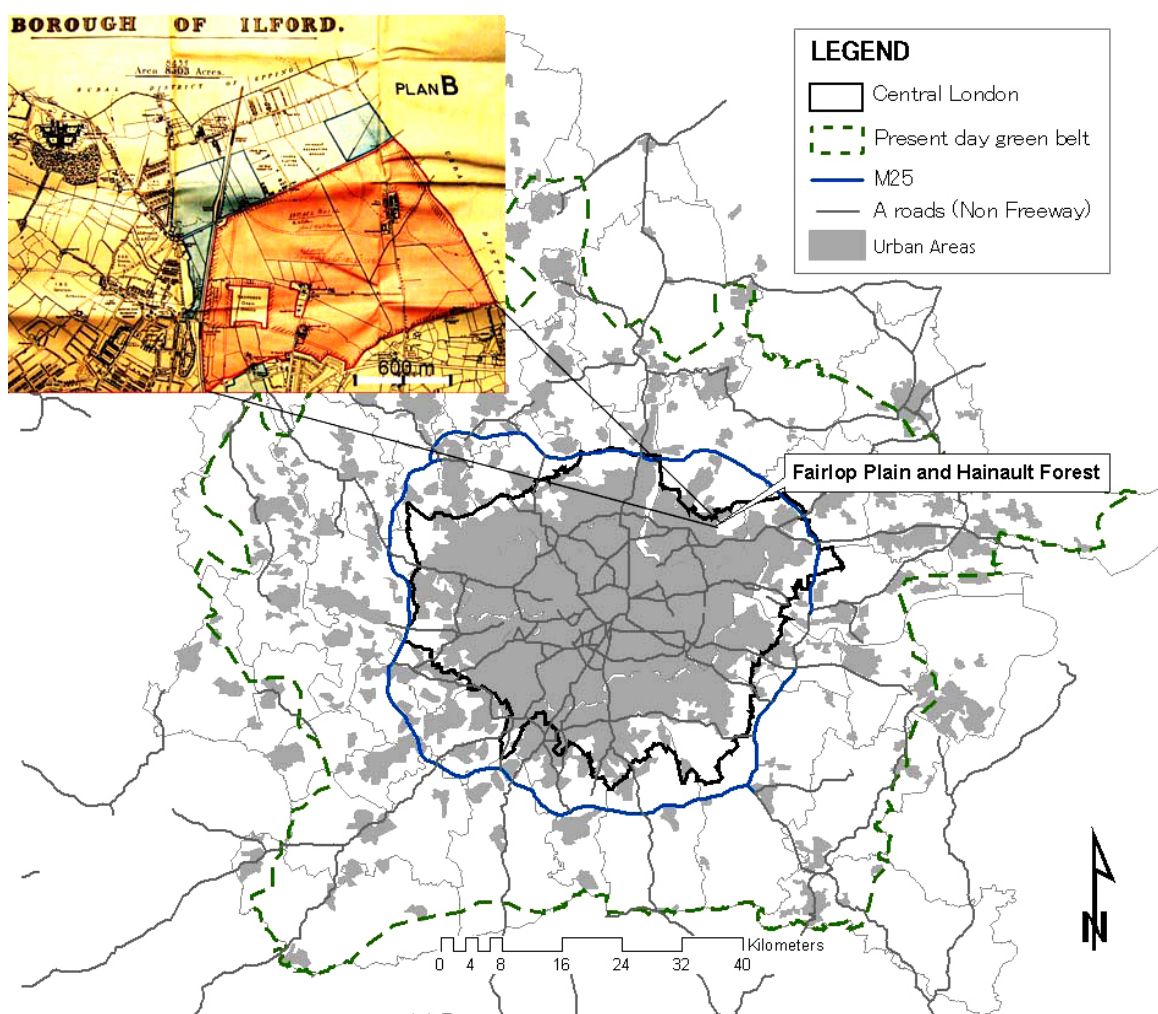


Figure – 3.7 Location of Fairlop Plain and Hainault. Urban areas indicate modern day extent.

and it was adjacent to the London North-Eastern Railway line and the projected extension of the new Central underground line. The land was sold by the Chief

Commissioners in two sections. 380 hectares known as Fairlop were sold in early 1935 for an aerodrome. 93 hectares of land known as Hainault Forest were sold for the green belt in 1936-1937. The following closely examines how these purchases took place.

3.5.6.2 Purchasing Fairlop plain: The Crown Lands versus the LCC

The first piece of land to be sold was 380 hectares on an area known as Fairlop Plain. The London County Council required this land for housing in late 1934. The LCC had used all the land that they had available for housing. By the mid-1930s the LCC was being subjected to tremendous pressure by residents that wanted to move out of crowded tenements in London's East End to sites outside London. As the LCC's Chief Valuer explained, they received approximately 120,000 applications for accommodation a year, but had only been able to construct 50,000 houses during the last fifteen years.⁷⁵⁾

Despite this urgent need for housing the Chief Commissioner of the Crown Lands acted to prevent the London County Council from developing this land for housing. The Chief Commissioner first wanted to give consideration to a variety of open space uses such as golf or aviation.⁷⁶⁾ When describing his reasons for doing this to a member of Essex County Council, he explained that it was "simply to invent every possible kind of public user which will preserve the property as a public open space of some kind in the future, while securing the revenue which we must, as trustees, secure."⁷⁷⁾ Whilst maintaining an appearance of detached interest towards the LCC's housing scheme, he chose to solicit opinions from the Air Ministry and the Greater London Regional Planning Committee (GLRPC) on the suitability of land for building an aerodrome. The GLRPC in particular had already prepared arguments that supported this function (see 3.5.3.2). Figure – 3.8 shows a map of existing and projected need for aerodromes around London. 26 out of a total of 37 sites were proposed aerodromes. Each of the large circles around the location of the airport is an indication of the space that needed to be kept clear around the airport for landing, take-off and buildings related to the aerodromes.

Considering the GLRPC's support for the green belt it is perhaps no coincidence that all

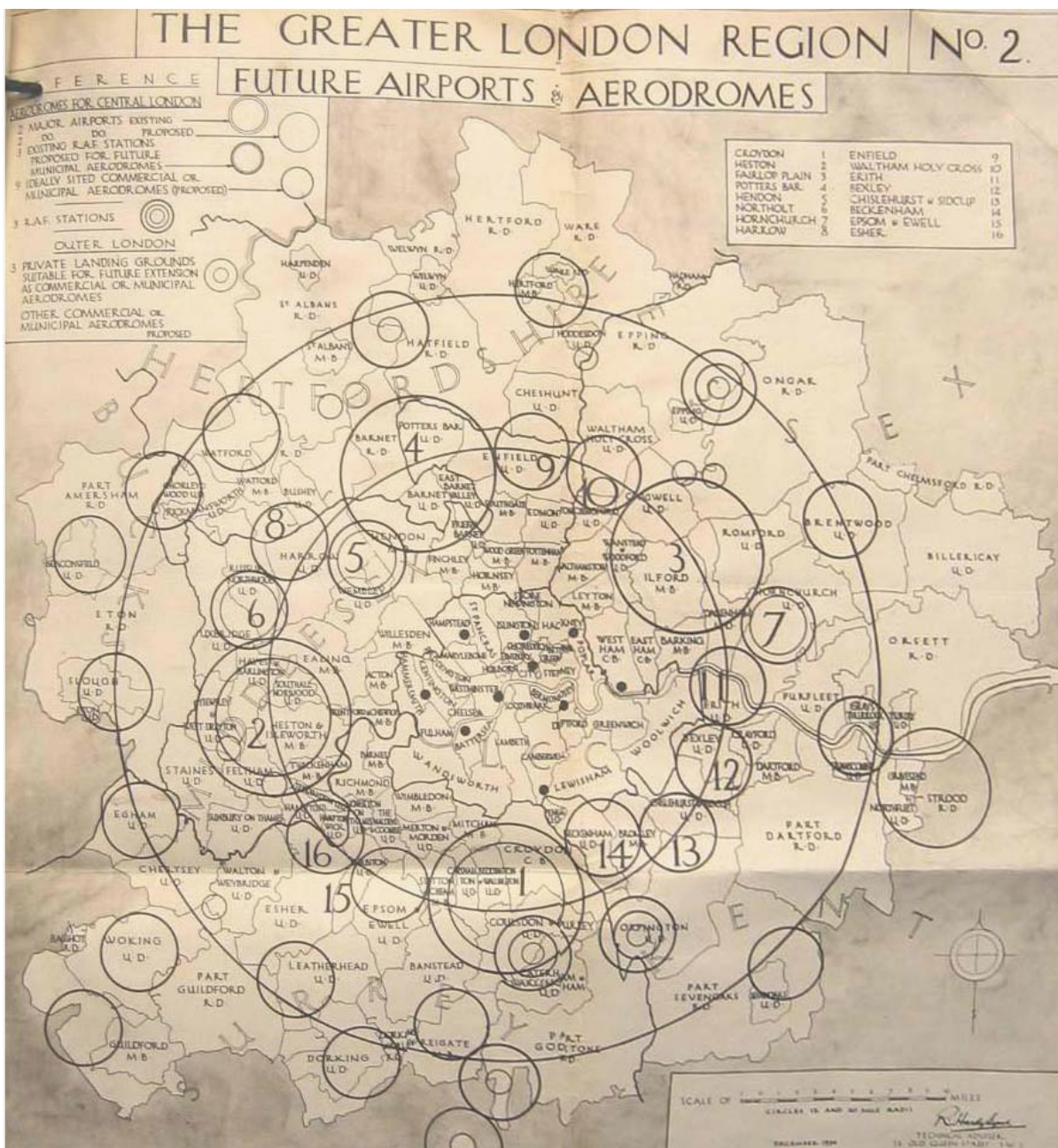


Figure – 3.8 Map of the future location of aerodromes around London (1935). (Produced by the GLRPC this map shows No. 3 as Fairlop Plain, chosen as a suitable site for an aerodrome. The circles around each number indicate the land that had to remain open for the aerodrome. It is significant that the circles touch each other. This was also used as a justification for the green belt).

the circles on the map touch each other and form a belt around London.⁷⁸⁾ The Chief Commissioner also asked Ilford Borough Council to make an offer for the land and the local council discussions were reported in the local press.⁷⁹⁾

Eventually the matter of whether the land should be sold for an aerodrome or to the LCC for a housing scheme was referred to a Ministry of Health Public Enquiry. Ilford Borough Council called on the evidence of the Greater London Regional Planning Committee (GLRPC) and the famous airman Sir Alan Cobham to argue that the site was suitable for an aerodrome.⁸⁰⁾ Finally, the Ministry of Health decided to grant a loan to Ilford Borough Council to buy the land for an aerodrome.

The section above (3.5.3.1) showed how the GLRPC failed to convince the Air Ministry to pay for the green belt. The case of Fairlop Plain shows how the arguments in support of providing aerodromes to conserve open space eventually took precedence over the LCC's urgent housing needs.

3.5.6.3 Purchasing Hainault: The Crown Lands versus private developers

Though the preservation of Fairlop Plain as an aerodrome which was 'mostly green grass and therefore far preferable to houses'.⁸¹⁾ had been dealt with in a largely satisfactory way, the adjacent site soon came under pressure for urbanisation in early 1936. Again the action of the Chief Commissioner of Crown Lands and the role of the press and public opinion were instrumental in saving this land for open space. In addition, the argument for preserving the land for the green belt was important to allow the land to be preserved.

Firstly, news that the land would be sold to developers reached the newspapers. A number of articles appeared which highlighted the paradox that the Crown Agents were making a profit at the expense of local amenities. Secondly, the Chief Commissioner of Crown Lands were also pressured by a letter in "The Times" signed by F. J. Osborn among others, about the danger of losing a green belt town, and a letter in Country Life ("Ugliness Pays").⁸²⁾ The Chief Commissioner responded by taking pains to answer these letters and to restore relations with amenity groups. For example, in response to an enquiry from the secretary of the Metropolitan Gardens Association who had read the

correspondence in the Times, the Chief Commissioner wearily noted: “I saw her and explained that we are virtuous people. She was pleased”.⁸³⁾

In aiming to preserve the openness of the land but to return a profit from it, the Chief Commissioner of Crown Lands was willing to consider other uses for Hainault, such as golf or aviation. He explained that “only green-belting could preserve the area for aviation in future and that we must have immediate revenue”.⁸⁴⁾

When the LCC only proposed to offer a loan of 30% for purchasing the land, Essex was unwilling to contribute the rest because of the expense,⁸⁵⁾ the local newspaper reported that as ‘far as Essex County Council is concerned, it would seem the preservation scheme is as good as dead’.⁸⁶⁾ The Chief Commissioner of Crown Lands was also willing to wait for Essex County Council to decide to buy the land. In the meantime developers lobbied him with demands to release land for housing.⁵³⁾ These demands were all rebuffed.

Finally, following a conference of the County and local authorities and with Essex County Council’s agreement, 320 acres (130 ha) of the land was purchased for £145,000 for inclusion in the green belt.⁸⁷⁾ It is unlikely that such a purchase could have been made if the Chief Commissioner of Crown Lands not been willing to wait for the green belt negotiations to be finalised.

3.6 Discussion

3.6.1 The characteristics of top-down planning

The results show that a specific group of planners and landowners enabled the green belt to be implemented. The results show that this group of landowners and planners shared the same views about the green belt. The strongest example of this was the Chief Commissioner of the Crown Land’s membership of the Council for the Preservation of Rural England. Finally the results also show that the landowners and planners employed

negotiation such as the secret bargain to implement the green belt. These results demonstrate the existence of a top-down approach as well as describing its characteristics. Had information about the green belt been shared more freely, it is possible that the green belt’s implementation could not have happened.

More than simply financing land purchases, the 1935 LCC green belt scheme crystallised the political will to conserve land for a particular purpose and gave birth to the green belt movement. We show that as well as planners, central and local government civil servants and landowners played significant roles in this movement (Table – 3.9).

At the same time, it must be understood, that the proportion of land that was

Table – 3.9 Restriction and response - a summary of the results

CASE STUDY	RESTRICTION		RESPONSE	
	Type	Who	Type	Who
I: Central Government	Necessity	Other ministries e.g. Treasury	Change the green belt's function	GLRPC
	Cost	Landowners needing compensation	Include effect of neighbouring open space on land price	GLRPC/ Central government
II: Local Government	Necessity	Some local districts resisting interference	Centralisation and pressure to implement	Central government
	Cost	Landowners seeking a profit	Secrecy. Flexible rules Lowering price/contributions	Central/Local Govt. Large landowners
III: Crown Lands	The 1925 Settled Land Act & Crown Lands Act 1927	London County Council (housing) Developers	Delays and secrecy	Chief Commissioner of Crown Lands

purchased for the green belt around London was tiny in comparison with the area that was needed for solving the problem of sprawl. If the land had been owned by a few members of the ruling classes, the problems of sprawl around London would not have occurred in 1920s. Similarly, the green belt would not have been necessary. Therefore we can conclude that the landownership around London was mostly fragmented, but crucially a few large estates remained.

In 3.2 above, we assumed that landowners were motivated principally by profit. We also showed how this profit motive acted as a restriction onThe data from this Chapter

suggests that other motivations were also important. The involvement of the aristocratic landowners was also important. These landowners were not motivated by profit as the majority of landowners were, but by a love of the countryside that had been produced through education and tradition. At the same time, there are other, darker sides to this involvement that merit further investigation. To what extent can the involvement of the aristocratic landowners be seen as a strategy to (re-)gain political power for example?

Overall what was important in allowing the green belt to be implemented was a consensus that it was necessary, even if opinions differed about what the green belt was actually for. There was at the time, as Peter Hall commented in relation to the Scott report, an almost ‘mystical belief’ in the importance of preserving land at any cost.⁸⁸⁾

3.6.1.1 Private lands

Perhaps the most surprising aspect of the behaviour of landowners are the direct contributions that neighbouring landowners made to the purchase of the green belt land. The results show a lack of opposition to the green belt from landowners. This is because a significant number of landowners saw the advantages of planning in the public interest. The results show that although the conflict between private and public interests was a problem because it could raise the cost of purchase, it was not the main source of conflict. The results show that the implementation of the green belt met with some resistance. Overall however, the purchase of green belt land from private landowners was made possible because some landowners realised that the public interest was more important or equivalent to the private interest.

3.6.1.2 Chief Commissioner of Crown Lands

The consensus over the need for the green belt extended to the Crown Agents. This was a branch of government that did not have any official responsibility for town

planning. The results show how the Chief Commissioner of Crown Lands attempted a number of different methods to allow open space to be preserved. This was in contravention to what the law should have made him do (i.e. maximise profits) (Figure – 3.9). The reason the Chief Commissioner made such efforts to save this land for the green belt is because he was a member of the Council for the Preservation of Rural England.⁸⁹⁾ and was ‘delighted at the thought of saving some of this land from jerry-builders’.⁹⁰⁾

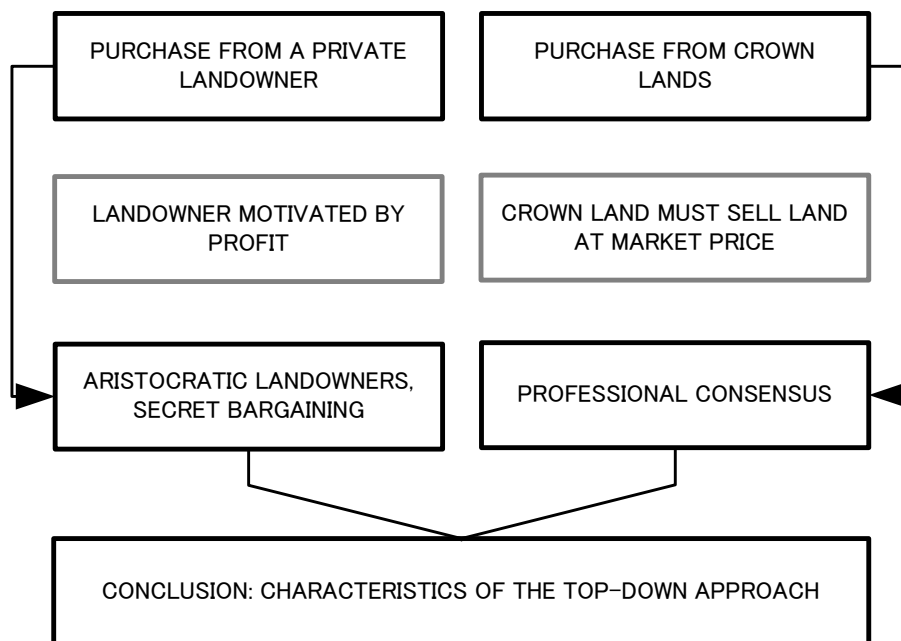


Figure – 3.9 Official restrictions on purchasing land and how these restrictions were overcome (compare with Figure – 3.4)

3.6.2 Conflicts beneath the consensus

The existence of a consensus over the importance of implementing the green belt does not mean that conflict did not exist, or even that implementation was unproblematic. In fact the existence of this consensus created problems of its own kind. In the following, we further explore some of these conflicts. Firstly, we explain why landowners were able

to give the public interest a higher priority than their private interest. Secondly, we show that the issue of access also brought the landowners' values into conflict with the public-spirited aims of the green belt.

3.6.2.1 Landowners' altruism and the purchase of land in the green belt

Most of the discounts and the gifts of land, which enabled the green belt to be implemented during the inter-War period were made altruistically. Landowners were nonetheless able to benefit from these arrangements by writing conditions into the sale of their land or by exerting considerable influence over the authority making the purchase. The influence of this benefit can be seen in a famous case involving Surrey County Council and a gift of land known as Glory Woods in 1929. This land had been pledged as a gift by the Duke of Northumberland to the local authority to allow it to be preserved. However the Duke then retracted this gift in protest at a proposed by-pass road. Through the subsequent publicity he won support for his alternative scheme.⁹¹⁾

In the case of the green belt, landowners could influence the conditions attached to other pieces of land. Sir Jeremiah Coleman's generous offer to the local authority referred to above (3.5.5.1.4), is related to his demands to convince the council to increase the permitted number of houses on an adjoining site for development from 58 to 66 houses, and to ask the local authority to plant trees for screening the site.⁹²⁾ On the whole however, landowners' aimed to influence the way in which the public open space was used. For example many contracts stipulated that buildings should not be erected on the site, or that trees should not be cut down except in the course of normal estate management. Other contracts insisted that the land should be kept as public open space.⁹³⁾ These contracts provide evidence that the landowners felt they could act in the public interest; in some cases they felt they were better custodians of the public interest than the local authority.

Though the landowners could gain some benefit from offering land cheaply, the

existence of altruistic motives should not be surprising. The aristocracy had engaged in a tradition of giving land away for several decades. For example, The National Trust had been receiving donations of land since its foundation in 1895.⁹⁴⁾ A royal contribution to the green belt had been Windsor Great Park⁹⁵⁾ and the King wondered whether provisions for Scout Camps could not be made in the green belt.⁹⁶⁾ In addition, the CPRE were active in encouraging landowners to give their land for the public benefit.⁹⁷⁾ This idealisation of the countryside and the view that the preservation of such a large area of open space was in the public interest were linked to the idealisation of the countryside by the 19th century romantic movement.⁹⁸⁾

3.6.2.2 The aim of the green belt and the problem of access

The involvement of landowners in planning the green belt caused conflict with the green belt's aim to preserve land for the urban poor. Considering that efforts to conserve land were spearheaded by the big landowners who were mainly from the upper-classes, it was inevitable that class and elitism would influence decision-making.

For example, the plight of East End children was regularly used as a justification for purchasing land. The Borough Engineer for Banstead Urban District Council in convincing Surrey County Council to purchase land for preservation referred to how the land was used for recreational outings for slum children from the East End of London.⁹⁹⁾ This dovetailed with the green belt's urban and recreational function.

