



## SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE

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Your ref:  
Our ref: ZPP/10/42

5 August 2005

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Dear Sir/Madam

### **CONSULTATION ON DRAFT SCOTTISH PLANNING POLICY 21: GREEN BELTS**

I enclose a consultative draft copy of *Scottish Planning Policy (SPP) 21: Green Belts* which, when finalised, will replace the policy on green belts contained in *Circular 24/1985: Development in the Countryside and Green Belts*. Policy in that Circular on development in the countryside has been superseded by *SPP 3: Planning for Housing* and *SPP 15: Rural Development*.

#### **Responding to this draft consultation document**

We are inviting written responses to this draft consultation document by 28 October 2005. Further copies of the document are available by telephoning (0131) 244 7543. The document is also available on our web site: [www.scotland.gov.uk/planning](http://www.scotland.gov.uk/planning)

#### **Please send your response to:**

[spp21@scotland.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:spp21@scotland.gsi.gov.uk)

or

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If you have any queries contact Rosie Grant by emailing [rosie.grant@scotland.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:rosie.grant@scotland.gsi.gov.uk) or by telephoning (0131) 244 7553.

We would be grateful if you could clearly indicate in your response which questions or parts of the consultative draft you are responding to as this will aid our analysis of the responses received.

**For future engagement:**

If you wish to access this consultation online, go to <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/view/views.asp>. You can telephone Freephone 0800 77 1234 to find out where your nearest public internet access point is, if you prefer to submit your response by e-mail to [spp21@scotland.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:spp21@scotland.gsi.gov.uk)

**SEConsult**

A new email alert system for SE consultations (SEconsult) was launched in December 2003. This system will allow stakeholder individuals and organisations to register and receive a weekly email containing details of all new SE consultations (including web links). SEconsult will complement, but in no way replace SE distribution lists, and is designed to allow stakeholders to 'keep an eye' on all SE consultation activity, and therefore be alerted at the earliest opportunity to those of most interest. We encourage you to register as soon as possible.

**Access to consultation responses**

We will make all responses available to the public in the Scottish Executive Library and on the Scottish Executive consultation web pages, unless confidentiality is requested. All responses not marked confidential will be checked for any potentially defamatory material before being logged in the library or placed on the website.

Yours faithfully



Rosie Grant

## B. RESPONDEE INFORMATION FORM

Please complete the details below and attach it with your response. This will help ensure we handle your response appropriately:

Name:

Postal Address:

Consultation title:

1. Are you responding as: (please tick one box)

- (a) an individual  (go to 2a/b)  
(b) **on behalf of** a group or organisation  (go to 2c)

### 2a. INDIVIDUALS:

Do you agree to your response being made available to the public (in SE library and/or on SE website)?

- Yes (go to 2b below)   
No, not at all

2b. Where *confidentiality is not requested*, we will make your response available to the public on the following basis (please tick one of the following boxes)

- Yes, make my response, name and address all available   
Yes, make my response available, but not my name or address   
Yes, make my response and name available, but not my address

### 2c ON BEHALF OF GROUPS OR ORGANISATIONS:

Your name and address as respondees *will be* made available to the public (in the SE library and/or on SE website). Are you content for your response to be made available also?

- Yes   
No

3. We will share your response internally with other SE policy teams who may be addressing the issues you discuss. They may wish to contact you again in the future, but we require your permission to do so. Are you content for the Scottish Executive to contact you again in the future for consultation or research purposes?

- Yes   
No

## C. The Scottish Executive Consultation Process

Consultation is an essential and important aspect of Scottish Executive working methods. Given the wide-ranging areas of work of the Scottish Executive, there are many varied types of consultation. However, in general Scottish Executive consultation exercises aim to provide opportunities for all those who wish to express their opinions on a proposed area of work to do so in ways which will inform and enhance that work.

While details of particular circumstances described in a response to a consultation exercise may usefully inform the policy process, consultation exercises cannot address individual concerns and comments, which should be directed to the relevant public body. Consultation exercises may involve seeking views in a number of different ways, such as public meetings, focus groups or questionnaire exercises.

