



Report to the Partnership for Urban South Hampshire Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Date: **27 June 2018**

Report of: **Claire Upton-Brown, Assistant Director (City Development), PUSH
Planning Officer Group Chairman**

Subject: **Potential Designation of Green Belt in South Hampshire**

SUMMARY

To outline to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee the process that would be followed for the potential designation of green belt in South Hampshire and some of the issues that would need to be considered before any decision was made to follow this route.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is RECOMMENDED that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee NOTES the report and decision made by the Joint Committee that the PUSH Planning Officer Group should bring a full report back to the Joint Committee in light of the presentation by CPRE to advise whether there is any justification for considering a Green Belt across the PUSH area.

Background

1. The current National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) acknowledges that the Government attaches great importance to Green Belts. The fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open. Green Belt serves five key purposes, namely to:
 - a) check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;
 - b) prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;
 - c) assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;
 - d) preserve the setting and special character of historic towns;
 - e) Assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.

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

3. The general extent of Green Belts across the country is already established:

"New green belts should only be established in exceptional circumstances, for example when planning for larger scale development such as new settlements or major urban extensions."

4. Furthermore, where a local planning authority is proposing a new green belt it should:
 - demonstrate why normal planning and development management policies would not be adequate;
 - set out whether any major changes in circumstances have made the adoption of this exceptional measure necessary;
 - show what the consequences of the proposal would be for sustainable development;
 - demonstrate the necessity for the green belt and its consistency with Local Plans for adjoining areas;
 - show how the green belt would meet the other objectives of the NPPF

5. It is worth noting that much of the debate in the planning law has centred on what are the 'exceptional circumstances' for altering (i.e. reviewing) existing green belt in light of increasing housing need, rather than around designating new areas. This is a strategic issue, Green Belts tend to cover more than one administrative boundary and for this reason if there is to be an examination as to whether there is an exceptional case for considering creating a Green Belt the local planning

authorities that form PUSH would have to consider the matter collectively rather than each authority considering in isolation.

Issues for consideration

6. As stated above, Green Belt will only be established in exceptional circumstances. Given the considerable growth that has been delivered across the PUSH area to date and will continue to be delivered it is critical that the integrity of the highly valued natural environment and the key elements of settlement pattern are maintained. A key part of the current strategy is to ensure that development can be accommodated while preventing the coalescences of the separate communities across the PUSH area. For this reason Strategic Gaps (landscape gaps) play a significant role in and achieve the same purpose of the five key purposes of Green Belt designation.
7. Given the importance of Green Infrastructure across the PUSH area, the PUSH Joint Committee approved the Green Infrastructure Strategy in 2017 and work is currently on going to prepare the Green Infrastructure Implementation Plan. For noting in the Hampshire & Isle of Wight Devolution Proposal there were proposals about green infrastructure with a recognition that it could achieve similar outcomes to green belt. The view from HMG was that this would be more acceptable to them than the actual designation of green belt and so PUSH may wish to think whether this is a more appropriate route to follow.
8. If there is a desire to agree to the designation of new green belt there would need to be clear justification how the area would meet the criteria for Green Belt designation, why the current strategy was not delivering its objectives and an understand the extent to which there is consensus across the PUSH authorities about the desirability to do this.
9. An important issue to consider, and which should inform the debate about whether we should focus resources on building a case for designating a Green Belt in South Hampshire, is the extent to which this would be consistent with our messages about wanting to deliver sustainable growth in South Hampshire and the Isle of Wight. Clearly. Whilst this narrative could be developed it would be interesting whether that would be the message received by central government who may take an alternative view that we are 'anti-growth' in South Hampshire and the Isle of Wight.

CONCLUSION

It is RECOMMENDED that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee NOTES the report and decision made by the Joint Committee that the PUSH Planning Officer Group should bring a full report back to the Joint Committee in light of the presentation by CPRE to advise whether there is any justification for considering a Green Belt across the PUSH area

Background Papers:

- None

Reference Papers:

- None

Enquiries:

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