However, the documents show that planners did not address the question of how the land should be accessed or used by the public. This caused a debate among members of the LCC's Parks and Open Spaces Committee from 1936-1939 over what the green belt should be used for. The debate was about whether signs should be used to mark land that was part of the green belt (Figure – 3.10). On agricultural lands in particular the words “ ‘Green Belt’ appear to convey to many people the mistaken idea that the whole property is open to the public.”¹⁰⁰⁾

Other documents show more directly that the planner's objective was to preserve land for an elite. In a 1926 consultants' report on the conditions in Surrey, the consultant recommended preserving areas of particularly intrinsic beauty with a special rural

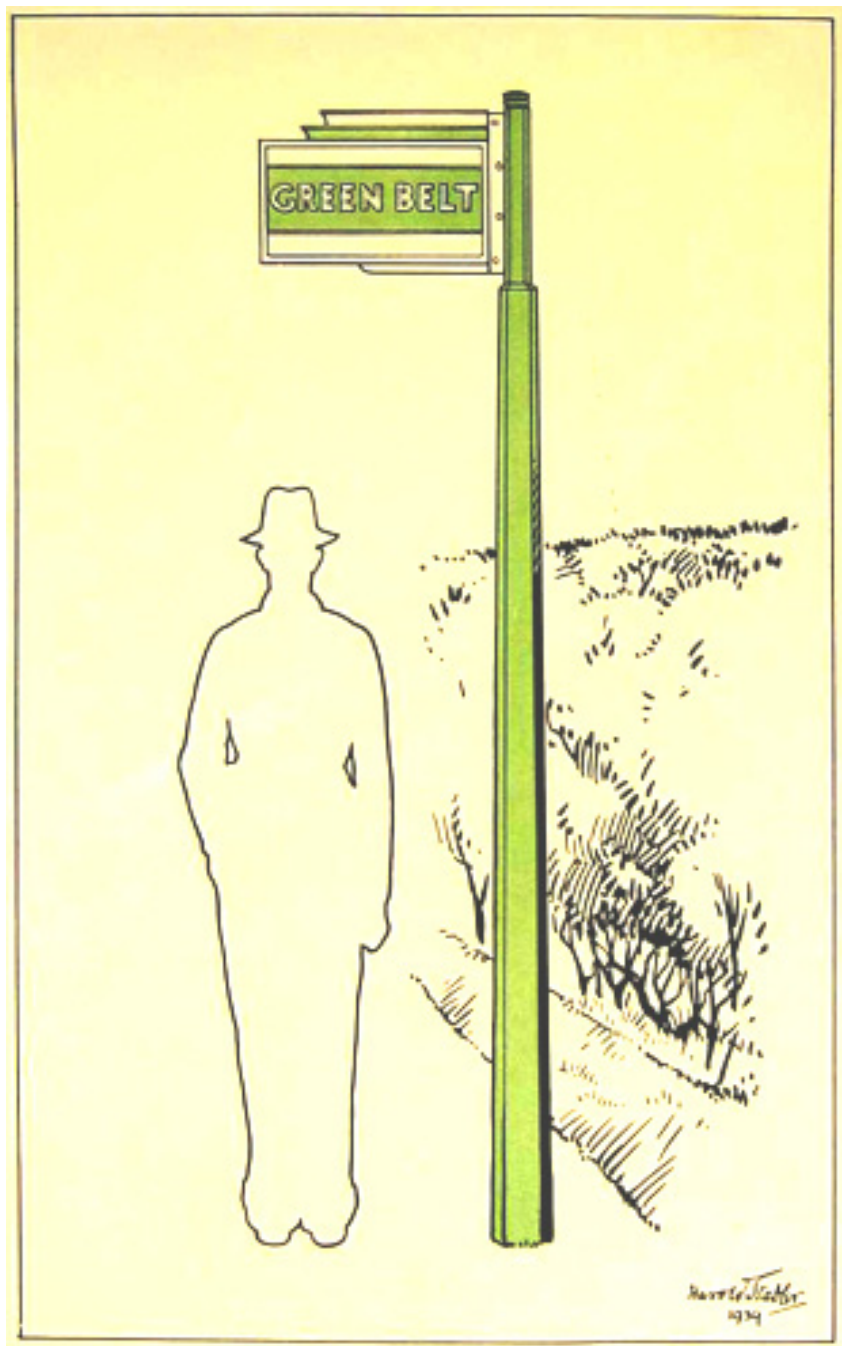


Figure – 3.10 A design for the green belt sign commissioned by the LCC in 1938. (These signs were never used but they generated a debate over access to the green belt).

zone.¹⁸⁾ The objective of such a zone was not only to preserve the intrinsic beauty of the area, but also to surround each village with a belt of open country to prevent the area developing into one urban sprawl. At the same time, much of the land was said to offer extremely attractive sites for country houses ‘and it must be admitted that a number of these could be accommodated, if carefully disposed, and well-designed in suitable materials, without spoiling the country-side [sic] to any serious extent’.¹⁰¹⁾

Though the green belt was for the public, members of the ruling classes held the view that the land should only be for “the public to look at from a distance”.¹⁰²⁾ and that in any case the responsibility for town planning failures lay with the general public.¹⁰³⁾

Such conflicts explain the green belt land purchases that did little to contribute to the green belt’s fundamentally public-spirited purpose. In 1937 Surrey County Council began negotiations for the purchase of the Royal Wimbledon Golf Club and an adjoining 40 acres. Surrey County Council tried to argue that the land would serve as “linking-up” land (i.e. land that would serve to link one patch of green belt with another). The London County Council did not consider the land suitable for the green belt, as it was not public open space.¹⁰⁴⁾ Nonetheless Wimbledon Borough Council, with Surrey County Council’s encouragement, proceeded with the land purchase and a course of action was decided upon at a special meeting. In the end the land was bought with a loan from the Ministry of Health and a 20% contribution from Surrey County Council.¹⁰⁵⁾

Currently, much of the green belt is privately owned farmland and access to the green belt is as much of a concern as it was in 1938 (3.6.2.2). The problem of access to the green belt was addressed in 1944¹⁰⁶⁾ and in the London Planning Advisory Committee Report in 1991.^{107,108)}

3.6.3 A brief comparison with Japan

Up to now the involvement of landowners in the planning of the green belt has gone unnoticed by researchers in the UK and in Japan. This is unfortunate because comparing

the action of the landowners in the UK and in Japan enables us to reach a deeper understanding of how the green belt was established.

In Japan landowners are famous for successfully opposing attempts to implement the green belt after the Second World War. Full details of this will be explained in Chapter 6. For the time being, how can we explain the directly opposite attitudes of Japanese and UK landowners towards the green belt?

The first thing to realise in the UK, is that landowners stood to gain from the green belt. By participating in the green belt landowners could gain power and influence with the local authority. A gift of land was therefore seen as a long-term investment to be used to gain a future concession. Secondly, there was a widely held assumption that conserving land would raise the price of surrounding land. Thirdly, it is important to realise that not all of the landowners approved of the green belt in the same way. Only a tiny number of instances of opposition to the green belt exist. Nonetheless, it is reasonable to assume that a majority of landowners in the UK were willing to act in their own interests as they were in Japan. In fact, we can say that only a tiny but powerful minority of landowners acted in the way that we described above. The fact that these were the actions of a minority can be seen from the behaviour of planners. Planners were forced to act in secret precisely because they feared the actions and opinions of the majority of landowners. Whether this structure of landownership really exists however would remain a topic for a future study.

3.7 Conclusions

Overall, the results show that the establishment of the green belt was more complicated than has assumed in the literature up to now (see Chapter 1). We show the existence of the top-down approach in implementing the green belt and describe its characteristics.

Firstly, in 3.2 above, we assumed that landowners were motivated principally by

profit. The data from this Chapter suggests that other motivations were also important. The involvement of the aristocratic landowners was also important. These landowners were not motivated by profit as the majority of landowners were, but by a love of the countryside that had been produced through education and tradition. At the same time, there are other, darker sides to this involvement that merit further investigation.

Instead of being implemented solely by famous planners the green belt's implementation was more problematic. The results show that two further factors in particular allowed the green belt to be established. These factors are significant because they give a more precise reason why the green belt has been existed up to now.

We show that the planners' main objective was to implement the green belt, and that its function was opportunistically changed (i.e. 'invented' – see 3.5.6.2 above) to help this implementation. This is in contrast to other studies which argue that the green belt's aim was changed according to a rationale.⁸⁸⁾ The most opportunistic of the changes made to the green belt's function was for military and commercial aircraft use. This function was used to appeal to the Air Ministry to gain funding. It was also used to ensure that the Crown land that was being sold remained as open space.

A similar process of argumentation occurs today. The green belt's implementation is based on a widely shared assumption that limiting urban growth is somehow 'good' and that providing large areas open space will be of benefit to towns. Overlying this assumption are a series of justifications for the green belt.^{109,110)} In some cases groups that are determined enough to preserve the green belt can create a new function. For example, the lobbying efforts of the recently renamed Campaign for the Protection of Rural England, were responsible for the attaching the urban regeneration function to the green belt in the government's 1984 circular 14/84 on the green belt.^{111,112)} Since then the CPRE has been able to have influence on another important pillar of central government planning – Planning Policy Guidance 3: housing. Such action is responsible for maintaining the modernist divide between urban and rural.¹¹³⁾

The green belt's implementation was assisted by commonly held assumptions about

the importance and value of preserving land. For example, landowners were willing to contribute to the purchase of green belt because they recognised that a nearby green belt would increase the value of their property. Landowners with NIMBYs attitudes were willing to contribute to the purchase of green belt land. However these NIMBYs were quite different from the NIMBYs of today. They understood the costs to society of non-development and were willing to compensate society for this.

The results show that officials in the Crown Agents and in the local municipalities tended to flexibly interpret regulations in buying and selling land. This was to allow the land's preservation. Central government strongly advised and directed the purchase of land, almost to the point of having the Minister coerce the council to deal with an uncooperative clerk in Kent . At the local level, the documents show that for Ockham common and other sites in Surrey, local officials used negotiations with landowners to secure good terms for buying land. Secrecy was an element in this. The extent to which secrecy and consensus are a necessary part of the present-day planning of the green belt will be investigated in the following chapters.

In addition we reveal some of the problems that are inherent to the employment of these two factors. On the one hand, the lack of understanding over the green belt's function is shown in the wide variety of places that were preserved. It was also shown by the LCC's confusion over access to the green belt. If the green belt was being bought for London's overcrowded population but the public were not allowed access to green belt land, then for whom was the green belt being preserved?

Finally, the desire of planners to act in the public-interest can be seen as a strategy to gain power. Planners adopted the values of the landowning generation to plan more effectively by entering into covenants for example. Planners expressed a desire to own the land in the manner of the aristocracy. For example, Surrey County Council's purchase of manorial rights over land and throwing it 'open to the public'.¹¹⁴⁾ The extent to which the green belt is used as a way of gaining power will be explored in the following chapters.

The reason why the history of the green belt has remained until now a simple one of visionary heroes is because the green belt's implementation was such a success. Such deterministic thinking distorts the view of history. The results show that even in a weak planning environment concrete actions can have results that have a significant impact. The reason why the green belt was successfully implemented is because of the flexibility in its functions and a consensus between seemingly opposed groups over its necessity. Chapters 4 and 5 investigate whether these reasons exist today in planning.

Chapter 4

The influence of top-down planning in the local policies in the green belt

4.1 Introduction

In Chapter 3 we showed that a reason why the green belt was fully established was because its functions were flexible. The objective of the planners was simply to set-up the green belt. The main aim of the green belt, to preserve open space was hidden behind a series of justifications.

Following the 1947 Town and Country Planning Act land-use planning became easier to control. From Abercrombie's originally proposed 2000 km² the green belt expanded in the early 1970s and again in 1982 to its present size of 5085 km².¹⁾ Policies are assumed to be uniform in the green belt because of its strategic function and the centralisation of local government (Chapter 1).

The objective of this chapter is to investigate whether the function of the green belt varies in all of the different local authorities that plan the green belt today. This chapter is divided into nine sections. We first describe the post-War green belt and the UK's local planning system (4.2 and 4.3). Then we review the results of previous research that has investigated the UK's local planning system and describe the aim of the study (4.4). Section 4.5 details the method for the investigation and section 4.6 describes the results. Finally section 4.7 and 4.8 discusses these results and draws some conclusions for future work. This work is based on a previous publication.²⁾

4.2 The post-War green belt

The following describes how the green belt's strategic aims have evolved. The aims of the different groups that were involved in green belt planning at the end of the 1930s were reconciled by Abercrombie's famous Greater London Plan: 1944.³⁾ Abercrombie saw the function of the green belt as being mainly that of controlling urban development.⁴⁾ His 'cordon sanitaire' was planned to be around 10-12 miles wide (16-19 km).

The 1947 Town and Country Planning Act nationalized development rights. The Scott Committee, one of the most influential committees on planning during the Second World War decided that the function of the countryside would be to produce food.⁵⁾ It followed that any development not related to agriculture has been consistently discouraged in the green belt. Development could still take place if, for example, planners considered it necessary for the national interest, but this required the approval of the Secretary of State.

In 1955 the Minister of Housing and Local Government, Duncan Sandys, encouraged other large cities to adopt green belts for the following reasons:⁶⁾

- To check the further growth of a large built-up area;
- To prevent neighboring towns from merging into one another; or
- To preserve the special character of a town.

This circular was the first in a series of guidance issued by the central government to local authorities. As Gault,⁴⁾ Munton¹⁾ and Elson⁷⁾ all show, local authorities were enthusiastic about drawing green belt plans. This can be explained because they were influenced by the values of the large landowners described in Chapter 3. Such was the enthusiasm of these local authorities that central government had to use its top-down power to cut the amount of green belt back.

Since the 1950s, the number of green belts and their surface areas have grown. The number of reasons proposed by central government for implementing the green belt has also increased. Central government's 1995 Planning Policy Guidance defines the reasons for implementing the green belt as being:⁸⁾

- to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;
- to prevent neighbouring towns from merging into one another;

- to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;
- to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and
- to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land

In addition the government suggests that the green belt has the following positive functions:

- to provide opportunities for access to the open countryside for the urban population;
- to provide opportunities for outdoor sport and outdoor recreation near urban areas;
- to retain attractive landscapes, and enhance landscapes, near to where people live;
- to improve damaged and derelict land around towns;
- to secure nature conservation interest; and
- to retain land in agricultural, forestry and related uses.

4.3 The UK's local planning system

As a part of the 1947 Act a system of development plans was introduced. Development plans were meant to provide the planner with a general background for making land-use decisions on a case-by-case basis.

The 1968 Town and Country Planning Act added to this system by introducing two forms of plan. Structure plans were to be drawn at the County level to decide on strategic planning matters. To decide on local planning matters however, district Local Authorities (LAs) had to make 'Local Plans'. These local plans became mandatory as a result of the 1991 Planning and Compensation Act. The form and content of local plans are controlled by central government. Central government defines the kind of plan that it expects the LAs to adopt in Planning Policy Guidance.⁹⁾ The other kind of check on the authority of the local planner is the current system of public participation, introduced by the 1968 Act.

The review and adoption of a local plan is a complex task requiring an average of

5.5 years.¹⁰⁾ The following gives a brief outline of the local planning process with emphasis on the aspects that are relevant to the study.

A local plan review involves five stages during which the final outcome of the plan may be changed through consultation (Figure - 4.1). During the preparation stage, LAs

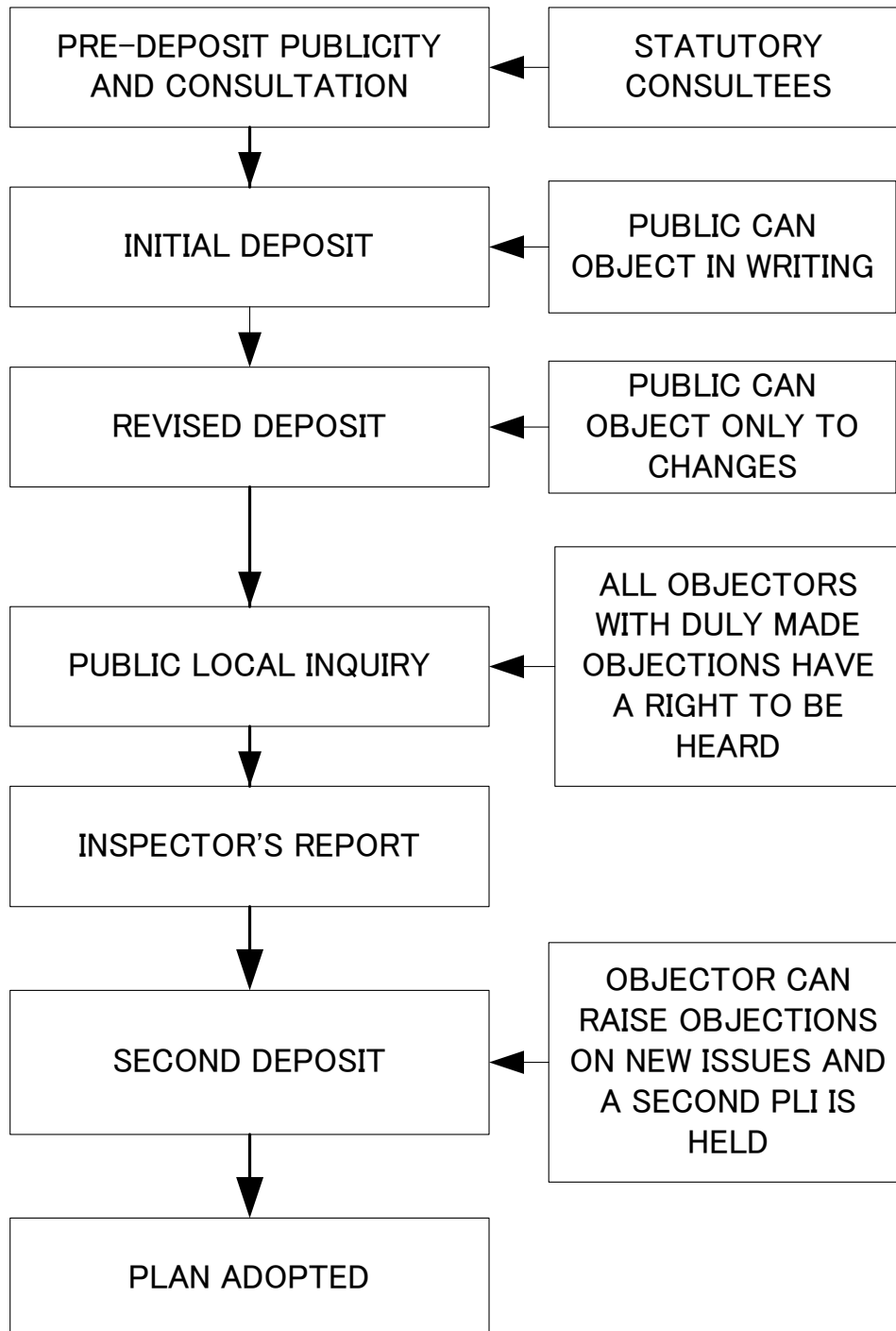


Figure - 4.1 Local plan adoption

carry out pre-deposit consultations as part of producing the first draft. Following this, the LA allows the plan to be publicly inspected for a period of 6 weeks, during which time objections have to be made in writing. During the subsequent period of negotiation, if the LA does not meet at least one of the objections, an adversarial Public Local Inquiry (PLI) is held. A government planning inspector hears the objectors' and the LA's side of the argument and then issues a report. The LA has to justify the decision of whether to adopt the changes in the report or not, before a second deposit is made available for public inspection. If no objectors raise new issues at this stage the plan is adopted. If new issues are raised, a second PLI is held after which the plan may be adopted.

Such a complex series of interactions produces a variety of plans. To understand what influences the content of the plans, researchers have up to now reported a series of detailed individual case studies. These cases have then been used to infer general characteristics of UK local planning. The following reviews these studies.

4.4 A review of local planning studies' literature

During the 1960s and 1970s UK local plans were assumed to be no more than an opportunity for defining the strategy of an area. Plans were considered to be unproblematic and their content was assumed to be neutral. Policies were thought to be easily transferable from one part of a country to another and even from one country to another.

These assumptions were undermined as a result of a number of studies published during the 1980s. These studies aimed to show that "the form of development plans as procedural tools is something which is evolved in specific social-historical contexts, which in turn affects the content of plans and of the policies and proposals which it may contain".¹¹⁾ To arrive at a proper understanding of what constitutes the public interest as expressed by the local plans, Healey argued that it was necessary to examine the plans' distinctive form and content and the processes involved in their preparation. For example, Healey's study quoted above looks at different aspects of plan preparation, and describes the content of seven plans in different parts of the country.¹¹⁾ This work was followed by a number of studies that employed a series of planning scenarios to assess the impact of local plans in different parts of the country.^{12,13)} Overall, this work showed that local

plans were effective in guiding and supporting decisions by local planners. The work also showed how the plans were important for communicating the LAs' intention to the private sector.^{14,15)} An example of this communicative function occurs in the case of the green belt.

Researchers have argued that the green belt is useful for local planners. This is because the aim and permanence of the green belt are widely understood among planning professionals (i.e. consultants, developers, NGOs etc.) This means that the existence of a green belt prevents time being wasted in negotiating and lobbying with the LA to release land in the urban fringe.

Though these conclusions are useful for understanding the planning of the green belt at the local level, they only go part of the way to explain how the green belt's local plans vary or what local plans are used for. For example, if the green belt's aims and permanence are widely understood we would expect the local planning policies in the green belt to be very similar. If the green belt's policies do vary, what factors are responsible for this variation?

The London green belt extends over a large area and over a variety of planning conditions. To understand how the green belt is planned at the local level, it is necessary to infer what determines the content of its local plans over a large area. From the pattern seen in the content of the local plans it may be possible to infer the influences on the content of the policies. The detailed method employed by the above authors would restrict the scope of such a study. Therefore it is necessary to develop a new method for assessing the content of the local plans.