Typically, Scottish Executive consultations involve a written paper inviting answers to specific questions or more general views about the material presented. Written papers are distributed to organisations and individuals with an interest in the area of consultation, and they are also placed on the Scottish Executive web site enabling a wider audience to access the paper and submit their responses<sup>[1]</sup>. Copies of all the responses received to consultation exercises (except those where the individual or organisation requested confidentiality) are placed in the Scottish Executive library at Saughton House, Edinburgh (K Spur, Saughton House, Broomhouse Drive, Edinburgh, EH11 3XD, telephone 0131 244 4552).

The views and suggestions detailed in consultation responses are analysed and used as part of the decision making process. Depending on the nature of the consultation exercise the responses received may:

- indicate the need for policy development or review
- inform the development of a particular policy
- help decisions to be made between alternative policy proposals
- be used to finalise legislation before it is implemented

If you have any comment about how this consultation exercise has been conducted, please send them to:

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<sup>[1]</sup> [www.scotland.gov.uk](http://www.scotland.gov.uk)



SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE  
Development Department

# **Scottish Planning Policy**

## **SPP 21**

# **Green Belts: Consultation Draft**

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## PLANNING SERIES:

- **Scottish Planning Policies (SPPs)** provide statements of Scottish Executive policy on nationally important land use and other planning matters, supported where appropriate by a locational framework.
- **Circulars**, which also provide statements of Scottish Executive policy, contain guidance on policy implementation through legislative or procedural change.
- **Planning Advice Notes (PANs)** provide advice on good practice and other relevant information.

Statements of Scottish Executive policy contained in SPPs and Circulars are material considerations to be taken into account in development plan preparation and development management.

Existing National Planning Policy Guidelines (NPPGs) have continued relevance to decision making, until such time as they are replaced by a SPP. The term SPP should be interpreted as including NPPGs.

Statements of Scottish Executive location-specific planning policy, for example, the West Edinburgh Planning Framework, have the same status in decision-making as SPPs.

The National Planning Framework sets out the strategy for Scotland's long-term spatial development. It has the same status as SPPs and provides a national context for development plans and planning decisions and the ongoing programmes of the Scottish Executive, public agencies and local government.

**Important Note:** in the interests of brevity and conciseness, Scottish Planning Policies do not repeat policy across thematic boundaries. Each SPP takes account of the general policy in SPP1 and highlights the other SPPs where links to other related policy will be found. The whole series of SPPs should be taken as an integral policy suite and read together.

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## **SUMMARY**

Scottish Ministers recognise the importance of Scotland's cities and towns to the growth of the Scottish economy and recognise the need to avoid urban sprawl and unmanaged, unplanned growth. Green belt policy is one of a range of mechanisms that can help to shape our towns and cities in a sustainable way. This Scottish Planning Policy sets out the objectives of green belt policy and the way in which it should be used and enforced.

Scottish Ministers consider that green belt policy should be used as a long-term land use planning tool to provide clarity and certainty on where development will and will not take place. There should continue to be a strong presumption against development in green belts. Where it is considered necessary, the proposed release of green belt land should be taken forward as part of a long-term settlement strategy in the development plan. This will ensure widespread engagement and debate on the future shape of settlements. Development plans prepared by local authorities will define the scale of land use change, identify the developments that are appropriate and indicate the standards of layout, design and other important requirements that should be met.

Land that is designated as green belt in the development plan, in association with wider networks of green space, can provide a number of benefits, including outdoor recreation opportunities for local people, biodiversity and enhanced quality of life. Opportunities should be taken to protect and enhance these benefits. Management plans agreed between local authorities, landowners and other interests, as well as a range of funding schemes, have an important role in maximising the benefits of green belt land in a co-ordinated way.

SP21

## INTRODUCTION

1. This policy replaces *Scottish Office Circular 24/1985: Development in the Countryside and Green Belts*. Policy in that Circular on development in the countryside has been superseded by *SPP 3: Planning for Housing* and *SPP 15: Rural Development*.