4.5 Method

The London green belt covers an area of 5085 Km² over a variety of open spaces,¹⁶⁾ that range in their suitability for conservation, from areas of outstanding natural beauty such as the North Downs in Surrey, to degraded land in the urban fringe. 58 local authorities maintain the green belt around London. Each of these LAs were contacted between March and June, 2002 to obtain their latest plan. Out of these, 3 (5%) of the plans were obtained by visiting the LA; 27 (47%) plans were received by post/email and 21 (36%) were downloaded from the respective LAs' websites. Plans were not obtained

for 7 (12%) of the LAs. Though some of the plans were undergoing a review process in all cases the latest plan was requested. It was assumed that whether the LA was a London Borough, a district council or a Unitary Authority, was not going to significantly affect the results. It was assumed that only those policies that fall into the green belt section of the local plan affect the planning of the green belt. For example, policies that fall into the environment or housing section are beyond the scope of this study even though these

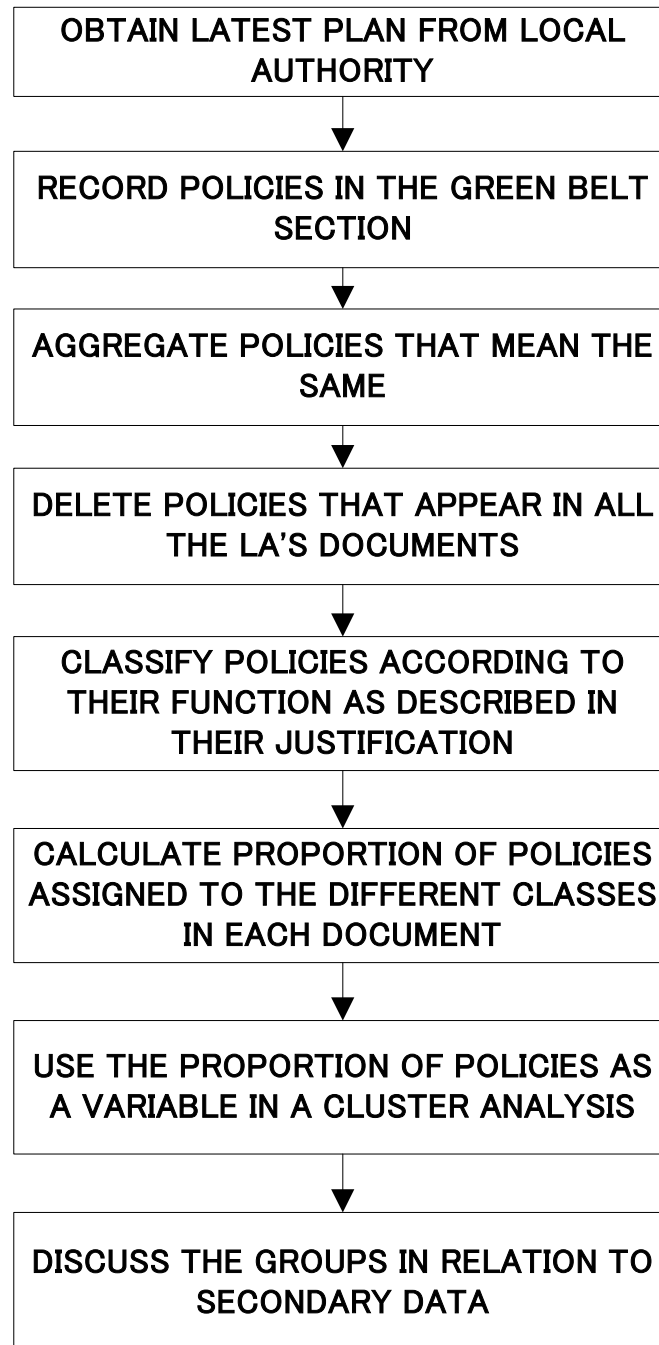


Figure - 4.2 Steps used in the method

may well have an impact on the green belt. These were then inputted to a database (Figure - 4.2).

Table – 4.1 Keywords used for classifying the green belt local policies

GROUP
↓ (see Table - 4.2)

I	Additions to the GB	II	Revisions/exclusions	IV	Farm shops	VII	Landscaping	
	Adjoining land to GB		Safeguarded land		Listed building		Linear Park	
	Agricultural buildings		White land		Re-use unused rural buildings	VIII	Ecological impact	
	Existing bad devt.		Subdivision		Rural character		Nature conservation	
	Extensions	Agricultural occupancy change	Rural fringe	Sustainable rurality				
	garden centres	Ag. workers dwellings	Access	Woodland protection				
	Glasshouses	Ag. workers, extra control	Allotments	IX	Caravans			
	Indoor sport	Bad appearance=no development	Country parks		Cemeteries			
	Metropolitan open areas	Change of land-use	Greenways		Gypsy sites			
	New Buildings	Fragmentation of farmland	Historic gardens		Moorings			
	Outbuildings	Golf courses	Leisure needs	Plotlands				
	Outdoor sport	Replacement dwelling	AONB	Temporary Buildings				
	Protect outside MGB	Residential Buildings	Countryside conservation	X	Airport operation			
	Protect visual amenity	Residential caravans	Horse/equestrian		Service areas			
	Riding schools	Re-use of existing building	Landscape protection		Motorways			
	Stables	Agricultural protection	Overgrazing	XI	Community facilities			
	Strategic gap	Commercial development	Removal of topsoil		Low cost housing			
	II	Excluded villages	IV	Countryside management	VII	Water bodies	XII	Flooding
		Infilling		Development next to farm		Community forests		Mineral workings
		Major developed sites		Farm diversification		Damaged land	Waste disposal sites	

Within the green belt section, each policy is separated by paragraph numbers according to central government guidance.⁹⁾ The plans were read and a list of 80 keywords drawn up to identify the individual policies (Table - 4.1). Policies were then counted according to this list. This inevitably involved some aggregation of different wordings (e.g. those plans with policies to control ‘mobile homes’ and those controlling ‘caravans’ were assumed to be the same) and occurred in 14 cases out of a total of 545 (2.5%). Policies which appear in all of the plans were deleted from the analysis since they do not contribute to differentiating the LAs in a statistical analysis.¹⁷⁾ Using Elson et al’s.¹⁸⁾ definitions of the role of green belt policies and the justifications contained in the local plans, the policies were grouped into the different categories shown in Table - 4.2.

The emphasis on each of the policy groups in Table - 4.2 was treated as a variable for characterising the local authorities. The emphasis was defined by the number of policies in the local plan as a proportion of the total number of green belt policies. SPSS

was employed to perform a Ward Method cluster analysis on this variable to classify the different local authorities. A map of this clustering was then drawn and this was compared with the rate of urban land-use and the proportion of green belt in each local authority, calculated from a 1:50,000 cadastre,¹⁹⁾ a map of the green belt boundary²⁰⁾ and a map of urbanized areas at a scale of 1 pixel to 110m.²¹⁾

Table – 4.2 Classes of green belt policies used

Group	Policy category	Explanation
I	PRESERVE OPENESS	The main aim of the London Green Belt (LGB) is to preserve 'openness' – any development which infringes this, e.g. large agricultural buildings are rarely permitted
II	ALLOWS/ CONTROLS SOME GROWTH	Some of the LAs use the MGB to direct development into certain areas. This group of policies makes provisions for 'white land' – i.e. land that may be built on at some stage in the future.
III	ANTI-SPECULATION	Development for agricultural or forestry use is generally permitted in the MGB. Developers seek planning permission by building a residence which is ostensibly for a farm but then change this designation with comparative ease. These policies aim to prevent this.
IV	RURAL CHARACTER	The plans looked at still view the MGB as having a rural preservation function. This group includes policies that prevent high-grade agricultural land from being built-on, controls the size and function of farm shops and controls the conversion of rural buildings into other uses.
V	AMENITY	This includes provisions for using open space in non-agricultural uses, including Country parks, allotments, leisure facilities
VI	LANDSCAPE PROTECTION	These policies protect the landscape by regulating equestrian activities which have a negative effect on the landscape. Also, the MGB is used to give extra development control to Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty
VII	LANDSCAPE RESTORATION	Some of the LAs contain areas in the urban fringe with a degraded landscape. These policies aim to encourage the restoration of landscapes, e.g. through community forestry.
VIII	NATURE CONSERVATION	These policies aim to maintain biodiversity and rural sustainability
IX	LIMINAL DEVELOPMENT	Often the urban fringe is also a place for development that is difficult to define. Caravans and gipsy sites fall into this category, these policies control the permanence of such settlements and their location.
X	INFRASTRUCTURE	These policies control the infrastructure developments such as airports and motorways and the added development control that is needed around them
XI	LOCAL FACILITIES	These policies encourage low-cost housing in rural areas and to promote community facilities
XII	UNAVOIDABLE URBAN FRINGE DEVELOPMENT	Certain activities – e.g. a waste development site, require an urban fringe location. Others, e.g. mineral extraction cannot take place elsewhere. The policies are intended to control such development

4.6 Results

Some of the overall figures for the number of policies in the different groups in the whole of the green belt are shown (Table - 4.3). Overall the most important policy group in the green belt can be said to be ‘preserving openness’. A policy that falls into this class appears at least once in 84% of the local authorities and makes up 20% of the policies used overall.

Group A local authorities: Policies that admit and control development (N=8)

Table – 4.3 Percentages of green belt policy types appearing overall in the local plans

Group	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII	IX	X	XI	XII
% of policies mentioned overall	20	9	14	13	8	9	5	5	8	4	3	4
% LAs containing at least one policy	84	73	73	65	49	39	29	25	20	14	10	10

The first split in the dendogram reveals a distinction between those local authorities that use policies, which defend the green belt and those whose green belt chapter contains policies, which may permit development taking place (Figure - 4.3). Such policies include revisions or exclusions from the green belt, house extensions and provision for ‘white land’ (i.e. open land which is not green belt) for example. In general, group A local authorities, are clustered to the north and to the south east of London (Figure - 4.4). Table - 4.4 shows that the population of these local authorities significantly increased between 1981 and 2001. This group is also comparatively undeveloped with only 19% urbanisation. The placement of these local authorities along a development corridor may be regarded as a significant factor in determining their green belt policies as seen from the government’s regional planning guidance 9 for the South-East (Figure 4.5).²²⁾ For example, the Bedfordshire structure plan, includes a provision for removal of the green belt to accommodate housing around Dunstable.²³⁾ The Hertfordshire Structure plan also includes provisions for releases of green belt, specifically, at Stevenage and North Hertfordshire.²⁴⁾

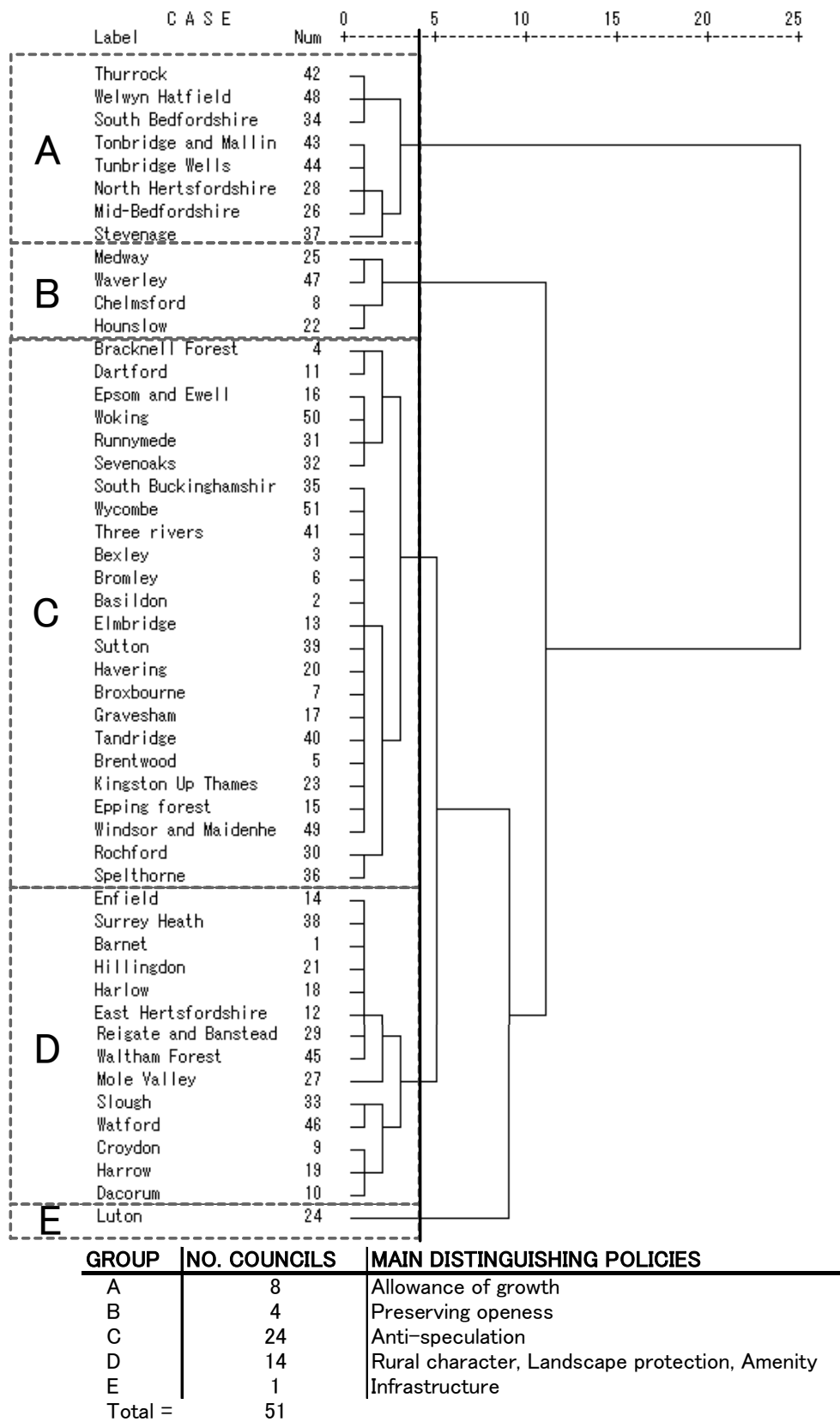


Figure – 4.3 Dendrogram to separate LAs according to their emphasis on different types of green belt policy

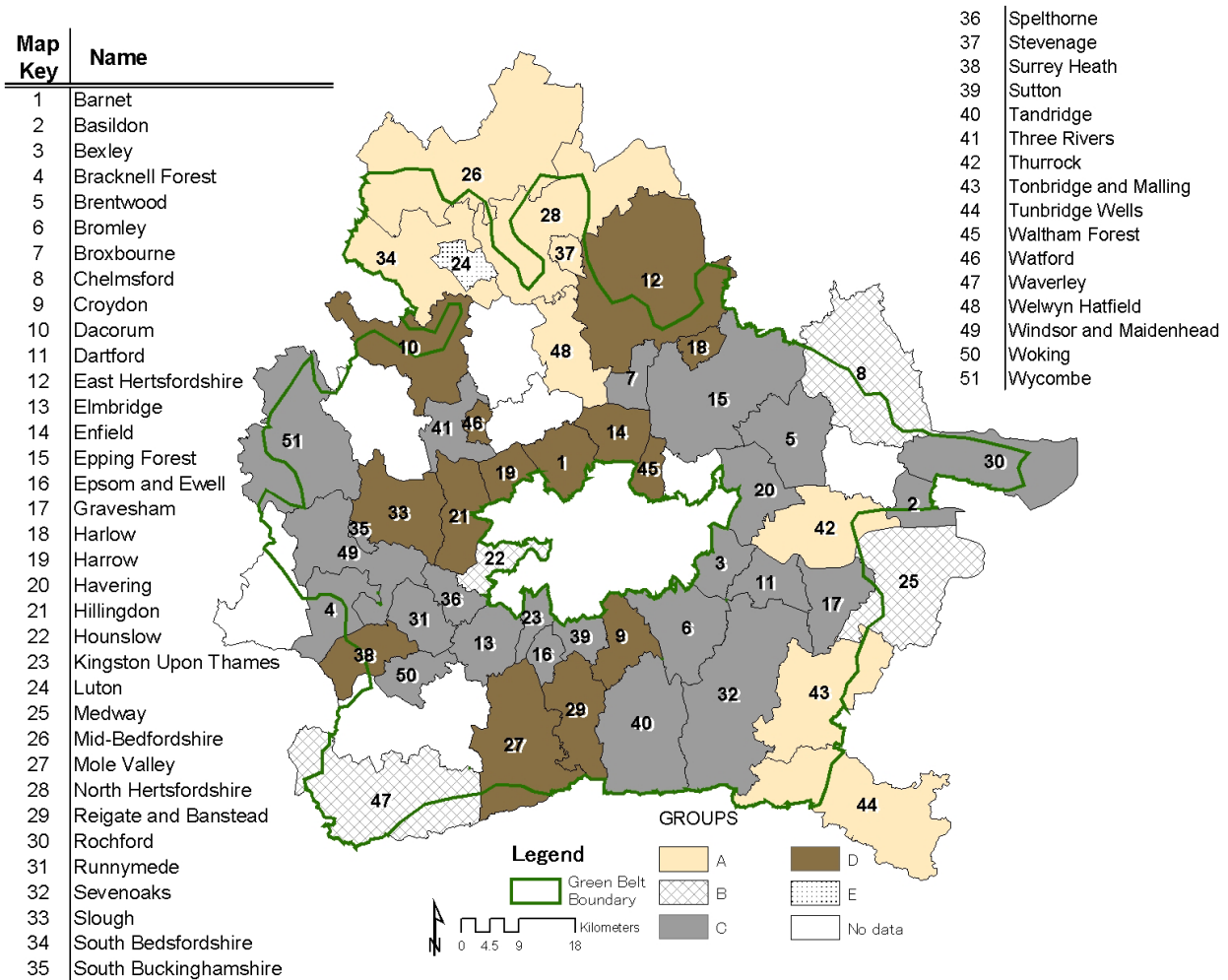


Figure – 4.4 Map of the different local authority groups derived from the cluster analysis (c.f. Figure – 4.3).

Group B local authorities: local authorities with the minimum required green belt policies (N=4)

Central government details five aims for the inclusion of land in the green belt (see 4.2 above). The plans in Group B contain the minimum number of policies needed to achieve this aim, i.e. that of retaining the land’s openness. In explaining the reasoning for these policies they use wording that copies exactly the central government’s guidance. These local authorities have 46% of their non-urban open space outside the green belt.

The exception to this is the borough of Hounslow, which lies on the inner edge of the green belt. The green belt can be regarded as a minor issue for these authorities that lie on the outer and inner edges of the study area. They have little incentive to create green belt policies that go beyond or against the government’s guidance.

Group C local authorities: Rural preservation policies (N=24)

This group is the largest and contains much of London’s urban fringe. Many of the

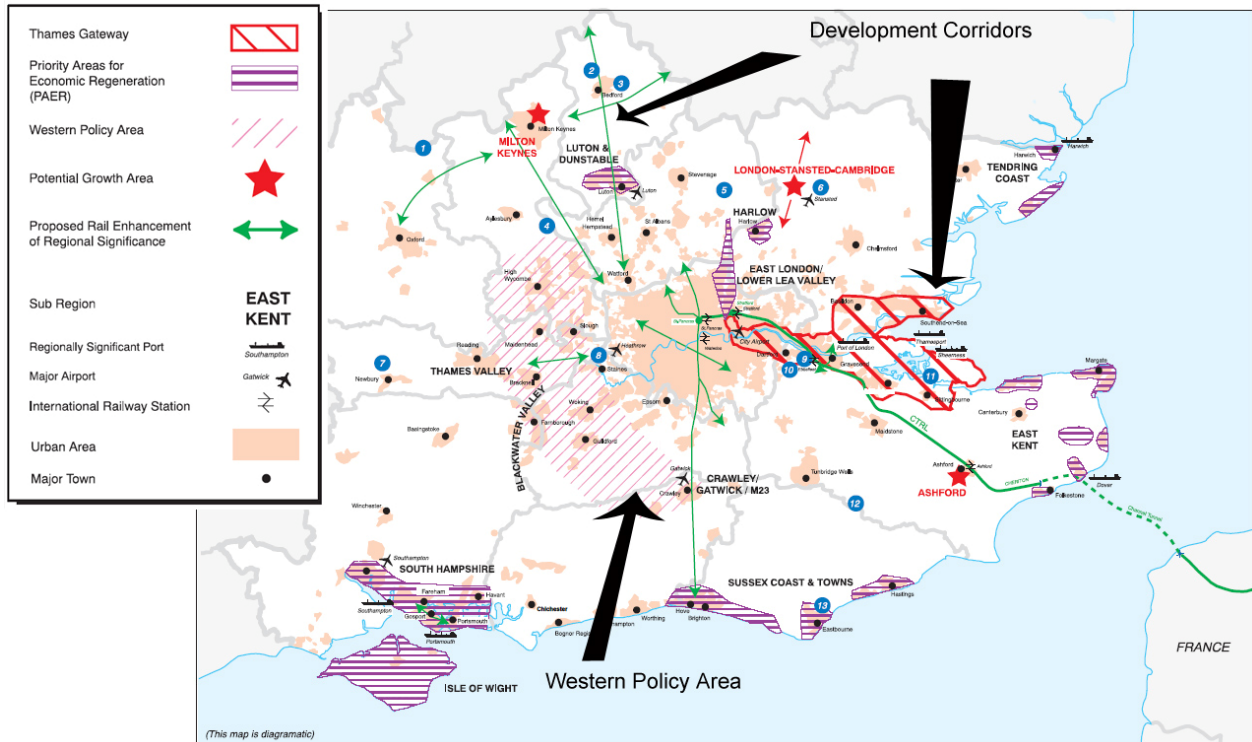


Figure – 4.5 Map of Core Strategy for the South-East from RPG9.

local authorities to the West of London lie in the most affluent area, the so-called “golden triangle” which is currently termed the “Western Policy Area” (Figure - 4.5). The distinguishing policies of these local authorities are their emphasis on preserving the openness of the green belt, imposing extra controls which prevent agricultural dwellings being developed to be later sold as residences in the green belt²⁵⁾ and preserving the rural character of the district. Local authorities such as Bracknell Forest, Dartford and Three Rivers all contain more than 40% of policies that aim to carefully check the development of agricultural dwellings being developed. A rural local authority such as Rochford, has 50% of its policies which fall into the rural character category (Table - 4.4). More than a quarter of policies in the plans of local authorities, such as Sevenoaks and South Buckinghamshire, also fall into this category.

Group D local authorities: Local authorities distinguished by policies for protecting

and restoring landscapes. (N=14)

The plans of the LAs in this group include policies that aim to control overgrazing, implement landscaping measures and restore damaged landscapes. Some of the local authorities in this group contain fragmented agricultural land with some land in a derelict state (e.g. Enfield, Hillingdon). Others include local authorities with largely agricultural landscapes closer to the outside of the green belt but still within the range of the commuter belt (e.g. Dacorum, Surrey Heath and Chelmsford). The local authorities in this group comprise the rest of London’s urban fringe and are the most urbanized (Table - 4.4).

Table – 4.4 Averages figures calculated for the different groups

Local Authority Groups	Total population % change 1981-2001 ⁽¹⁾	Average % of urban land ⁽³⁾	Average % of land outside the GB ⁽²⁾	Average % undeveloped land outside the GB ⁽²⁾
A	8.5	18.8	28.9	31.3
B	6.0	30.7	45.5	48.2
C	3.8	34.9	7.5	9.7
D	6.7	48.8	11.0	12.6
Total avg.	6.2	33.3	23.2	25.4

(1) Based on figures from McGinty and Williams (2001) Regional Trends, 36, London, HMSO.
 (2) From a 1:50000 cadastre [Ordnance Survey, (2002) OS Landranger Series, 1:50000. London, Ordnance Survey] and a 1 pixel=110m map [ODPM (1993) Map – approved green belts based on structure plans and local plans, www.planning.odpm.gov.uk.]
 (3) From a map of urban areas [MAFF, (2000) England Rural Development Programme 2000–2006, Appendix 8, London Region, HMSO, London 9–10.]

Group E (N=1, Luton)

Group E is an exception, since its section on the green belt only contains provisions for controlling development around the airport. Luton is an exception also in the sense that it is a working class town surrounded by affluent strongly preservationist local authorities. The role of the green belt is different here than that for the surrounding region.

4.7 Discussion

4.7.1 Comparison with the results of previous research

The results show the variability in the green belt's function in different areas. This is in contrast to previous studies that have assumed the green belt's function is constant because of its strategic designation. The function of the green belt also shows a distributional pattern. The following discusses the reasons for this distribution.

4.7.2 Green belt policies used in the face of demands for growth

Though the basic physical requirement for land to be included in the green belt remains the same, i.e. that the land should remain open, it would seem as though the policies in the green belt were being used for a variety of different purposes. When a local planning authority lies in the path of the government's plans for an urban growth corridor through the green belt, it creates policies that are associated with urban growth. A subsequent interview with South Bedfordshire District Council revealed that the local authorities were opposed to the plans of the strategic authority to develop green belt land. Therefore, their decision to use such growth policies in the green belt is not necessarily to allow such growth to take place on the green belt. Instead the local authority is trying to bring the issue of growth under a green belt designation and regain control from the strategic planning authority. This regional-local conflict has been shown in previous studies.²⁶⁾

4.7.3 Green belt policies that prevent speculative dwelling and preserve rurality

The largest number of local authorities in the London green belt are distinguished by their policies for controlling speculative dwellings and the preservation of rural characteristics. Such policies are applied to affluent areas to the South-West, and to the East of London, where houses in rural villages are sought after. Therefore, developers have more to gain by trying to convince the local authority to allow development. Similarly, it could be argued that the local authority has more to lose since the rural

character of these areas is why residents and businesses will move there.

Such development can be called “speculative” because the developers seek to exploit loopholes in the green belt policy. Agricultural dwellings for example are in general allowed in the green belt. Developers have tried to take advantage of this designation by buying a farm and then selling the house alone, at a considerable profit. The tendency to use the green belt to control “speculative” development is reflected in the criteria for building agricultural dwellings. These go beyond the normal development criteria by forcing the applicant for planning permission to prove that they are a legitimate farmer. Developers may also try to convince the local planning authority to allow the land to be developed by allowing the land to go derelict. LAs try to prevent this by stipulating that dereliction is no excuse for development.

The rural character of the green belt is maintained in these areas through the use of policies that protect agriculture, and aim to precisely control what may be sold in farm shops and what rural buildings may be re-used for. The green belt can be said to be maintaining the rural character of the area at the same time as maintaining control on further development. Clearly a paradox lies in these policies to preserve this ‘reconstructed rurality’.²⁷⁾ These policies aim to preserve the countryside to attract residents and investment, but at the same time this imposes a much stricter control on development than would exist in other parts of the green belt.

4.7.4 Green belt policies that restore and protect landscapes

Many of the local authorities in the urban fringe are distinguished by their use of policies in the green belt to restore and protect landscapes. Such local authorities are generally located in the urban fringe and are comparatively more built-up. Their policies reflect a use of the green belt in a positive way for enhancing the landscape of the areas.

4.7.5 Green belt policies for communication and conflict mediation

Overall, these results support Healey’s conclusions on the communicative function of the local plans.^{14,15)} The green belt local policies are being used to communicate the local authority’s intention to the different groups. This communication comes not only as

a warning to developers, that the local authority intends to stringently control buildable land (e.g. Group A) or to prevent agricultural dwellings being converted into executive homes (e.g. Group C). It also comes as an invitation to residents and companies to enjoy the rural quality of the area (e.g. Group C) and to show that the green belt's landscape should be restored because it serves the open space requirements of the nearby population in the urban fringe (e.g. Group D). In addition to Healey's work, we wish to propose that the changes in the green belt's function can be explained by Foucault's idea of the multiplicity and even, the tactical polyvalence of discourses.²⁸⁾ In other words that the end, i.e. green belt preservation for whatever, usually unarticulated, reason, is justified by assigning it an overt 'function' through its policies. This is similar to the finding in Chapter 3 that the function of the green belt is flexibly and opportunistically determined.

Therefore the strategic function of the green belt is moving smoothly down the chain of the government's command to become problematic at the local level.²⁹⁾ This follows Foucault's concern with governing in a liberal society. In such a society, the objective of the government is to harness social fields and use them for the purposes of the government's rationality. In a study that employs this concept, Murdoch shows how a clear central government target becomes problematic at the local level. In the case of the green belt the same process is taking place and the supposedly technical function of the green belt becomes a battleground of competing rationalities.

The principle controller of the green belt's function is the local planner. She or he has the power to set the terms under which the green belt can or cannot be eroded. At times this power can be used to follow or oppose central government's plan. Comparing this conclusion to previous work which showed that the role of the green belt is conflict mediation.^{12,30)}, we could add that it is the planner's use of the green belt that mediates the conflict.

4.7.6 A brief comparison with Japan

In Chapter 4 above we showed that central government has an important influence over local planning policies. These policies can determine whether land is developed or not. Compared to Japan, central and local planners in the UK have much more power to

set policies and resist development. This control applies to areas outside as well as inside the green belt. Central government clearly benefits from support for the green belt. In Japan on the other hand, neither central nor local government are able to refuse development. It is possible for the government to slow-down development but in practice developers are skilled in avoiding various kinds of restrictions. Finally, we can say that central government in Japan has always been torn by a desire to give more power to planning but finally allowing the need for economic growth to dictate its decision-making.

4.8 Conclusions

The results show that the function of the green belt varies in the different local authorities around London. In a similar way to the results in Chapter 3, we show that the main objective remains to implement the green belt. The function of the green belt is in some cases invented to strengthen the green belt when it is threatened.

The study showed how the green belt's function is flexible and that it varies in different areas. Chapter 3 showed that this variability allowed the green belt to be established. Chapter 4 has shown that the flexibility allows it to cover a wide variety of different planning situations. This flexibility allows the green belt to survive. Chapter 3 also showed a high degree of central government intervention in the green belt's establishment. The results in Chapter 4 also show this central government intervention. This is not only through planning policy guidance, but also through other plans such as the Thames Gateway. Chapter 3 demonstrated the important role of the discretion of the local planner. The results in Chapter 4 also show this discretion as some local planners use the green belt to resist central government intervention.

In addition, a characteristic of the green belt is that it gives the local authority a significant degree of bargaining power. This has already been shown in other literature (Chapter 1). However, the above results show that the varying functions of the green belt are an expression of the local authority's power. For example, the local authority can use the function of the green belt to counter strategic designations for housing and growth or it can enhance the amenity of the green belt for nearby residents by promoting landscaping.

The multitude of green belt functions identified in the study can be seen as an example of the way in which a particular iconic planning policy will create its own language and rationality, despite the apparent simplicity of its central government implementation.

Despite the influence of central government on the local planning and the control of the local planner in setting the green belt's policies we can also deduce that pressure groups will have a significant influence on the policies in the green belt. Chapter 3 showed the important role of a professional consensus and a common language in allowing the green belt to be established. The following chapter further explores this consensus among local groups.

Chapter 5

The lack of bottom-up planning at the local level in the green belt

5.1 Introduction

We showed in Chapter 3 that planners flexibly changed the green belt's function. This is important in maintaining the green belt today (Chapter 4). The next chapter addresses another aspect of green belt planning that Chapter 3 also showed was significant: consensus among groups with seemingly opposed interests. Specifically we aim to investigate whether seemingly opposed groups such as developers and environmental groups have similar interests towards the green belt. At the same time we reveal the strategies that the local groups employ to influence the content of the local plans.

We first review studies that have investigated the influence of different groups on the planning process (5.2). We describe the method used for the study (5.3) in particular, the site selection (5.3.1) and the questions asked in the survey (5.3.2). Section 5.4 describes the results of the survey. Finally, we discuss the results (5.5) and draw conclusions (5.6).

5.2 Local planning studies: a review

A number of studies already describe factors within UK planning that encourage consensual decision-making. Before undertaking the study it is necessary to review this work. The following literature review identifies three factors that are important for

encouraging consensus: the propensity for elites to make the decisions, the strength of property rights, and the links between the local authorities, environmental groups and developers.

5.2.1 A propensity for elites to make the decisions

A number of studies since the 1970s have shown that a variety of causes for elitism exist in planning.¹⁾ Firstly, the local authority will simply exclude certain groups from planning and decision-making. These groups may be excluded for a variety of reasons but the most common reason is that these groups obstruct the aims of the local authority. Secondly, local authorities may establish links with certain groups through informal networks. In rural areas Woods²⁾ has shown that rural pursuits such as shooting and hunting are particularly important for this type of networking. Groups, which do not have access to such informal networks, do not enjoy the same level of access to the local authority. Thirdly, certain groups have traditionally enjoyed privileged access to decision-making in planning. These groups are usually local business or producer interests.

5.2.2 The strength of property rights in the UK

This elitism is particularly important to consider in the case of the UK. The UK lacks a system of constitutional rights. This means that citizens do not have a right to be represented or for expressing free speech. Instead the legal system has been based on common law and precedent which has allowed the British planning system to develop its discretionary approach.³⁾ Despite the lack of a constitution, property rights in the UK have always been given a strong status. The planning system has had to develop its legal structure to allow these rights to have a voice and be mediated. Over a span of almost 700 years property owners have expected to be consulted about any changes taking place to their locality that may affect their property rights and eventually the value of their property.⁴⁾ Such changes could include anything from the view from their house, local road traffic, shopping arrangements, the character of their locality and the existence or not of a green belt.⁵⁾ The tradition of participation linked to property rights in the UK and

the discretion of local planners to control development has encouraged a consensual approach to planning.

The power of a concern for property prices was influential on the inter-War planning system as shown in Chapter 3. Landowners adjacent to a proposed green belt designation were willing to contribute to the purchase of green belt land because they were aware that it would raise the value of their properties. The landowners were compensating society for the benefit that they received from the green belt.

5.2.3 Local authorities and their relationship with environmental groups and developers

One of the most effective ways of directing this property-owning interest is through participation in local environmental groups.⁶⁾ Organised environmental voluntary activity is a comparatively recent phenomenon dating from around the 1920s. Though community organisations have existed in the UK since 1846 there was little activity before the advent of the urbanisation described above in 3.4.

Environmental groups have the following characteristics that promote consensual decision-making with the local authority:

- *Skills and membership*: A largely middle and upper class membership; this membership will often include professionals such as architects, retired or working planners and lawyers. These professionals may lend a number of useful skills to the environmental group's cause. In addition, some environmental groups such as Nature Conservation Trusts have more expertise than the local authorities because they are able to call on the services of ecologists and other experts. In such cases the local authority will rely on the expertise of the environmental group to produce needed data.

- *Claims of these groups to be representative*: Despite having inherent problems of representativeness,⁷⁾ environmental groups are also included in the decision-making because they represent fixed, identifiable points with some permanence and continuity. They serve to channel amorphous local opinions.

As well as environmental groups, developers also enjoy a close relationship with the local authority. These encourage developers to enter into consensual decision-making

with the local authority for the following reasons.

5.2.3.1 Building houses is in the financial interests of the local authority

Local authorities are under pressure to meet the housing demand. The number of houses that the local authority must permit is determined and imposed by central government. Local authorities may favour a larger number of residents because it raises their potential to raise taxes and generate jobs. Finally some local authorities may own land that they wish to sell. In such a case they have the same interests as a landowner. They will be concerned with the short-term gains of selling land with planning permission.⁸⁾

5.2.3.2 The long-term nature of land investment

The percentage of land which is owned by public and private institutions in the green belt (20%) and the amount of time it takes to release land from the green belt both indicate that developers and landowners will take a long-term view of the investment potential of land they buy.⁹⁾ This long-term view of their investment means that developers and landowners will have time to build a close relationship with the local authority as a way of releasing land for development.

5.2.3.3 Land values and the stability of the land market

Studies in the welfare economics literature and in planning have shown that developers prefer a regulated well-planned land-use system.^{8,10)} This preference is for two reasons. Firstly, developers can also behave as landowners. In a case where they are selling land they may hope that the value of the land may rise. Secondly, developers benefit from a nearby green belt since the houses are sold at a premium.

Overall the review above showed that a number of factors allow the local authority to enjoy a close relationship with developers and environmentalists. This allows the local authority to easily obtain a consensus with such groups. In addition it is possible in some cases that the developers will share the same interests as the environmentalists. Some

environmental groups recognise that housing can be beneficial when it creates a more

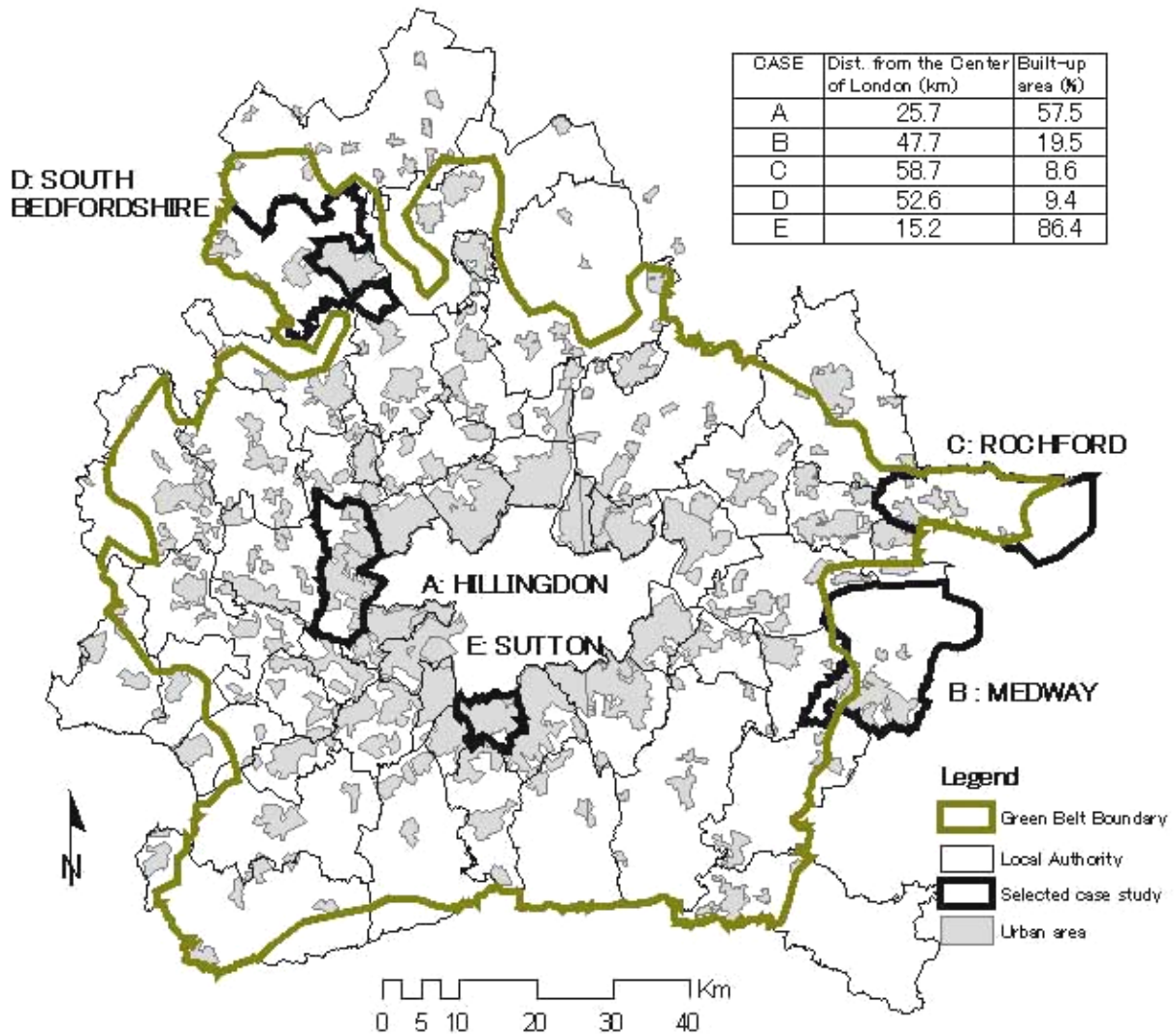


Figure – 5.1 Location of the case study areas

sustainable form of urban development. Other environmental groups wish to protect green spaces inside the city so would prefer the development to occur on the edge of the existing urban area.¹¹⁾ Developers may also benefit from a restrictive planning regime. This can either be because the amount of buildable land is restricted or because they are able to sell houses at a premium in such an environment. Fairlie¹²⁾ has argued that this produces a consensus between big environmental groups and developers.

5.3 Method

The literature review above showed a number of causes why consensual decision-making exists in UK planning. To identify whether developers and environmental groups share similar interests in terms of the green belt it is necessary to identify which of these groups have the skills to effectively communicate with and influence the local authority. It is important to understand the way in which these groups communicate with the local authority and their level of influence.

5.3.1 Site selection

Five sites were chosen to reflect a variety of green belt planning conditions (Figure – 5.1). The sites were chosen according to different distances from the centre of London and different levels of urbanization. The sites were also chosen from groups A, B, C and D identified in 4.6.

5.3.2 Survey questions

Following the pre-deposit publicity and consultation, the Local Authority (LA) will publish a draft of the local plan known as the “Initial Deposit” (see 4.5 and Figure – 4.2 above). The public may view this draft of the local plan, which will be available in the Local Authority offices, the public library and increasingly on the Internet. They may submit representations to the local authority based on whether they object to or support the local plan. When making this representation they must include their address, information about which section of the local plan they are referring to and whether they are objecting to, commenting or supporting the local plan. This data is open to the public so we collected it for the survey. Local planners were also interviewed about the local planning process. Using the addresses on these representations each of the objectors and/or their agents was sent a postal survey between January and February 2003.

5.3.2.1 Main questions

Being able to accurately measure the influence of a group or its level of

participation would be difficult without the use of an indicator. In a previous study

Table – 5.1 Return rate for the different case study areas

Case Study:	Council name	Year of the 1st deposit draft	Number of Cases	Number of Returns	% Return Rate
A	Hillingdon	1993	36	13	36.1
B	Medway	1999	10	6	60.0
C	Rochford	1993	12	6	50.0
D	South Beds	1999	56	23	41.1
E	Sutton	1996 (SPG)*	63	14	22.2
Total			177	62	35.0

* SPG = Supplementary Planning Guidance

Murdoch et al.¹³⁾ showed that the stage at which the group interacts with the making of the plan has a very significant impact on the final outcome. During the plan's initial stages, the discussion is relatively open. A group with influence can shape the content of the plan by deciding what should and should not be discussed. Ideas and opinions can easily change. However, writing the plan involves a certain amount of effort. This means that changing ideas once the plan has been written is more difficult than during the initial stages. Therefore the groups' level of influence was measured according to the stage at which they had interacted with the planning process. The survey was based on the following two questions:

- At what stages the group or individual had participated in or influenced the local plan.
- How many changes had resulted from their objection to the final plan.

In total, 62 questionnaires were returned between February and March 2003, relating to 35.0% of objections in the five sites chosen for the study (Table –5.1). This rate represents an average rate of return for a postal survey.¹⁴⁾

5.3.2.2 Defining the objectors

A number of studies point to factors that are responsible for a group having an influence with the local authority. Adams^{15,16)} looks at the lobbying efforts of landowners to influence the local plan. He identifies the significant role that consultants have in influencing the local plan. Other studies identify differences in the style of lobbying between a 'small' (i.e. local or neighbourhood interest) environmental group or developer and a 'large' (i.e. regional interest) environmental group or developer.^{6,8,13)}

Objecting to a local plan in England is a complex and time consuming process. One of the biggest factors that will have an influence on a group’s success in its negotiations with the LA is the group’s level of experience. Not only is the quantity of objections important for the group’s experience but also its quality. However assessing the quality of objections remains a challenge. Though a number of factors influence the quality of an objection, we assumed that the whether group’s interest goes beyond the boundaries of the local authority would be useful as an indicator. We assumed that a group that makes objections to plans in other local authorities is likely to be more established and professional. Similarly, if the group made objections to plans in other local authorities, its green belt interest would go beyond purely local issues. We can therefore say that these groups have a regional interest in green belt planning.