## MANAGING THE GROWTH OF TOWNS AND CITIES

### THE CHANGING CONTEXT

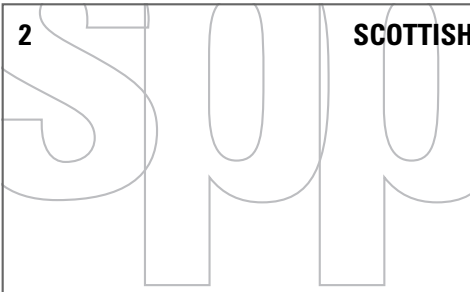
2. Scotland's population and household patterns are changing. The National Planning Framework highlights that the overall population is declining, although this conceals significant regional and local variations. There has, however, been a sustained increase in the number of households. Population fluctuations, new household formation and economic, social and lifestyle changes affect the way land is used and create pressure for the expansion of some towns and cities.
3. The shift towards a service-based economy has meant that high quality environments and accessible locations have become increasingly important. This can result in pressure for new development at the edges of settlements, while land and buildings in urban areas become and remain vacant. Regeneration of disadvantaged communities and the re-use of vacant urban land are key priorities of Scottish Ministers.
4. In the face of these dynamics, we need robust tools to manage change in our towns and cities.

### SPP OBJECTIVES

5. Our vision is to ensure Scotland has vibrant towns and cities, where change is managed effectively, and the best use is made of available land. Green belt policies can help to achieve this. In some areas, however, existing green belts are not providing long term certainty and have been undermined by piecemeal development management<sup>1</sup> decisions. This SPP aims to strengthen and enhance the role of green belts and encourage greater stability to increase their effectiveness. The effective operation of green belt policy has major benefits to Scotland in improving quality of life for local people and managing land carefully to guide the growth of our settlements.

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<sup>1</sup> The White Paper *Modernising the Planning System* (June 2005) signals the change in terminology from 'development control' to 'development management'. The latter term is used throughout this SPP.



6. From this, the key objectives of green belt policy are:
- **To direct planned growth to the most appropriate locations and support regeneration;**
  - **To protect and enhance the character, landscape setting and identity of towns and cities; and**
  - **To protect and give access to open space within and around towns and cities, as part of the wider structure of green space.**

### **RELATED MECHANISMS**

7. Green belts are one of a range of mechanisms that help shape our towns and cities. Others include policies on:
- Re-use of previously developed land;
  - Regeneration;
  - Housing;
  - Sustainable transport;
  - Retailing, in particular the sequential approach to development;
  - Urban design, including density;
  - Landscape and nature conservation; and
  - Open space, green network and access.

## **THE ROLE AND FUNCTION OF GREEN BELTS**

### **WHAT IS A GREEN BELT?**

8. A green belt is an area of land designated for the purposes of managing the shape of a town or city in the long term. It is the outcome of a long-term settlement strategy to achieve the three objectives listed in paragraph 6. Green belt policy is not a designation to protect natural heritage or to safeguard land for major uses such as housing or airports: there are other policies to carry out these functions. These other policies, for example, airport safeguarding zones or Areas of Great Landscape Value, can overlap green belt designations. Not all greenfield land will be covered by green belt policy. Only areas of land that help to deliver the objectives in paragraph 6 should be covered by green belt policy.
9. Green belts can encircle settlements but can take a variety of other forms including buffers, corridors, coastal strips or wedges, to take account of local circumstances. Whatever form green belts take, the policy should be used to direct development to suitable locations, not to prevent development from happening in general.

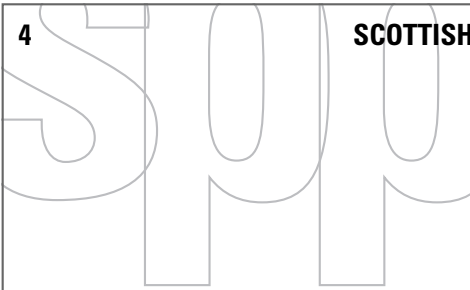
10. Designated green belts should be managed effectively to enhance the quality of life for local people. They can do this by:
  - Providing a range of opportunities for outdoor recreation;
  - Providing access to the countryside;
  - Protecting and enhancing biodiversity and the landscape resource; and
  - Conserving the historic environment.
11. Policies supporting the development of green networks, as advocated by *NPPG14: Natural Heritage*, can overlay policies on green belt as a focus for positive management measures to achieve the benefits set out above. Management issues are discussed further in paragraphs 28-30.

#### **WHERE SHOULD GREEN BELTS BE DESIGNATED?**

12. Green belts have a particular benefit in the planning of towns and cities where there is demand for development and where co-ordination is required across local authority boundaries. For towns and cities with a distinct character and identity that could be harmed by unplanned growth, the use of green belt policy may help to manage that growth more effectively. Other policies, however, may also achieve these aims, for example, the effective use of countryside policies. Most settlements do not need green belts. Other policies can achieve the aims of green belt just as successfully, for example, a policy designed to protect the setting of an historic town or to rigorously manage development in a landscape of high environmental quality. Ministers do not expect to see many new green belts being designated.