Assuming a positive relationship between experience and influence, the respondents were classified according to whether they had previously made objections to a local plan in the same or in a neighbouring local authority. In addition, a third group was defined. This was composed of objectors who had represented a client. These ‘Professional

Table – 5.2 Definition of the different groups that were surveyed

	Definition
Agent (Client’s Interest Group)	Agents include solicitors, lawyers and planning consultants. These can be hired by an interest group to influence the local planning process. Agents will represent a variety of clients in different locations. In other words their interest is not tied to their location. Note: In the survey, the Agents were all representing regional groups which are not included below. Agents have been classified separately from the regional groups because their position as consultants means that their experience and interest will be different from the other groups.
Regional (Regional Interest Group)	Regional interest groups include large development companies and environmental NGOs. Their interest covers several location in the green belt. In other words, their interest is not tied to a particular area in the green belt.
Local (Local Interest Group)	Local groups include neighbourhood associations, amenity organisations, schools small farmers and businesses. The interest of these groups towards the green belt was assumed to be purely located within the local authority.

Agents' may be planning consultants, lawyers, surveyors or solicitors, who represent a client during the submission of a local plan objection and are hired to navigate the complexities of the planning system. The nature of their work means that their position in relation to the green belt may be different from that of other objectors. Whereas they may have an interest in a positive outcome on behalf of their client, this may not be as strong as the interest of a landowner who will be able to benefit directly from a favourable planning decision, for example. The work of planning consultants means that in general, they will be involved in local plan reviews in several areas. This means that they will have a much richer level of experience when compared to other groups. At the same time the consultants will not have the same legitimacy as other groups. Since theirs is by definition only an indirect interest in the locality it is possible that this will weaken their objection. Similarly a consultant is less likely to be representative of a large block of voters. Therefore the local authority may have less incentive to placate them (Table – 5.2).

To understand how these factors influence local planning in the green belt, respondents were also asked a series of questions about their characteristics, their experience and their motivation for making the objection. They were specifically asked for the name of their organisation, whether development should or should not be allowed in the green belt and whether they had made objections related to the green belt previously in other plans. From this information it was possible to ascertain the groups' influence, their participation and the nature of their objections.

Objectors were classified into one of three groups. This classification was performed based on their answers to the questions in the survey: i.e., whether or not they had previously made objections regarding the green belt in other LAs. Respondents that had made such a representation were defined as having a 'regional' interest in green belt planning. Professional agents, e.g. planning consultants, were separated into a different group since the nature of their work means that they are involved in local plan reviews in several areas. Groups that had not made an objection about the green belt in another LA prior to the plan, were classified as having a local interest (Figure – 5.2).

In addition, the respondents were classified into one of seven groups according to their name and their motivation for making the objection. Using the name of their organisation they were classified as property company, developer, non-governmental

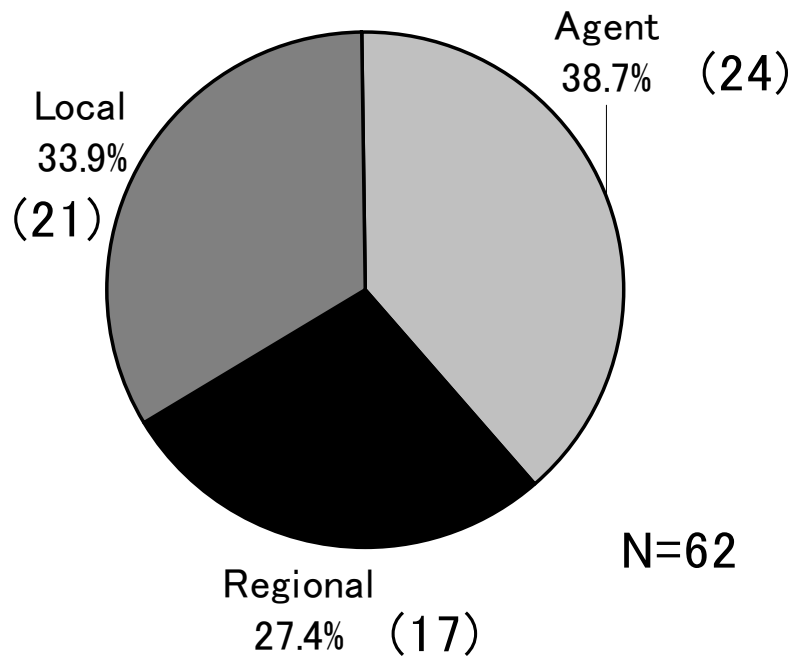


Figure – 5.2 Distribution of Local groups, regional groups and agents in the returned survey

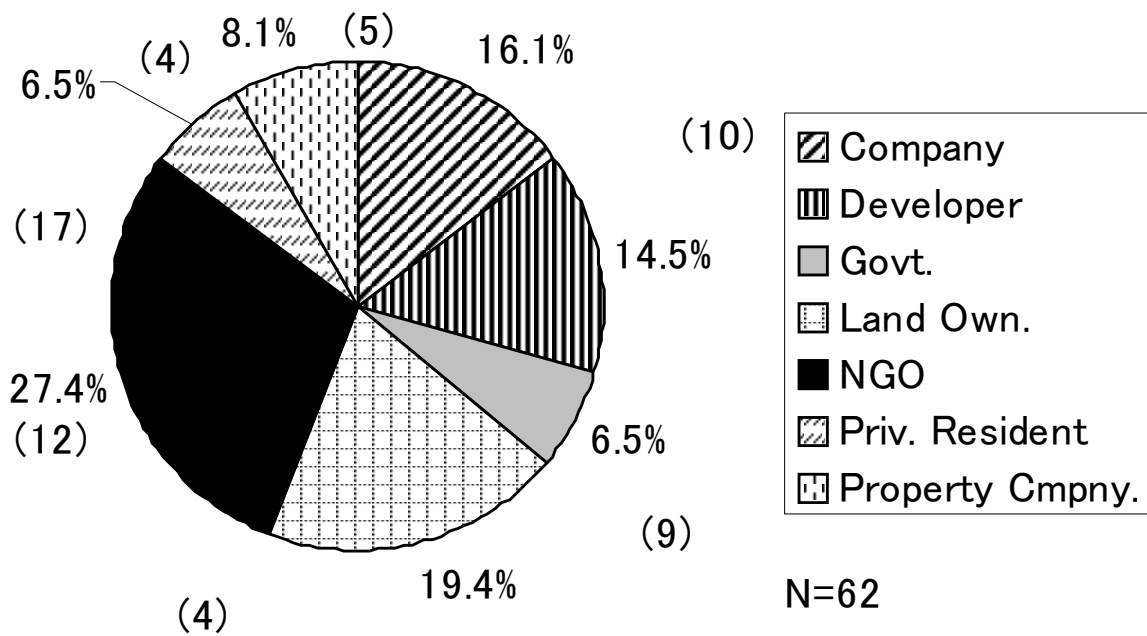


Figure – 5.3 Distribution of the different pressure groups in the returned survey

organisation (NGO), governmental organisation or private resident. If the respondent was none of these, their motivation for having land removed from the green belt was used to classify them. If this was economic, they were classified as land-owners. If this motivation included facilitating on site operations, they were classified as companies (Figure – 5.3).

5.4 Results: Objectors to the green belt

5.4.1 Participation in the local planning process

As expected, those groups with more experience in the local planning process, i.e.

Table – 5.3 Participation in planning the green belt

GROUPS	Participation at all stages		Early participation		Late participation		No Participation	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Agent	1	11.1	1	14.3	10	52.6	12	44.4
Regional	6	66.7	4	57.1	1	5.3	6	22.2
Local	2	22.2	2	28.6	8	42.1	9	33.3
Totals	9	100.0	7	100.0	19	100.0	27	100.0

P = 0.015 N = 62

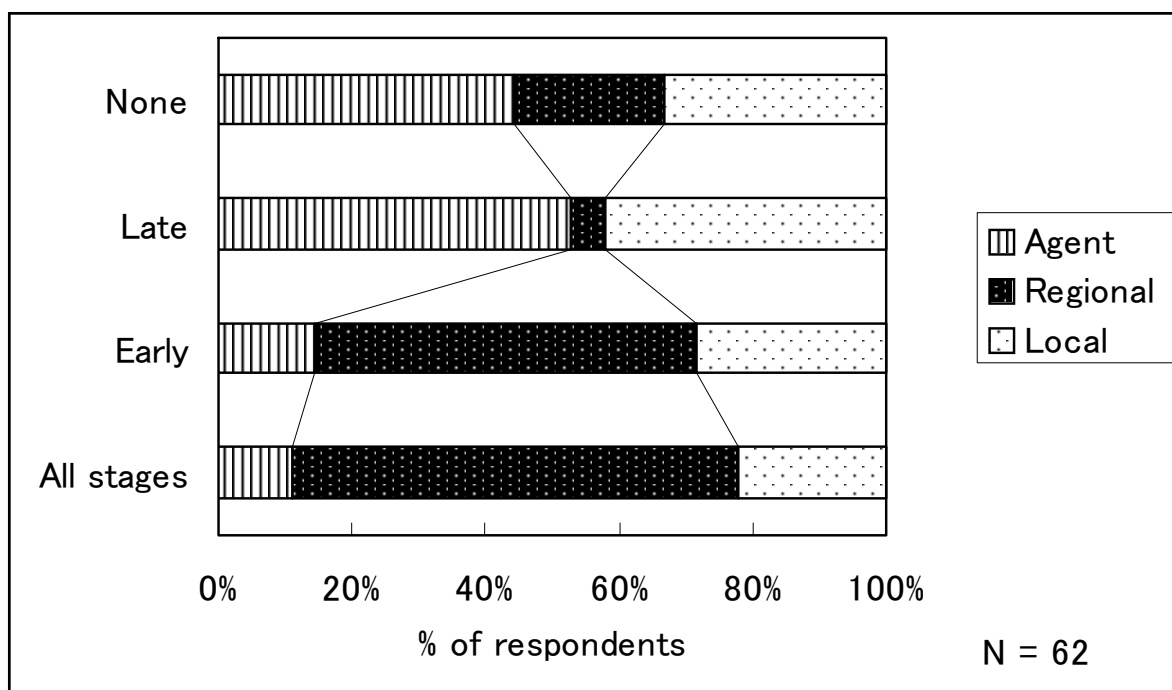


Figure – 5.4 Levels of participation of the different groups

regional groups, were able to participate in the early stages of plan-making, i.e. in either tabling issues, or discussing them before the plan was written. Agents (e.g. planning consultants) tended to participate during the latter stages of the local plan, i.e. during the public local inquiry. Again, this might be expected since such a public local inquiry requires time to attend and knowledge of planning policy. In addition, the adversarial nature of such an inquiry may be forbidding for some objectors (Table – 5.3; Figure – 5.4).

5.4.2 Influence on the local planning process

The regional groups’ influence shows a similar pattern to that seen for the participation (Table – 5.4; Figure – 5.5). Groups that influence all stages of plan development are regional groups. On the other hand, the agents make up the largest proportion of groups that were able to have a purely early influence on plan making. Agents also make up the largest proportion of groups that have a purely late influence on plan development.

Table – 5.4 Influence in planning the green belt

GROUPS	Influence at all stages		Early influence		Late influence		No Influence	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Agent	0	0.0	3	42.9	4	40.0	17	43.6
Regional	6	100.0	2	28.6	3	30.0	6	15.4
Local	0	0.0	2	28.6	3	30.0	16	41.0
Totals	6	100.0	7	100.0	10	100.0	39	100.0

P = 0.004 N = 62

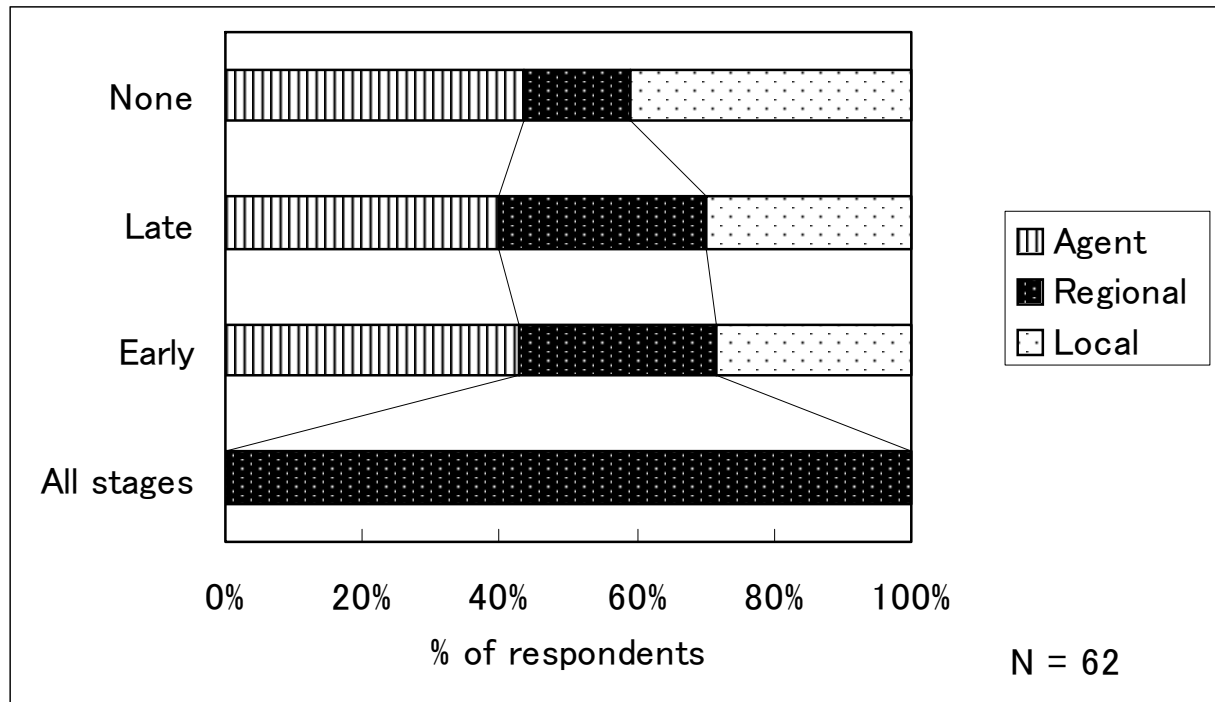


Figure – 5.5 Levels of influence of the different groups

5.4.3 Comparing the levels of participation and influence

The regional groups showed the highest participation at all stages of plan development so it can be expected that they will exert a high influence on plan-making. For the local groups, the relationship between participation and influence is not so clear. Table – 5.3 and Figure – 5.4 show that they participated to a relatively higher extent than agents in the planning process. Despite this, Table – 5.4 and Figure – 5.5 show that they have less influence on the outcome of the local plan when compared to the agents. Clearly, professional agents are at an advantage in being more experienced in arguing their case and in having access to information, contacts, experience and resources, when compared to a local group. At the same time, the local authority may be less ready to appease the consultants so there is a difference in the level of participation.

The above findings are confirmed in Table – 5.5. The respondents were asked to name the number changes in the final document that can be attributed to each of the

respondent’s objection. The regional groups show the highest number at 2.18 changes/objector, the agents show the next highest with 0.42 changes/objector. Finally the local groups have the lowest number at 0.24 changes/objector.

Table – 5.5 Number of changes to the plan per group

	Number of Changes in plan	Number of Objectors	Number of changes per objector
Agents	10	24	0.42
Regional	37	16	2.18
Local	5	22	0.24

5.4.4 The content of the objections and the strategy of the different groups

To determine why these differences exist between the different groups, the attitude of the group towards the green belt was analysed. In addition interviews were conducted with five local authority planners and 22 of the regional objectors.

5.4.4.1 Companies with a regional interest

67% of companies with a regional interest either wanted to see land removed or more development permitted in the green belt, whereas 33% looked for other changes (Table – 5.6). Table – 5.7 shows the respondents’ answers in relation to these other objections. The principle aim of such companies’ objections is to facilitate operations and to request a more flexible approach to green belt planning. These objectors include large commercial operations such as an airport or a gravel extraction company. Such companies employ an in-house planning director or land manager whose job it is to address all planning issues. The respondents noted how they ‘work with’ the local authority on several issues. In other words, these respondents may share the same language as the planners and the important role their companies play in the economy of each local authority, allows them access to the planning process.

5.4.4.2 Regional and Local Non-Government Organisations (NGOs)

From Table – 5.6, there would not appear to be a significant difference in the extent to which the local and regional NGOs defend the green belt or seek other changes. Table – 5.7, shows that the contents of their objections are significantly different. Regional NGOs, include the Green Belt Council, the Campaign for the Protection of Rural England (CPRE) and the House Builders Federation (HBF). In a similar way to the regional companies, the regional NGOs try to moderate their objection by using the same language as planners to reach an understanding with the planning system. The HBF for example, though clearly an NGO in support of development, does not register objections to local plans with the explicit aim of developing the green belt. Instead such groups usually cast themselves in a monitoring role.

A further example of this can be seen with the Green Belt Council. This non-governmental organisation was established in 1954 as an umbrella organisation for national and local amenity groups. The Council's sole aim and that of its 140 neighbourhood and local amenity groups is to preserve the green belt. It lobbies the planning authorities at different levels and would be expected to take a strongly preservationist stance when making an objection. In practice however, the Green Belt Council, talks of monitoring the activities of the local authority to ensure that plans conform with Central Government guidance for example. They see confrontation with the local authority as a last resort.

NGOs that defend the green belt openly and confrontationally are confined to residents' associations and their members. The NGOs seeking 'other' changes to the green belt include organisations such as a local school that wish to allow the development of new buildings, or residents that are concerned about the construction of a new pathway.

Table – 5.6 The motivation of each of the different groups

GROUPS	Land Owner				Developer				Property Company				Company			
	Green Belt Objection %	N	%Attack	%Defend	%Oth.	N	%Attack	%Def.	%Oth.	N	%Attack	%Def.	%Oth.	N	%Attack	%Def.
Agent	6	100	0	0	7	100	0	0	3	100	0	0	6	100	0	0
Regional	1	100	0	0	2	100	0	0	1	100	0	0	3	67	0	33
Local	5	100	0	0	0	–	–	–	1	100	0	0	0	–	–	–

GROUPS	NGO				Private Resident				Government				Total			
	Green Belt Objection %	N	%Attack	%Def.	%Oth.	N	%Attack	%Def.	%Oth.	N	%Attack	%Def.	%Oth.	N	%Attack	%Def.
Agent	0	–	–	–	1	100	0	0	1	100	0	0	62	60	26	15
Regional	8	0	75	25	0	–	–	–	2	0	0	100				
Local	9	0	63	38	4	0	100	0	2	50	50	0				

Table – 5.7 Summary table of respondents and their ‘other’ objections to the green belt

Objector type	Interest ^a	Example of organisation	What their objections seek if answering 'other' in the survey
Company	Agent	Town planning consultants, surveyors and solicitors	Ease restrictions on operation
	Reg.	Airport, Water company and Mineral extraction	Ease restrictions on operation
Developers	Agent	Town planning consultants, surveyors and solicitors	Develop green belt land
	Reg.	Developers	To make LA aware of where the development land is.
Government	Agent	Town planning consultants	Land removed from GB
	Reg.	Regional government offices	Ensure LA conforms with Government guidance
	Local	Parish Councils and DTI	Parish Councils: defend GB, DTI:increase employment
Land-Owners	Agent	Town planning consultants, surveyors and solicitors	Develop/sell land
	Reg.	Farmer	Develop but offers planning gain
	Local	Farmers and haulage companies	Develop/sell land
NPO	Reg.	CPRE, London GB Council, HBF, Residents' association	Protect the green belt but also reach a compromise with the LA.
	Local	Residents' associations. Open spaces action group. Local school	Defence of the GB. In some cases a an urban fringe management policy change
Priv. Res.	Agent	Architectural surveyor	House extension
	Local	Residents	Defend the green belt and/or aligned with Local NPO
Property	Agent	Town planning consultants	Develop/sell land
	Reg.	Water company's property	Promoted major developed site
	Local	Property company	Develop/sell land

5.5 Discussion

5.5.1 The influence of the large groups

In the case of the green belt, and through their use of a similar planning language, bodies such as the Green Belt Council, the CPRE, large developers, companies and the HBF, form a stable network around the planning system. The results suggest that such a consensual network exists at the regional level influencing the policies in the local plan.

5.5.2 Difference in influence and participation

Overall, two main factors promote consensus in the planning of the green belt. The first set of factors are similar to those in the previous literature and have been reviewed above (5.2). The second set of factors are related to language.

The study indicates that regional groups have a significantly higher influence in the local planning policy-making than other groups. Agents, i.e. lawyers and consultants, also had a higher influence compared to local groups, despite the latter's higher rate of participation. The following discussion proposes reasons for these differences.

Firstly the groups' different levels of experience, affects their power to influence the local plan. This difference in experience can be seen in their different use of language. From the content of their objections to the local plan. Groups with any hope of influencing the system, from companies to NGOs, strive to speak the language of planners. There appears to be a link between the influence that a group will have in the green belt and the stance that they adopt: i.e., those that seek greater influence in the planning system try and align themselves with the system even if this means that they have to adopt a neutral stance. Meetings and inside information clearly have a role to play, as the better-connected groups are more likely to be able to understand the planner's position and align themselves accordingly.

Secondly, the power of the 'regional' groups is contingent on a variety of additional factors which will allow them to reach consensual decisions with the local planners. One factor, is that local planning officers may employ the groups' data and results of

investigations when making local policies. Another factor is that such groups will represent an easily accessible sector of public opinion for the planner. Finally, the influential groups' power is related to their ability to speak for non-local or strategic concerns. Based on interviews with the local planning officers in each of the areas studied, the local authorities see local groups as 'NIMBYs' or 'emotional' regarding a green belt issue. The local perspective of these groups means that the planners may be reluctant to allow such groups to interfere with what they see as a 'non-local' or strategic concern.

The planner's central role can also be seen in the dual use of language. On the one hand, language is used as a filter to distinguish and exclude groups from the planning process. There is a greater chance of being labelled an extremist if a group speaks its opinion openly. Similarly, groups that are inside the sphere of decision-making, are under pressure to identify their position as closely as possible to the planning system. The groups are able to do this primarily behind the closed doors and also because they are not very representative organizations to begin with. However, neutralizing one's position involves an inevitable loss of influence. To offset this, the groups resort to other strategies to claim that they embrace the public interest. One such strategy is the 'monitoring' of the local authority for example.

This readiness by the groups to mediate their stance is supported by Flyvbjerg's¹⁷⁾ conclusion that conflict in planning is generally avoided. Instead consensus and mediation are the overarching characteristics of power relations. In this case, the groups revealed through interviews that they are under pressure to remain inside the decision-making circle. If they do not mitigate their stance through a skilful use of language then they risk being labelled as either 'speculative developer' or a 'NIMBY', the extremist variants of 'housebuilder' and 'conservationist'. In addition, the results show that occupying the centre ground allows the groups to claim that they embrace the 'public interest'.

Such a pressure towards the centre of the argument, leads to an apparent consensus between the groups. Fairlie¹²⁾ has also suggested that a consensus to maintain the green belt exists between the large developers and large preservationist societies such as the CPRE. The evidence from the interviews for this, however, is mixed. Clearly developers gain from the green belt, but they do not gain as the government suggests, simply by

restricting the supply of land for development and pushing up the price (land-banking). Interviews revealed that the development industry like any other, relies on cash-flow, so when planning permission is granted the developer's prime objective is to realise his or her investment as quickly as possible and turn it into capital. Nonetheless, a consensus does emerge when looking at the indirect benefits that the green belt gives developers. For example, they gain by being able to sell premium houses in a 'rural' setting, with a very strong guarantee, from the green belt, that development will not occur nearby.

The developers of a particular site may actively seek consensus with local preservationist groups to mitigate any protests that they may voice. However, such an approach will only take place under certain conditions. Interviewees mentioned the important influence of the local planner in such circumstances. If the local planner is encouraging regarding a development, then the developer will feel more confident about approaching the local groups. If the local planner is not encouraging, then the developer will not share information about the development to avoid accumulating added resistance to it.

From the objections of such local groups to the green belt, it is possible to gain an understanding of their needs. Though the survey included local groups whose sole purpose for existing was to oppose development in the green belt (28% of the local groups surveyed stated that it was the policy of their group to defend the green belt), some of the local groups showed other concerns. For example, the study identified some groups which saw the green belt as a hindrance to the development of buildings for schools and cemeteries for example.

5.5.3 A brief comparison with Japan

In Chapter 5 we show the important role of regional groups in the planning system. These regional groups include developers and environmental groups. These regional groups add stability to the planning system. Even though landowners and environmental groups at the local level might disapprove of changes to the planning system they are not able to act unless the regional groups support them. This regional group structure does not exist in Japan to the same extent that it does in England. Five major developers build the majority of houses in England. Development in Japan takes place mainly because of

the actions of small-scale developers and landowners. Landownership in Japan is fragmented. Farmers will typically sell off a piece of their land to increase their cash flow. In the UK the scale of landownership is much larger. This larger landownership encourages the formation of regional groups. Profits from developing depend entirely on whether the land comes with a development permission. This is hard to obtain even when the land is outside the green belt.

5.6 Conclusions

The objective of this chapter was to investigate whether groups such as developers and environmentalists have opposite interests towards the green belt. The assumption is usually made that only local, NIMBY environmental interests defend the green belt (Chapter 1).

Overall, the results show that the local planning of the green belt is more complex than is assumed. Firstly the results show that instead of green belt planning being dominated by NIMBY environmentalists, larger environmental groups and developers dominate the local planning of the green belt. The interests of the group towards development on the green belt are relatively unimportant factors determining their influence. Instead, the influence and participation of a group depends to a greater extent on whether the group is local or not. The results suggest reasons for these differences. The regional groups have a greater experience of participating in the planning processes. They also share stronger ties with the local planners. This allows these groups to align themselves more easily with the planning system. Such an alignment means that the groups appear to share similar interests. This lack of involvement by local interests in local planning should not be surprising considering the large sums of money that are involved in developing a site on the green belt. Nonetheless it should be of concern as will be argued in Chapter 6.

Secondly the results show the influence of the local planner. The local planner can influence the negotiations by providing barriers to entry for different groups. The opinion of the planner towards the green belt determines the type of participation that is going to take place. For example, if the planner supports development in the green belt this will encourage the developers to engage with and open up to groups that wish to conserve the

green belt. If the planner wishes to defend the green belt then the developer is more likely to try and keep his or her aims secret. The local planner's position towards development can determine the approach taken by the other groups.

The green belt being a strategic measure with local level applications can be expected to have a mixture of local and regional interests influencing the local plan. The paradox of the lack of influence of local groups, however, is that green belts remain one of the most popular planning policies with the general public. The implications of these results in relation to Chapter 2 will be discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter 6

Lessons for the future of green belt policy

6.1 Introduction

The following chapter aims to discuss the implications of the results for the future of the green belt policy. Section 6.2 summarises the results and argues that the history and present-day implementation of the green belt shows that the green belt is incompatible with so-called ‘bottom-up’ planning. To allow bottom-up planning, as defined in Chapter 2, either the local planning system should be reformed or a complete alternative to the green belt should be implemented. Section 6.3 describes a number of alternatives to the green belt that currently exist around London. Section 6.4, reviews greenspace planning in other countries and proposes solutions for the green belt’s reform.

6.2 The green belt and bottom-up planning

First, we address each of the questions asked in Chapter 1:

- **How was the green belt established in a top-down manner?**

Chapter 3 showed that the green belt could be implemented because of secrecy and hidden negotiation. In other words if the green belt had not been planned in secret, then it would not have existed. Understanding this aspect of green belt history also helps us to understand the green belt today. Firstly, the secrecy in the establishment of the green belt enabled a small group of planners and landowners to set its function and location in a top-down manner. Secondly, the flexibility in the function of the green belt was important for enabling it to be established. Finally, the history of the green belt shown in Chapter 3 also provides a lesson on the importance of bottom-up planning. The

combination of secrecy and flexibility in the green belt eventually led to confusion about which members of society the green belt was being planned for, how it should be accessed and where it should be located. Furthermore, we can see from later chapters that the secrecy and flexibility in planning the green belt remain feature of green belt planning today. The key to reforming the green belt lies in the way in which bottom-up planning is implemented. However the history of the green belt suggests that the green belt's flexibility is necessary for allowing the green belt to survive. This history also suggests that an objective of bottom-up planning should be to dismantle the secrecy and bargaining that currently exists in the system.

- **Is the function of the green belt determined locally in the present planning system?**

Chapter 4 describes the pattern of functions in the green belt. Interpreting this pattern shows that the functions of the green belt are decided by local planners in two ways. The first way is through a process of negotiation between the local planners and central government. Central government can decide where development takes place in the green belt. Local authorities will respond to these decisions by altering the function of the green belt to either prevent or allow more development. The results show that in several cases therefore, the function of the green belt is not determined locally. At the same time, the results also show that local planners try to use the green belt to respond to local needs. For example, some local authority planners use the green belt for improving the landscape. A future aim for bottom-up planning in the green belt would be for central government to encourage flexibility in planning the green belt. This would allow the different functions of the green belt to evolve. Increasing this flexibility would also allow local authorities to decide the kind of green belt they wish to adopt, or even whether a green belt is suitable in their district.

- **At the local level, are local groups involved in the planning of the green belt?**

Chapter 5 showed that at the local level planning local groups are at a distinct disadvantages in participating in and influencing the local plan. The analysis in Chapter 5 shows how regional groups gain influence over the local planning process. Regional groups easily reach a consensus with local planners over the type of development allowed in the district. Regional environmental groups can use their connections with the

national media to prevent any changes to the green belt. Regional developers and local planners will be decide in secret whether development can take place on the green belt. These regional groups and the local planners reach important decisions about the green belt by preventing information leaking out to the local groups.

Overall the results show that the green belt is incompatible with the tenets of bottom-up planning. The culture of planning the green belt in secret led to a top-down system of planning that has largely remained in place. This is shown by the local policies in the green belt that only occasionally respond to local concerns. This is also shown by the influence that regional developers and other regional interest groups have in determining local planning policies in the green belt.

The government proposes to introduce bottom-up planning by increasing the opportunities for participation. Introducing bottom-up planning in the green belt is not as simple as increasing participation for two reasons. Firstly, a truly participatory system would allow all those affected by the green belt to participate in making a local plan. This would mean that residents in the inner-city who suffer from a lack of house-building could participate to oppose the green belt. Such a system has already been suggested by Self¹⁾ however it is not clear how it could be put into practice. Secondly, there are clear dangers when implementing a bottom-up planning system. Giving more opportunities for participation at the local level will simply allow the present system to continue. Those that have power will simply gain more power.

Therefore the planners that wish to carry out a reform of the green belt are faced with a dilemma. Either the local planning system should be reformed to allow true participation but maintaining the form and policy of the green belt. Alternatively, a complete replacement to the green belt should be implemented keeping the present planning system intact. The following argues that the second option is preferable. We show that many of the tools and experience to implement such a strategy exist already in the UK and abroad.

6.3 Alternatives to the green belt

6.3.1 Alternatives that already exist in the UK

Any reform of the green belt is accompanied by a concern that a ‘wave’ of urban

Table – 6.1 Number and area of protected areas in the UK as at 31 March, 2003

Status ¹	Number	Area (Km ²)
Statutory		
National Nature Reserves	399	2460
Local Nature Reserves	2 903	410
Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs)	2 6,586	23,350
Areas of Special Scientific Interest (ASSIs)	3 196	920
Marine Nature Reserves	3	190
Special Protection Areas (SPAs)	240	14,370
Candidate Special Areas of Conservation	576	24,060
"Ramsar" Wetland Sites	4 144	7590
Environmentally Sensitive Areas (ESAs)	43	31,900
Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty	50	24,070
National Scenic areas	5 40	10,020
Non-Statutory		
Biosphere Reserves	13	440
Biogenetic Reserves	18	80

Source: Defra; Environment & Heritage Service, Northern Ireland; SOAEFD; WO; English Nature; CCW; SNH; JNCC

- 1 Some areas may be included in more than one category.
- 2 Great Britain only.
- 3 Northern Ireland only.
- 4 Figure excludes sites classified in dependent territories.
- 5 Scotland only.

Source publication: e-Digest of Environmental Statistics, Published June 2004
 Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
<http://www.defra.gov.uk/environment/statistics/index.htm>

growth will be released over the countryside. In fact a large number of tools exist within England’s planning system to control development and protect areas of natural beauty or biodiversity. Table – 6.1 shows the large number different conservation policies that exist in England. These occupy a substantial area of England. For example National Parks and

Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty both occupy 9936 km² (8%) and 20510 km² (16%) of England's surface area respectively.²⁾

Figure – 6.2 and Table – 6.2 both show that a considerable surface area of the green

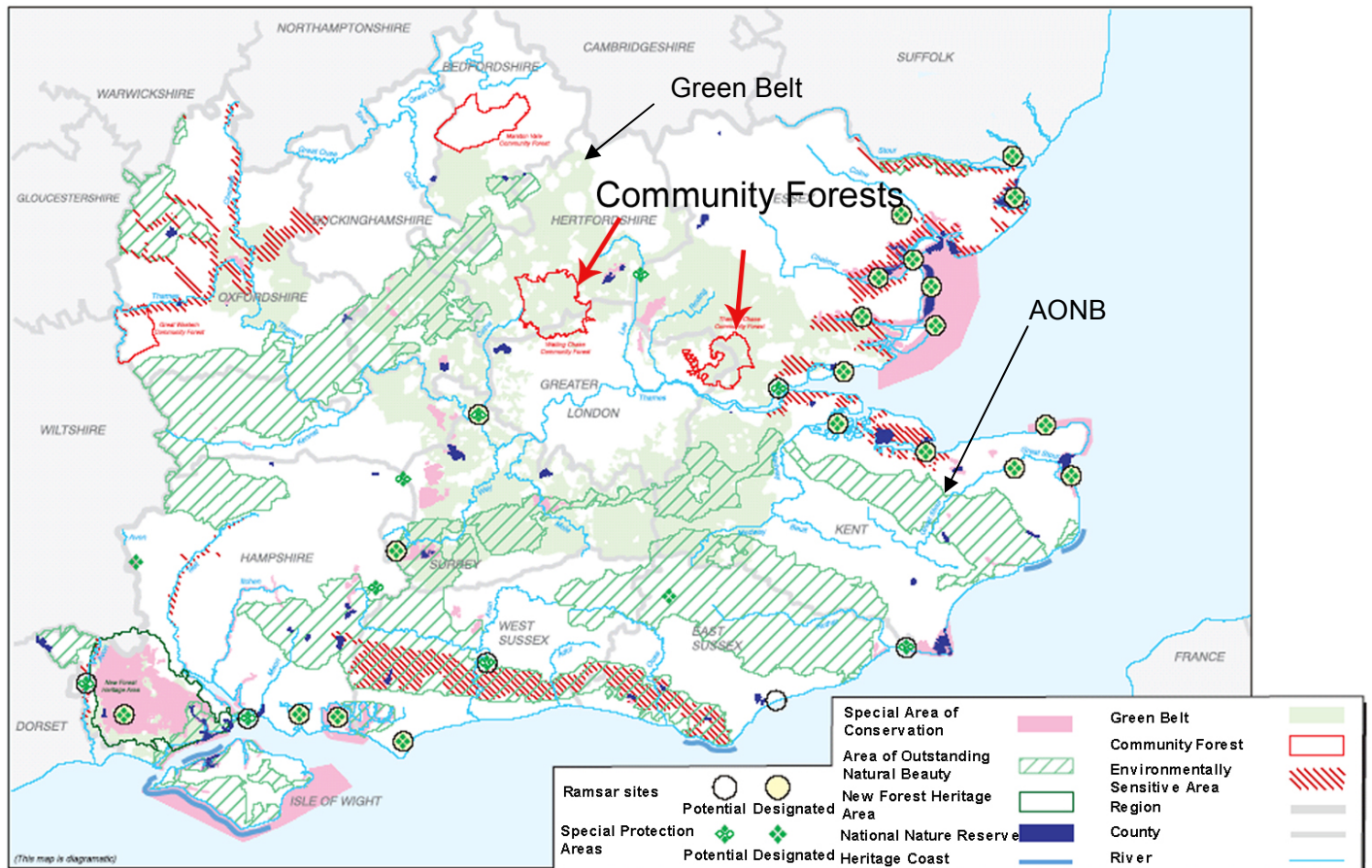


Figure – 6.1 Protected areas in the green belt from Regional Planning Policy Guidance 9

belt is already covered with other landscape conservation policies. In fact this protection covers around 2,873 km² of the London green belt's 5,085 km², or around 57%. The following briefly reviews the purposes of these policies.

6.3.1.1 Nature conservation policies in the green belt

The following reviews some of the policies for conserving nature in the green belt. National Nature Reserves are those sites designated under the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) to protect the most important wildlife and geological sites for scientific research. In England the sites are designated and protected by English Nature. There are 214 National Nature Reserves in England. The green belt around London contains 10

National Nature Reserves that cover 19 km² in total.³⁾

A "Ramsar site" is the land listed as a Wetland of International Importance under the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance Especially as Waterfowl Habitat (the Ramsar Convention) 1973. Both the Special Protection Area (SPA) and the Special Area of Conservation (SAC) are part of the Natura 2000 network of protected sites

Table – 6.2 Protected areas in the green belt

Status	Number	Area (Km ²)	Area not overlapping ¹ (Km ²)
Nature conservation Policies			
National Nature Reserves	10	19	19
Special Areas of Conservation	10	192	101
Sites of Special Scientific Interest	250	126	2
Ramsar Sites	8	221	221
Special Protection Areas	10	329	290
Environmentally Sensitive Areas	2	423	423
Other conservation policies			
AONBs	3	1,526	1,526
Community Forests	2	290	290
TOTAL	290	1,310	1,057

Source: www.magic.gov.uk

1 A number of designations in the green belt overlap with each other. The area of designations that only overlap with the green belt was calculated

created by the Habitat and Birds European Directives. The former was created by Directive 79/409 on the Conservation of Wild Birds. The latter by Directive 92/43/EEC on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora. The main aim of these Directives is to promote the maintenance of biodiversity taking account of economic, social, cultural and regional requirements.

Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) were first designated under the 1949 National Parks Act. Since then this Act has been amended by the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981). The sites are designated by English Nature who must notify the landowner that their land will be designated as an SSSI. The landowner then has four months during which to make an objection which can be considered by English Nature.

When the land has been designated, the owner must notify English Nature if he or she carries out any activities on a list issued by English Nature.

Finally, Environmentally Sensitive Areas (ESA) are one of a range of agri-environment schemes operating under the England Rural Development Programme. Incentives are offered to farmers to encourage them to adopt agricultural practices that will safeguard and enhance parts of the country that have a particularly high landscape, wildlife or historic value.

6.3.1.2 Other conservation policies

This section describes some of the other policies that do not specifically target nature conservation. Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) were created by the legislation in the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act, 1949. Each of the AONBs are designated for special attention because of their high aesthetic quality. Aesthetic quality can include the area's flora, fauna, cultural and historical associations as well as its fine views over the countryside. AONBs are centrally designated and chosen. In England, the Countryside Agency is responsible for designating AONBs. The Secretary of State (SoS) will appoint an AONB board by order of Parliament. This can only take place with the agreement of all the local authorities covered by the AONB. Boards are composed of at least 40% from the local authorities, at least 20% from Parish members and any other members appointed by the SoS or NAW. Boards have the responsibility for managing and achieving the aims of the AONBs. They are independent bodies, accountable to the public with a separate staff and budget.⁴⁾

There are three AONBs in the green belt. The Kent Downs AONB covers 878 km². Approximately 300 km² of this is in the green belt. The Surrey Hills AONB is closest to London and measures 419 km². Approximately 393 km² of this AONB lies in the green belt. Finally, the Chilterns AONB measure 833 km², 540 km² of this AONB lies in the green belt (Table – 6.2).³⁾

Finally, the Community Forest Programme is arguably the most progressive example of bottom-up planning in the green belt. The programme was established in 1989 to regenerate and revitalise some 4,530 km² of countryside and greenspace in and around twelve major conurbations. The aim of community forests is to enhance the

well-being and quality of life of the nearby communities.

Community forests include a number of activities to involve the local communities in planting woodland.⁵⁾ Their role is to mainly reforest and restore degraded land in the urban fringe. Currently there are two Community Forests which both lie entirely in the green belt. To the East of London, Thames Chase forest covers 108 km² and Watling Chase to the North covers 188 km².³⁾

6.3.1.3 A case of converting a green belt to a National Park

To consider what future role the green belt could have if it was converted to another protection policy, the following briefly describes the conversion of a large area of green belt in Hampshire to a National Park. The area is not a part of the London green belt. However, it is relevant to the study because it shows the new role that a green belt can have when it is replaced by another protection policy.

The New Forest in south Hampshire formed part of the green belt until 1994. It is close to urban development and has unique qualities of landscape and habitat. 27,000 hectares of the area is Crown land that is managed by the Forestry Commission. In addition, a further 38,000 hectares are protected by the New Forest Act 1964. As well as being administered by Hampshire County Council, the New Forest District Council, the Forestry Commission and others, the area is managed by a corporate body of Verderers who are responsible for managing the grazing and common land in the forest.⁶⁾ Finally, much of the land is protected by a mixture of SSSIs, SPAs and SACs.

To simplify the planning of the New Forest, the whole area was designated a National Park.⁷⁾ The National Park status allowed the local authority to provide additional protection against inappropriate development.⁸⁾ The area was included as a National Park to maintain the social and economic well-being of the communities in the New Forest and to promote the quiet enjoyment and understanding of the importance of the area by the general public.⁹⁾

Though the area was given National Park status, the inspector during the Public Local Inquiry argued that the green belt should be retained as a buffer zone of protection, or green wedge 5 to 8 miles (8 to 12.8 km) deep near the coastal towns of Bournemouth and Poole.⁹⁾ When the green belt was replaced by a more suitable policy we can see that

it was left at the edges of the urban area to provide a green wedge between the urban area and the National Park.

6.3.1.4 Conclusions

With a proposal to reform or soften green belt policy there is always a fear that control over development will be lost. In fact we show that a substantial proportion of the green belt is already protected. In the future if the green belt were to be removed, AONBs, SSSIs and other more specific greenspace planning designations could offer greater flexibility for greenspace planning and more imaginative solutions that suit different planning scenarios.¹⁰⁾ This system could be implemented through a flexible layering of policies.

One of the dangers of this layering approach is shown in the case of planning the South Hampshire green belt. In this case, planning was complicated by the variety of different designations that covered the area. Different governmental bodies had varying responsibility for planning the area. These complications led to the South Hampshire green belt being designated as the New Forest National Park to simplify the planning process. The green belt was retained to provide a buffer against urban development. Such a policy resembles the use of green wedges to prevent development.¹¹⁾

6.3.2 International solutions to the green belt's reform

The final part of this Chapter aims to gain additional insights on the future of the green belt from international examples. There is no space to provide a complete overview of all the different ways of conserving land and the legal systems that underpin them. Instead, the objective of this section is to highlight the different policy layers that could be employed in the green belt and the problems that exist with this approach.

The UK's is sometimes thought to be a "successful" example of planning. Because of this "success", UK planning has been influential in countries as far away as Korea and Japan. This is despite the differences in culture, history and distance.¹²⁾ The following reviews some of the other policies that exist to conserve land. These could eventually be used in a system of policy layers as an alternative to the green belt.

6.3.2.1 Green wedges

One of the most famous alternatives to the green belt is seen in the Greater Copenhagen 'Finger Plan' (1948). Copenhagen reacted early against the idea of green

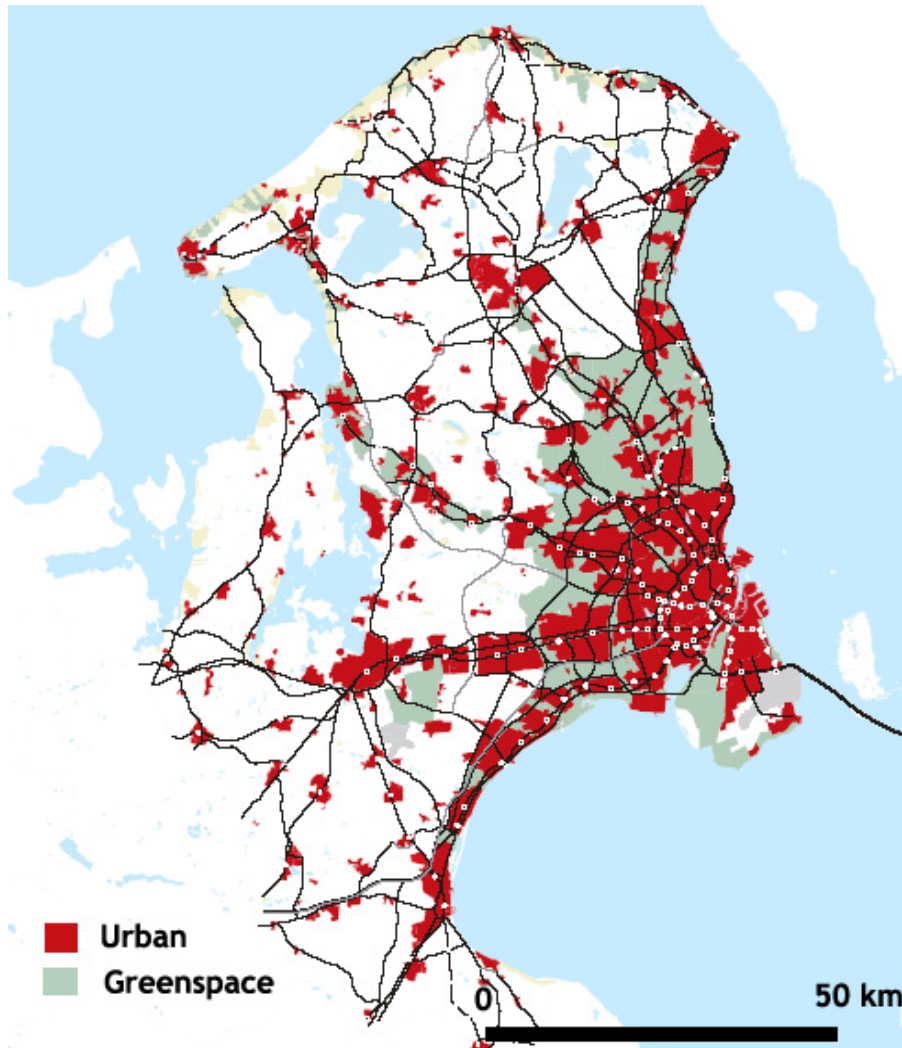


Figure – 6.2 Land use in Greater Copenhagen (2001). (The Regional Plan still incorporates the principles of the finger plan from the 1947 of urban fingers and green wedges)

belts and New Towns. Instead the planners concentrated growth along high-speed transportation corridors arranged in a fan shape from the centre of the city. A later 1973 regional plan extended the fingers placing major new development at the junctions. This plan has continued to influence the form of Copenhagen's development (Figure – 6.2).^{13,14)} Green wedges are already used around several UK cities.¹¹⁾ Flexible green

wedges instead of an inflexible green belt have been proposed for other areas of high development pressure in the UK,¹⁵⁾ it would seem that the same logic should be employed for the green belt around London.

6.3.2.2 Green heart

A further well-known alternative to the green belt is the so-called green heart – a preserved area of greenspace surrounded by a network of urban areas. The most famous use of this planning strategy is found in the Netherlands, where a ring of cities, the *Randstad*, each serve a different purpose surrounding a green heart of 1500 km².^{14,16)}

6.3.2.3 Greenways

Landscape planning has also provided alternatives to a green belt. The concepts that underpin landscape planning were developed by Olmsted and first implemented in his 26 km ‘Emerald necklace’ that elegantly solved the problem of the Back Bay in Boston in 1894. Not only was Olmsted’s planning solution functional, it also used natural forces to improve the urban environment.¹⁷⁾

Improvements to both, the functionality of the planning solution and the understanding of natural forces were then made in a number of well-known works. For example, Ian McHarg further developed the idea of working with nature by layering the different functions of the landscape.¹⁸⁾

The latest refinement of this concept has come with the definition of promotion of greenways. Greenways stem from the work of the above pioneers among others. Greenways are defined as being ecologically significant corridors, recreational greenways and, or greenways with historical and cultural values.¹⁹⁾ Against this background, greenways can have a variety of functions; catering for aesthetic, cultural, ecological or recreational needs.²⁰⁾ A number of other sources provide more concrete examples of greenway implementation.^{21,22)}

At first glance, it would seem that the greenways concept might share something with Unwin’s proposal for a green girdle around London. For example, both concepts promote the idea of linear corridors of greenery that are used for a variety of purposes.

The results in Chapter 3 however, show that Unwin's choice of a girdle of greenery around London was influenced by the constrictions of cost. The greenways concept is based among other things, on conserving land that is important for nature and enjoyment. For this reason, the greenways can criss-cross the landscape or they can run parallel to each other. The greenways concept also includes a procedure for implementation. This implementation aims to find the most rational location for the greenway based on layers of different parameters.

6.3.2.4 Towards a flexible layering of policies

Overall the above section shows that a variety of additional planning tools exist in different countries. When employing these tools to reform the green belt they could be layered on top of each other. This would preserve valuable areas of the countryside for the future. This would also enable the green belt to be planned more positively in the future. Implementing this system would have the advantage of giving the local authorities a greater amount of flexibility to protect the outskirts of London with different, more specific designations.

6.4 Learning from the East: Comparing UK and Asian experiences

6.4.1 Seoul's green belt: planning by *fiat*

The most well-known example of an application of a green belt in Asia is that of Seoul's "Restricted Development Zone" (RDZ). This belt of open space was implemented by *fiat* in 1971. At the time, President Park Chung-Hee simply decided where the green belt was going to be. Debate and much less, objections were not allowed to interfere with this decision.

Suto and Koshizawa²³⁾ have detailed the history and the current problems with the reform of the green belt. They document the early origins of the green belt in Korea, showing how it goes back to the Japanese colonisation period of the 1930s. The RDZ was created as an overlay to the lower-tier urban zoning system. The declared purposes of the RDZ were to prevent irregular expansion of cities, protect the environment and

secure national defence.

Suto and Koshizawa look at some of the disadvantages and advantages of Seoul's green belt. There are many points about their analysis that reflect the experience of London's green belt. The Greater Seoul Area has seen an increase in population because of private development, similar to the London case. The green belt in both cities serves

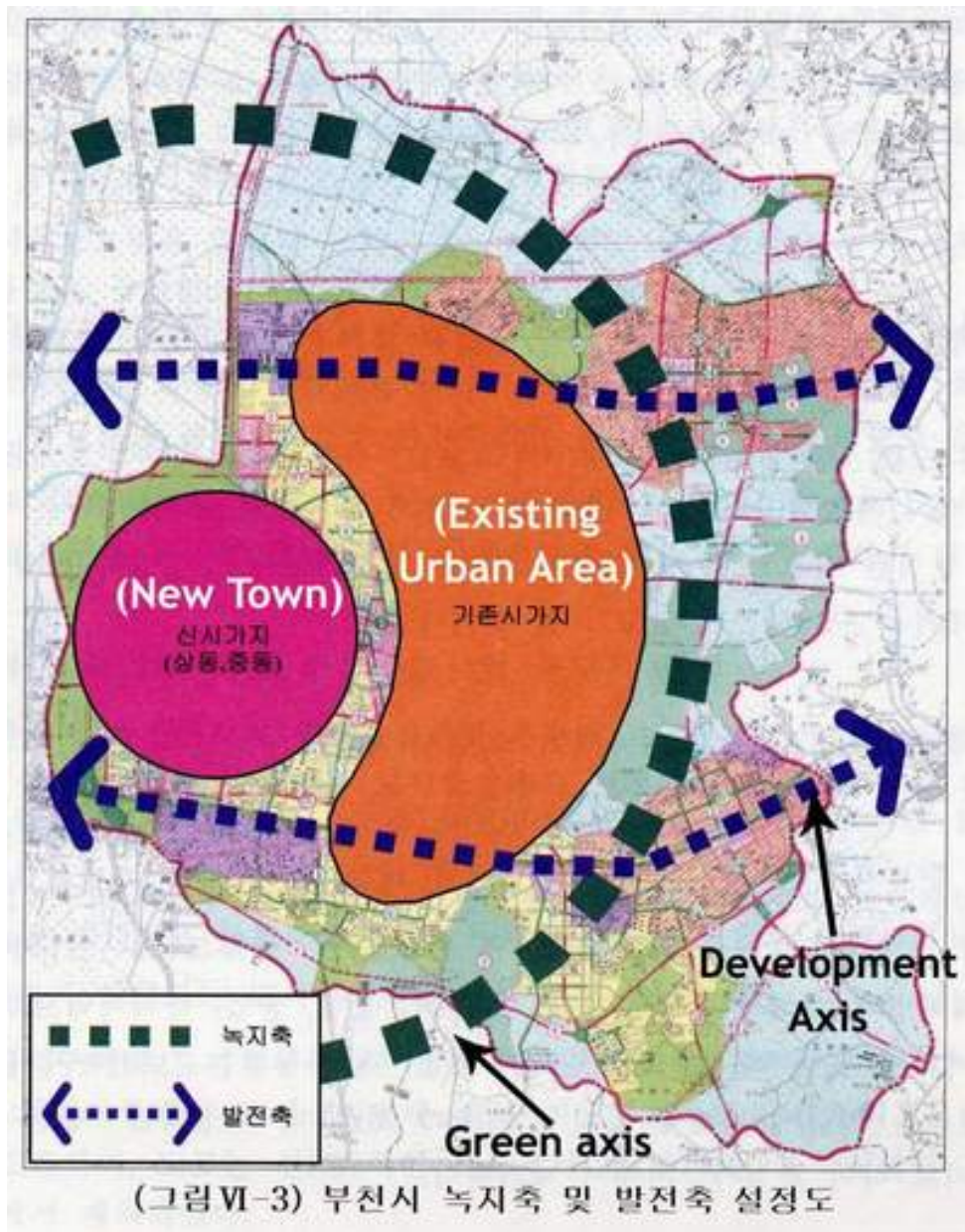


Figure – 6.3 Converting the Seoul green belt to a green network. (Bucheon City's green axis and development location map).

little in the way of recreation. In Seoul's case however, the green belt has been responsible for preserving open spaces inside the city.

Undoubtedly one of the biggest challenges that the Korean government currently faces is how to release land from the green belt for development.²⁴⁾ The green belt is a cause of much resentment from landowners in the RDZ who see development taking place elsewhere. They complain in particular that it disenfranchises their rights and has a particularly negative effect on the environment.

Awareness of the limitations of this system and the increasing democratisation of Korean society prompted the Korean government to begin reviewing the RDZ in 1998. The selection of land to be taken out of the green belt and the development of chosen areas will be performed using Geographical Information Systems and other supposedly 'scientific' methods. The apparent neutrality of this approach has been criticised for being too naïve for what is in reality an intensely political process.²⁵⁾

Nonetheless, the RDZ reform represents an interesting precedent for the reform of the London green belt. For this reason it is worthwhile understanding how the green belt in Korea is reformed to learn from this experience. So far, it is possible to see that in those areas where the rationale for retaining the green belt is suspect, it will be abolished. Some of the areas in the RDZ with high environmental value will be rezoned with strict criteria, similar to those applied to SSSIs and AONBs. In these and other areas of the RDZ a series of green networks are proposed to increase the environmental value of these areas (Figure – 6.4). In areas where mild growth is anticipated, the RDZ will only be partially removed. The review will make use of an environmental assessment to identify areas of low environmental value to move the boundaries of the RDZ outwards. Finally, in areas where the RDZ will be retained, measures will be taken to mitigate for the negative effects of limiting development, e.g. compensating landowners for restricting their development rights.

6.4.2 Japan's green belt: a consensus over the need for development

At various points in the above chapters we have mentioned Japan in comparison with the UK. For example, we showed in Chapter 3 that a small but important number of landowners supported the green belt in England. The planners were able to organise

support for the green belt with the help of these landowners. The cooperation of the landowners also enabled the establishment of the green belt to be made in secret. In Japan on the other hand, landowners were well-organised and well-informed. These landowners vigorously opposed every attempt to implement the green belt.

The following section reviews the history of the Japanese experience of post-War planning with a focus on the attempts made to conserve agricultural land in Tokyo's urban fringe. The purpose of this section is to investigate how the experience of planning the London green belt can help us understand why the green belt failed in Japan. At the same time, we argue that the Japanese experience can provide an important indication of mistakes to avoid when reforming the green belt by layering different policies.

6.4.2.1 Tokyo's agricultural green belt

The first attempt to define a concept of urban green space planning took place as a result of the 1924 Amsterdam International City Planning Conference. At this time, the Japanese representatives defined seven principles that were subsequently highly influential on planning in Japan.²⁶⁾ These principles were as follows: 1. the never-ending growth of cities should be stopped, 2. the urban population should be redistributed using satellite cities, 3. town areas should be surrounded with green belts, 4. a cautionary approach to the development of car-based transportation should be adopted, 5. regional planning approach is necessary for the future development of large cities, 6. such a regional planning system should be adaptable, 7. a system of land-use control should be established. A participant at the conference, Iinuma Issei then introduced these seven principles to a wider audience through the book "City planning theory and Administration" in 1927.²⁷⁾ This work emphasized the necessity of preserving agricultural land within a framework of open space conservation. Iinuma proposed a regulatory "regional agricultural system" for guaranteeing the preservation of open spaces in 1931, and highlighted the important role of urban farmland and the importance of preserving farmland in general.^{28,29)}

The Tokyo Green space plan published in April 1939 was influenced by these ideas. The plan included the Tokyo metropolitan area, and the surrounding provinces of Saitama ken, Chiba ken and Kanagawa ken (Figure – 6.4).

Agricultural land was classified into “productive green spaces” and “ordinary agricultural land” and was mainly situated in the Tokyo green belt. To enforce the green

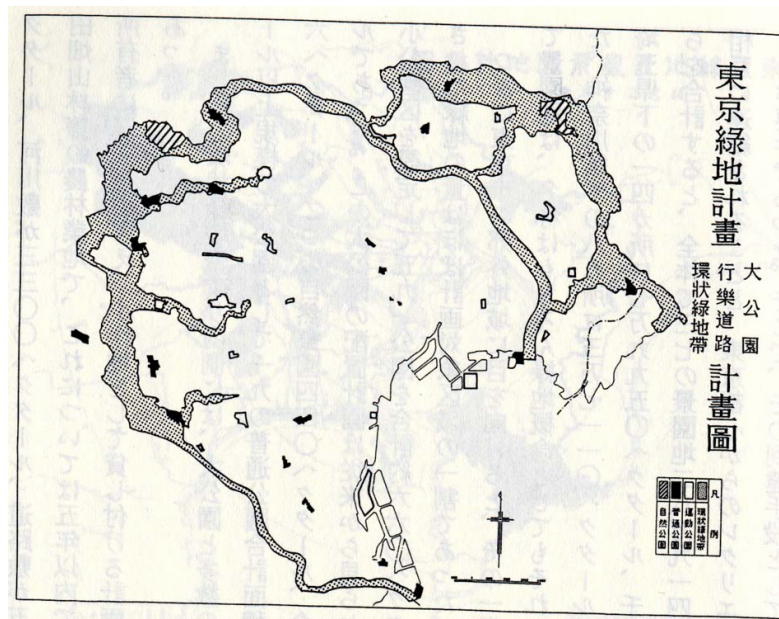


Figure – 6.4 Tokyo’s 1939 green belt.

belt, the scheme aimed to buy all the necessary land and then to lease it to smallholders. Eventually the purchased land could be converted to a variety of uses e.g. land for schools, agricultural plantations for the use of citizens, parks etc.³⁰⁾ A purchasing scheme was clearly preferable to Iinuma’s earlier “regional agriculture system” which would have severely infringed landownership rights and was never implemented. Out of the planned purchases, 746 ha were actually acquired in the end. However a large proportion of these areas were subsequently developed after the Second World War.

6.4.2.2 The Tokyo Air Defence plan and the Air Defence Belt

As the threat of War approached, the Air Defence Law was passed in 1937. The law included a scheme to “Plan the Air Defences and Open spaces of the Imperial Capital”. The Air Defence Law was amended in 1941, and a planned Air Defence Belt around Tokyo became a possibility. Areas to be conserved were subsequently designated in March 1943. These designated areas coincided with the planned location of the 1939 green belt. New development or extensions to existing development in these designated

areas first required the permission of the local government secretariat before they could go ahead. Ironically, the restrictions on the private rights of landowners that this law introduced were analogous to the restrictions contained in Inuma's pre-War "regional agricultural system". However, the designated areas were for military rather than agricultural use (Figure – 6.5).

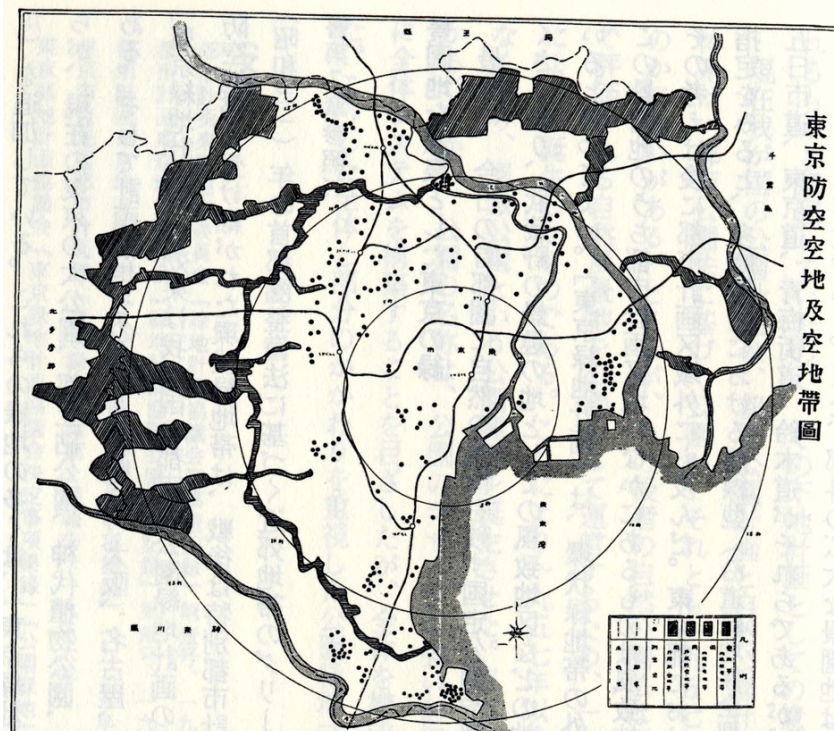


Figure – 6.5 Tokyo's green belt implemented through the air-defence plan in 1943.

6.4.2.3 The Japanese Land Reform

The land reforms that took place during the Meiji period started in the early 1870s. This reform created a class of small-scale owner farmers who continued to farm their tiny plots scattered around their village.³¹⁾ However, at the time large estates of landowners still remained. These estates were completely broken-up after the Second World War. Under the reform, around 33% of the national total of farmland was redistributed from landlords to owner cultivators. All the leased out land of cultivating landlords above 1 hectare was bought by the government and resold to tenants. Further, all owner-cultivated land above 3 hectares was bought and redistributed. This set an upper

limit on the amount of land any one farmer could hold. The resulting effect on urbanisation in Japan was dramatic. In the 1950s over 2.5 million farms or 40% of the total were less than 5000 m² in size. ³²⁾

6.4.2.4 Green spaces at the regional level (Ad Hoc City Planning Act)

During the post-War period, Article 3 of the Ad Hoc City Planning Act in 1946 was the first attempt to create a system for preserving regional green spaces. Specifically the regulations' purpose was to "prevent the coalescence of towns, check the outward growth of towns, enhance health and amenity, improve the welfare of citizens and, in addition, provide them with agricultural land for self-support". The law prohibited development in the green belt that exceeded 10% of a plot's surface area. In practice, because a number of developments, e.g. shrines, hospitals, agricultural housing etc. were permitted, the green belt soon turned into a low-density suburb. As well as suffering from weak regulations, the green belt also failed to attract support from other sections of the government. For example, despite the green belt's conservation of agricultural land, the planned green belt was excluded from the Agricultural Ministry's plans to promote agriculture. Similarly, the green belt was not mentioned in the Ad Hoc Planning Law's plans to prevent war and disaster damage in Tokyo and 10 other cities. Finally the restrictions that the green belt imposed clearly conflicted with the American occupying forces' aims to abolish the pre-War land-ownership structure through land reform. Such a conflict may have exerted an indirect influence. Later this lack of support also arose because of the government seeking agglomeration economies by concentrating development in Tokyo.

The discussions of the City's regional planning committee demonstrate that inside Tokyo's 23 wards, the problems of planning the green belt were compounded by pressure from powerful groups. The regional planning committee was set-up in January 1947 and met for one year and 3 months to designate green belt land. During this time, the committee had to contend with a group composed of mainly large landowners that did not wish to relinquish control of their land because they were developing through land re-adjustment schemes. The committee was also pressured by a group composed of smallholders and other landowners who simply wished to have their land released for

development and were actively pursuing their aims through agricultural associations. As a result of this action between 1948 and 1955, the green belt's area was reduced from 14015.7ha to 9870.8ha, a reduction of 30%.³³⁾

Landowners did not cooperate with the green belt for the following reasons. Firstly they had a clear incentive to develop their land because of the high urbanization pressure at the time. Secondly, landowners felt cheated because the green belt plan simply restricted building instead of purchasing land for institutional development and providing a compensation system. Thirdly, the green belt restrictions were also thought to affect the long-term viability of farmers' livelihoods. Finally, the release of green belt land for the development of large municipal apartment complexes in the green belt was seen to be unfair as it favored some landowners over others.

In 1954 after the end of the post-War reconstruction period, the Ad Hoc City Planning Law was repealed and with it the main law to support regional green space planning. Though the regulations related to the Tokyo green belt were not repealed until the 1968 City Planning Law, in practice the preserved areas had been illegally built upon well before this.

6.4.2.5 Suburban Belt (National Capital Sphere Redevelopment Act)

In 1958, the National Capital Sphere Basic Act incorporated the 1956 National

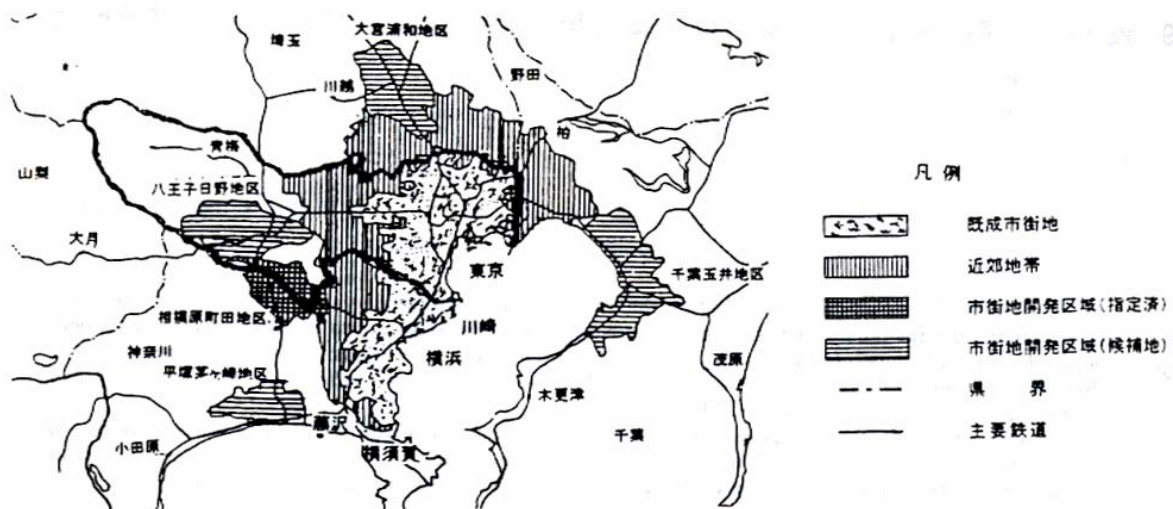


Figure – 6.6 Tokyo's 1958 Capital Basic Plan.

Capital Sphere Redevelopment Act (NCSRA) (Figure – 6.6). The goal of this Act was to plan for Tokyo a fully urbanized core, a suburban belt and areas where further urbanization would be allowed. The Act included a suburban ring around Tokyo whose inspiration was the Greater London Plan. The belt was planned to control in particular the spread of Tokyo's chaotic urban development. In addition, this suburban belt was meant to make up for the lack of green space in the core of the city and to protect the most productive agricultural land from development so as to guarantee the city a ready supply of fresh produce. The plan laid down provisions for allowing development in certain areas within the suburban belt (insets) and planned the location of a series of New Towns around Tokyo. The planned area occupied a 160km circumference from the center of Tokyo and it was to be enforced before 1975.³⁴⁾

However, as can be seen when comparing present-day Tokyo with the zones in Figure 3, this plan was never realized. A number of reasons can be cited for this.³⁵⁾ Firstly, the plan for the suburban belt did not provide any system for compensating landowners. Because of this, the suburban belt's restrictions on urban development met with fierce opposition from farmers and municipalities neighbouring Tokyo. Following the enforcement of the NCSRA, shortly before November 1956 the 16 towns and villages within the 3 main districts of Tama region West of Tokyo formed an association to oppose the creation of the suburban belt. Meeting in Hibiya park's Open-air Auditorium in the center of Tokyo, they staged a number of demonstrations which they used to effectively gain publicity and prevent the suburban belt being put into place. Secondly, a number of farmers in suburban areas managed, in any case, to obtain terms, which allowed them to develop around 20-30% of their holdings, so that the suburban belt became forcibly, and systematically dotted with residential development. Finally, the lack of support from central government was also an important factor. At the time, the central government's policy was to support growth in Tokyo in an attempt to gain agglomeration economies .

In the end, the suburban belt was omitted in a revision of the NCSRA in 1965. Instead, a "suburban infrastructure belt" which included both land for development and conservation replaced it.

6.4.2.6 The zoning system (the 1968 City Planning Act)

The new City Planning Act was passed in 1968 and introduced a more effective system for urban planning. The Residential development inquiry commission that drafted the law originally set-up 4 different zones, which were eventually reduced to 2, namely, the “Urban Coordination Areas” (UCA) and “Urban Promotion Areas” (UPA).³⁶⁾

Compressing the original 4 different kinds of zones into two zones, clearly involved a degree of simplification. The simple question of whether “development should be encouraged” or whether “development should be restrained” was asked for each area. This opened up a large gap between the characteristics of the two different zones. Though this gap would have repeated the earlier difficulties with the green belt, there was a feeling among policy-makers that farmland should be conserved. For example, the Agricultural Act originally required an inspection before development on agricultural land could take place. This Act was amended to allow development on farmland in the UPA in compliance with the 1968 Act. However the Agricultural Act still contained the provision that farmland in general should not be developed unless the development was necessary or of particular long-term benefit. Therefore, the Agricultural Act excluded farmland from the requirements of the 1968 Act at the national level.

Landowners that reviled the restrictions of the UCA tried as hard as possible to make sure that their land was included in the UPA. The result of this pressure was that out of the 800,000 ha of UPA originally planned by the Construction Ministry 1.2 million ha of UPA were designated in the end.³⁷⁾ Congruent to this, was the need for additional housing and calls to bring farmland into the same tax category as residential land.

Initially, no policy was put into place to include urban farmland in the same tax category as developable land. Therefore, farmland fell into a significantly lower tax category than what was considered to be land suitable for housing. This acted as an incentive for landowners to farm the land and hold it as a speculative investment. Clearly, this system limited the supply of housing land.³⁸⁾ Despite the need for more housing land, there was a groundswell of opinion that understood the value of preserving farmland in the urban fringe. This move polarized the academic debate into a group that favored a standard tax rate inside the UPA to release more land for development and a group that wanted a lower tax rate for farmland, so that it could be conserved.

6.4.2.7 Productive open spaces

Eventually, in 1973, a revision to the Provincial land tax Act set the rate of land tax on farmland in the UPA at the same rate as that for housing land. As a response to this the Productive open green spaces Act was passed in 1974. Specifically, productive open spaces were defined along with other public open spaces as areas with “multi-purpose functions”. As a whole, these areas were excluded from the tax rate applied to housing land.

When the Act was passed a total of 16,800 ha of farmland existed in the UPAs. Out of this land the Ministry of Construction estimated that only 10% of this farmland would be designated by local authorities to qualify for the scheme. This low take-up rate became a feature of the Act’s implementation.

As it currently stands the Productive Open Spaces Act places an obligation on local authorities to conserve green spaces to enhance the urban environment. The scheme essentially provides a means of support for farmers and owners of other green spaces who possess plots in the UPA of over 500 m². Such support comes in the form of advice and other forms of support from the local authority or the local farming committee. Apart from such assistance it places little obligation on the local authority. Land is designated as being in the scheme for 30 years. If during this time, the landowner dies and the land is sold, then the local authority is forced to buy the land.

However the system carries a number of weaknesses because:

- 1) The system provides no direct means for the authority to purchase the land and therefore does not provide an iron-cast means for the land to be conserved
- 2) The location of the preserved areas is liable to be influenced by housing pressure, so the location of the areas to be conserved cannot be planned.

6.4.2.8 Why did the Japanese green belt fail?

Clearly a review of all the reasons why the Japanese green belt failed is beyond the scope of this work. Instead, the objective of this section is to look at the results above and discuss how these provide a new insight on the failure of the Japanese planning system to implement the green belt. The first three points below highlight the insights

that can be gained from the results of the study. The final two points provide more fundamental reasons why the differences between the UK and Japan should exist.

- The structure of landownership

The land reforms that took place during the Meiji period started in the early 1870s. This reform created a class small-scale owner farmers who continued to farm their tiny plots scattered around their village.³¹⁾ However, at the time large estates of landowners still remained. These estates were completely broken-up after the Second World War. Under the reform, around 33% of the national total of farmland was redistributed from landlords to owner cultivators. This is almost the same as the amount of land that was bought and sold in the UK during the inter-War period (27%). However, the significant difference with Japan was that all the leased out land of cultivating landlords above 1 hectare was bought by the government and resold to tenants. Further, all owner-cultivated land above 3 hectares was bought and redistributed. This set an upper limit on the amount of land any one farmer could hold. Importantly, in the UK's case this limit did not exist. This lack of a limit allowed the Estate owners to impose their own values on the planning system. This occurred through the top-down implementation of the green belt.

- Governmental support

Chapter 3 showed that from the inception of the green belt it had enjoyed central government support. This had come directly from the Ministry of Health but also from other ministries and departments that were not directly related to planning. In Chapter 3 we show that a key figure in the Crown Agent was influential for allowing the green belt to be implemented. An extensive number of local officials also supported the green belt. In addition the UK had a large number of non-governmental organisations that also lent their weight to the argument for a green belt. Hebbert³⁹⁾ showed that the National Union of Farmers and other landowning non-governmental organisations have always supported the green belt. This can be understood because the viability of farming is dependent on maintaining a large amount of land.

In Japan on the other hand, the attitude of the central government was ambivalent at best. Town planning was subordinated from an early stage to the needs of economic development. Planning remained a central government activity. This meant that it was vulnerable to attacks from other ministries. Finally, in complete opposition to the case of

the UK, the green belt was seen as a threat to the farmers' livelihood. This is because the green belt prevented the farmer from selling and developing a portion of the land to remain solvent and continue being a farmer.

- 'Bad' landowners and 'good' landowners

Chapter 3 showed that there was an awareness among planners of the kinds of landowners that existed. We can suppose that the majority of landowners were interested in speculative development and making money, as they were in Japan. However in the UK, a critical number of landowners were seen to be 'good' landowners that wished to donate some of their private interest for the public good. Critically, these landowners were in a position of power. Planners were able to use these landowners while preventing information about planning developments from reaching the other 'bad' landowners through secrecy and bargaining. This awareness of 'good' and 'bad' landowners had been fostered by vituperative and well-publicised attacks from the intelligentsia in the 1920s.⁴⁰⁾ As a result there was little public sympathy for landowners that wished to make money.

In Japan on the other hand, latent sympathy for landowners to make money at the expense of the public, remains a powerful force. The government maintained a distinctly ambivalent attitude towards landowners during the post-War period. On the one hand promoting stronger planning, on the other hand allowing loopholes and looser regulation. This is not surprising considering the political force that landowners have represented during this period. What is genuinely surprising is that despite decades of awareness of the problems of sprawl,⁴¹⁾ no equivalent of the attacks on landowners in England in the 1920s have emerged in Japan. Instead, such attacks remain the domain of Japanese authors writing in English e.g.⁴²⁾ or foreign researchers.⁴³⁾

- Belief about a rise in land and housing prices

A third difference shown by the results, is in the expectations of landowners of a rise in land price. In the UK, land and housing price is contingent on the quality of the surrounding environment. The results show that landowners in the 1930s were willing to contribute to the green belt because they knew that having the green belt nearby would increase the value of their land. The quality of an area was linked to whether greenspace existed nearby. A green belt would bring a guarantee that the quality of an area would be maintained. It would also bring a guarantee that poor people would not move nearby.

In Japan on the other hand the land price is far less contingent on the quality of the surrounding environment. There is a belief that land is the ultimate safe investment. This self-fulfilling belief meant during the post-War period that it mattered much less what was constructed nearby. Furthermore, the impermanent nature of housing and the homogeneity of Japanese society mean that there is less aversion to development in general. This explains why land price in Japan is dictated to a far greater extent by factors such as access to shops and facilities.

- Strength of landowning rights,

In the UK the 1947 Town and Country Planning Act took away landowners' development rights. Prior to this Act however, landowners had been suffering from increasing obligations towards the state. As Booth⁴⁴⁾ has shown, landowners had had to share their landowning interest with the State and with other interests since the late 19th century. Cherry⁴⁵⁾ notes how already by the 1880s landowners in the UK were subjected to variety of restrictions on their private interest so that the government involvement in urban planning had become publicly accepted. The restrictions imposed on landowners by the green belt and then by the 1947 Town and Country Planning Act, did not occur suddenly but were part of a historical trend.

In Japan however, the trend had been moving in the opposite direction. As Sorensen notes, there had been a long tradition of control over land and its productive capacity as a basis for political and social power during the Tokugawa period. This was cemented by Article 27 of the 1889 Meiji Constitution that laid the basis for the strength of landowning rights in the 20th Century.⁴⁶⁾ This was then further reinforced by the post-War constitution. This landowning right was a considerable obstacle to the implementation of a green belt and the advancement of planning in general.

- Broader historical trends

When comparing the UK and Japanese experiences of planning the green belt, broad historical trends have to be considered. Firstly, the UK was not as driven as Japan was to catch up with other countries. This meant that economic development was not an overriding objective of government. Secondly, the Second World War had a clear impact on planning in both countries. In the UK, victory in the Second World War brought a rejection of the values of the pre-War era – i.e. a Labour government and a rejection of trust in laissez-faire policies. This also brought a renewed faith in the power of the

experts that had implemented the pre-War green belt. In Japan, defeat brought a retrenchment of the values that had existed in the pre-War era – i.e. the strength of landownership rights, the centralisation of government and the subordination of town planning to the needs of central government. There was also a clear rejection of the military regime that had been ruthless in its implementation of the green belt. Finally, it has to be remembered that at the end of the Second World War, as it had been for much of the 20th Century, UK society was much more urban than Japan's. The green belt's original rationale was to satisfy the needs of urban citizens. Data show that in 1950, 47% of Japan's labour force was agricultural. In the UK this figure was 5%.⁴⁷⁾

6.4.2.9 A continuing weakness of the Japanese planning system

The failure to address these fundamental issues remains a continuing challenge for Japanese planning. An example of these problems can be seen with the implementation of the National Land Use Planning Law in 1974. There have been two main problems with the system as Sorensen notes.⁴⁸⁾ The first problem is that the system is overly complex. It is enacted in five basic laws and enforced by three different national ministries. This meant that each of the ministries established its own notification/development permit system under its jurisdiction. This means that there are five competing planning and regulatory frameworks applying to different areas and administered by different national ministries. There is not higher level system to knit these competing factions together.

A second major problem with these layers is that coverage of the five different systems is not comprehensive: the failure to coordinate the various plans has left numerous 'white areas' that are not covered by any of the systems. These two weaknesses have combined to allow a great deal of inappropriate development.

6.4.3 Learning from the East: A suggestion for London's green belt reform

From the previous studies it would seem that the implementation of the green belt in Japan is a history of failures. In the literature the following three weaknesses are often emphasised: 1) the failure to control urban growth with growth policies such as a green

belt,⁴⁹⁻⁵¹⁾ Other studies have given a more positive appraisal, even going so far as to argue that there is much to be learnt from the Japanese city.⁵²⁾ Hohn has suggested that the Japanese urban planning system should be studied because it is a laboratory for planning solutions under particular conditions.⁵³⁾ Therefore we wish to highlight some of the lessons that the planning experience in Japan can teach the green belt's reform.

In particular the experience of layering policies in Japan could be useful for understanding how the green belt could be reformed. Though the flexibility and a layering of policies may be desired, it is important that the system does not become so complex as in Japan's case, that it becomes ineffective. Similarly, the layering has to be comprehensive if it is to be effective. These two recommendations, point to the need to establish a coordinating governmental or non-governmental body for implementing the green belt reform.

The urban environment has called desirable because of planning's loose control and the resulting mix of land uses. Could the Japanese urban fringe also be called desirable because of the mixing of urban and farm areas? It is worthwhile noting that a change to the green belt will involve a change to England's planning culture. Since its earliest implementation, the green belt's essentially aesthetic function has been hidden behind a series of justifications. One of the earliest and most important components of this aesthetic justification is that greenspace surrounding a town or village forms a part of its identity.^{40,54,55)} However when we examine this idea of identity it is actually more complex. The identity between a city and its surrounding farmland exists because of an interaction between the two areas.⁵⁶⁾ The chaotic and mixed land-use of the Japanese urban fringe provides an example of how an urban area can have a closer affinity with its rural areas. There is clearly more to learn from the Japanese city from this point of view.

Chapter 7

Conclusions

7.1 Planning the green belt from the bottom-up: the present state

The purpose of this study was to investigate the present state of local planning in the green belt and to question whether it is possible to plan the green belt from the bottom-up. Overall the results show that the green belt is incompatible with the tenets of bottom-up planning. The culture of planning the green belt in secret led to a top-down system of planning that has largely remained in place (Chapter 3). This is shown by the local policies in the green belt that only occasionally respond to local concerns (Chapter 4). This is also shown by the influence that regional developers and other regional interest groups have in determining local planning policies in the green belt (Chapter 5).

The government proposes to introduce bottom-up planning by increasing the opportunities for participation. However, there are clear dangers when implementing a bottom-up planning system. Giving more opportunities for participation at the local level will simply allow the present system to continue.

Therefore the planners that wish to carry out a reform of the green belt are faced with a dilemma. Either the local planning system should be reformed to allow true participation but maintaining the form and policy of the green belt. Alternatively, a complete replacement to the green belt should be implemented keeping the present planning system intact. In the thesis we argue that the second option is preferable.

7.2 Planning the green belt from the bottom-up: future directions

As a suggestion for the reform of the green belt we propose a system of layering

different policies. These layers would be a mixture of the policies that exist in the green belt for preserving greenspaces and new ideas and strategies introduced from abroad. Finally, we also suggest ideas for reforming the green belt that come from the Asian planning experiences. Korea's green belt reform will become an important topic of study in the future for green belt reformers. We investigate and discuss some of the reasons why the green belt in Japan failed. We discuss some of the broader historical reasons and some of the reasons that have been derived from the study. We suggest that additional reasons why the London green belt was implemented and the Japanese green belt was not is because of a difference in the following: structure of landownership, government support, the sympathy accorded to landowners and a belief in a rise in the price of land.

Finally, we also argue that the experience of planning in Japan has lessons to teach the reform of the green belt in London. In Japan, a layering of policies is already in place. However, the system allows a great deal of inappropriate development. This is because the system is too complex. It is also because the system leaves a number of blank areas without any protection.

Despite the best efforts of the government, implementing bottom-up planning in the green belt will remain complicated because of the amounts of money at stake. At the beginning of Chapter 1 we described how the green belt had survived the post-War era. However, the ability of a policy to survive might be a mark of its success, equally it may be nothing more than an expression of the interests that wish to maintain the status quo. The study suggests that the green belt may have survived only because of the interests that support it.

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Appendix: Interviews (c.f. Chapter 5)

1	John O Neil	Greater London Authority	Senior Planning Officer	2003/1/13
2	Kevin Croxford	Medway Council	Senior Planning Officer	2003/1/21
3	Mr. Atkinson	Bedfordshire Council	Senior Planning Officer	2003/1/22
4	Andrew Meddle	Rochford Council	Senior Planning Officer	2003/1/23
5	R F Kilsby	W. R. Davidge	Consultant	2003/1/24
6	Jonathan Harbottle	Howard Sharp	Partner	2003/1/29
7	Helen Clothier	CPRE (Beds)	Director	2003/2/4
8	Patrick Whitter	Sutton Council	Senior Planning Officer	2003/2/12
9	Sarah Sing	Hillingdon Council	Senior Planning Officer	2003/3/15
10	Mick Drury	Ward Homes	Development Manager	2003/7/2
11	Andrew Wintersgill	David Lock	Senior Consultant	2003/7/5
12	Keith Oliver	Wimpey Homes	Strategic Land Manager	2003/7/5
13	Andy Evans	Centex	Strategic Land Manager	2003/7/8

14	Ronald W. G. Smith	Green Belt Council	Director	2003/7/10
15	Andy Wadham	Heathrow Airport	Planning Manager	2003/7/11
16	Chris Bedford	Government Office for London	Senior Planning Officer	2003/7/11
17	Andrew Whitaker	Housebuilders Federation National	Planning Adviser	2003/7/15
18	Mr. A Robinson	A. Robinson	Director	2003/10/30
19	Mr. Holden	Chapman Warren	Senior Consultant	2004/1/5
20	Anthony Sestini	Broxbourne Council	Senior Planning Officer	2004/1/7
21	Ralph Dickens	Government Office for the South East	Senior Planning Officer	2004/1/8
22	Angela Turner	Jones Day	Solicitor	2004/1/13
23	David Cooper	David Cooper & Co	Director	2004/1/14
24	Roger Hepher	Hepher-Dixon	Director	2004/1/16
25	Alan Watson	National Trust	Planning Manager	2004/1/16
26	Tom Oliver	CPRE (London)	Rural Planning Director	2004/1/27
27	A. Meehan	Thames Chase Community Forest	Director	2004/2/4

List of Publications

The following papers were published as a result of the work in this thesis:

1. Amati, M. and Yokohari, M. "The actions of landowner, government and planners in establishing the London green belt of the 1930s", *Planning History*, (2004) 24 (1-2), 4-12.
2. Amati, M. and Yokohari, M. "Temporal changes and local variations in the functions of London's greenbelt." *Landscape and Urban Planning*, (accepted, 15th December 2004)
3. Amati, M. and Yokohari, M. "Ensuring the separation of the countryside and city: the role of an elite in the planning of the London Green Belt." *The Making of European Contemporary Cities: an Environmental History* University of Siena, (2004) June 24-27, 58-65.
4. Amati, M. and Yokohari, M. "The actions of landowner, government and planners in establishing the London green belt of the 1930s." *Landscape Research, J. of Japanese Institute of Landscape Architecture* (ランドスケープ研究、造園学会論文集), (2004) 67 (5), 433-438.
5. Amati, M. and Yokohari, M. "Identifying interest groups in the London Green Belt and their effect on local plans." *City Planning Institute of Japan* (都市計画学会論文集), (2003) 38-3, 607-612.
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