#### **SETTLEMENT PATTERNS**

13. The scale and type of development pressure, and the need for growth or regeneration, will influence changes in settlement patterns. The most effective way to plan for change will depend on the differences of geography, environmental sensitivities, landscape character and infrastructure capacity. Consideration should be given to the most sustainable pattern of urban growth, taking into account the impact on private car travel. *SPP17: Planning for Transport* seeks to reduce dependence on car travel and encourage more sustainable modes of transport. Growth on the urban fringe or in a development corridor, associated with a key public transport link, may represent the most sustainable solution. Leap-frogging of the green belt, where housing development in particular is pushed to outlying settlements, has the potential to increase commuting by private car, and should be considered only where more sustainable options are not practicable.



## DEVELOPMENT PLANNING

### ESTABLISHING AND REVIEWING GREEN BELTS

14. Development plans identify the demographic, economic, environmental and social needs of the area and set out a long-term settlement strategy to address them. The establishment and review of green belts forms part of this process. Strategic Environmental Assessment of development plans will ensure that the environmental consequences of the development strategy are rigorously examined.
15. Under the present two-tier system, structure plans consider the need for and review of green belts and local plans define the precise boundaries. In future, local development plans will establish both the need for and detailed boundaries of green belts, except in the four largest city regions, where strategic development plans will consider the issue of need. Outwith these city regions, proposals for any new green belts will require specific approval from Scottish Ministers, subject to legislative change.

### BOUNDARIES AND TIMEFRAMES

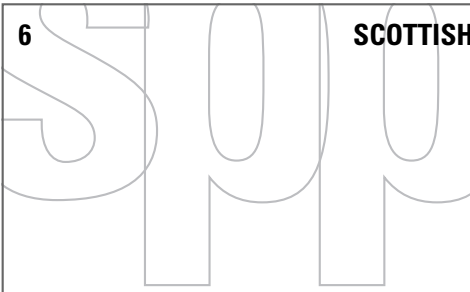
16. As a green belt is intended to achieve long-term certainty, it should have a timeframe of at least 20 years, consistent with the timeframe for housing land supply in *SPP3: Planning and Housing*. A fundamental review of some existing green belts will be required to plan positively for future development needs within this timeframe, in accordance with the key objectives of green belts set out in paragraph 6 above. The green belt boundary should be drawn to accommodate planned long-term growth and avoid the cumulative erosion of its integrity through the granting of individual planning permissions. Inner boundaries should not, therefore, be drawn too tightly.
17. Boundaries should be clearly identifiable on the ground, using strong visual or physical features. These may include rivers, tree belts, railways or main roads and landscape features that form the horizon, depending on their location and the settlements to which they relate. Hedges and field enclosures will rarely provide a sufficiently robust long-term boundary. Enduring green belt boundaries are those that combine a number of these features, creating an easily read physical relationship between the developed settlement and the countryside.
18. Planning for long-term growth can ensure that future development is well-managed and integrated into the fabric of the settlement and its surrounding landscape. It allows for phased release of land for housing, business and industry and open space. It also makes it possible for transport facilities, utilities, structural landscaping, path networks and links to the countryside, education, healthcare and other key facilities to be planned in advance.
19. There is a presumption that proposals to release green belt land will be considered as part of the review of the development plan strategy, noting the expectation that they will last for 20 years, rather than through individual

planning applications. In this way, local people can be closely engaged in the process at an early stage. Where a release is agreed, local authorities should work with a range of stakeholders, including landowners, developers, infrastructure providers, public agencies and surrounding communities to agree a master plan. As supplementary guidance, master plans can be a material consideration in determining applications and appeals, as set out in *SPP1: The Planning System*. Where major releases of green belt land are planned, consideration should be given to the potential for expanding that green belt at another location.

## DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT

### APPROPRIATE USES IN GREEN BELTS

20. There is a strong presumption against new development in the green belt. Development plans will define the uses that are appropriate in green belts. These will include:
  - Agricultural uses, including the re-use of historic agricultural buildings in keeping with their surroundings;
  - Woodland and forestry, including community woodlands;
  - Horticulture, including market gardening (but not retailing unconnected with or out-of-scale with this purpose); and
  - Recreational uses that are compatible with an agricultural or natural setting, for example, golf courses, some equestrian uses, fisheries, non-motorised cycling facilities, walking, parks and playing fields.
21. New development in the green belt must be of suitable scale and form for the location. Many uses will only be appropriate when the intensity is low and any built elements are ancillary to the main use, small-scale and of high quality design. The reuse of buildings of architectural or historic merit should be viewed positively. *Designing Places* and the related Planning Advice Note series are particularly relevant. Public transport and access by walking and cycling will be required for uses that will attract a significant number of visitors.
22. Much of the land within green belts is rural in nature. *SPP15: Planning for Rural Development* recognises that the need for agricultural land is decreasing and there is a need for diversification of the rural economy. It is acknowledged that this may lead to additional development in urban fringe land covered by green belt policy. Development proposals, however, must still meet the requirements set out in paragraph 21.



### **TREATMENT OF ESTABLISHED USES**

23. Existing settlements should be explicitly excluded from green belt designations, as should major educational and research uses, major business and industrial operations and airports, to allow for growth and change. All other uses should be covered by the green belt designation to afford a greater level of control over new development.

### **PROPOSALS FOR NON-CONFORMING USES**

24. Where a proposed use would not normally be consistent with green belt designation, exceptionally it may still be considered appropriate, either as a national priority or to meet an established need, and only if no other suitable site is available. These exceptions to the policy should be highlighted in the development plan to allow for wide publicity and engagement.
25. Existing institutions in large grounds may be redeveloped where they are no longer needed for their original purpose. Ideally, proposals should be identified in the development plan. In all cases, every effort should be made to redevelop within the existing built envelope (generally the buildings, outbuildings and associated hardstanding). In exceptional circumstances, new development may be acceptable as part of a comprehensive redevelopment scheme, where it enables the successful conversion of existing listed buildings. *NPPG18: Planning and the Historic Environment* sets out policy on enabling development.
26. Proposals for non-conforming uses will also need to be sympathetic in scale and form and to link with walking, cycling and public transport provision, as noted in paragraph 21.

### **DEPARTURES FROM THE DEVELOPMENT PLAN**

27. Applications for development in the green belt which do not conform to the development plan shall be subject to the notification arrangements set out in *Scottish Office Circular 4/1997: Notification of Planning Applications*. We intend to implement this through an amendment to that Circular.

## **MANAGING THE GREEN BELT RESOURCE**

28. Land designated as green belt can be positively managed for the benefit of the surrounding communities and beyond. New rights and responsibilities for outdoor access have now come into force through the *Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003*. Greenspace trusts and partnerships can be a focus for action to enhance access and the quality and use of green belt land and, looking more widely, the green network. Other initiatives such as the work of the Farming & Wildlife Advisory Group and Forestry Commission Scotland's *Woods in and Around Towns* initiative provides mechanisms for the enhancement of urban fringe land, the latter supported by the Scottish Forestry Grants Scheme.

29. Other funding, for example, through the Community Environmental Renewal Scheme and the Landfill Tax Credit Scheme, may help to support projects on environmental improvement or access. Given that many run-down and deprived areas are located adjacent to green belt land on the edge of cities, Community Planning Partnerships should also consider the potential to improve access from these areas to the countryside.
30. Management arrangements and agreements, where possible highlighted in development plans, can be a valuable way to ensure that green belts fulfil their purpose. Local communities, landowners and voluntary organisations should be involved where possible in helping to put these arrangements in place and keeping them under review.

## CONCLUSIONS

31. Green belts will continue to play a key role in managing change in Scotland's towns and cities and, once in place, should be robustly protected. It is important that the evolution of our towns and cities is planned on a realistic forward view of 20 years, taking into account the need to protect important characteristics of settlements and improve quality of life. Long-term growth should be planned to ensure that better quality development is delivered on the ground and communities and other stakeholders have greater confidence that the policy framework will be stable and effective.

## ENQUIRIES

32. Enquiries about the content of this draft SPP should be addressed to Rosie Grant, SEDD Planning, Area 2-H, Victoria Quay, Edinburgh, EH6 6QQ (0131 244 7553) or by e-mail to [rosie.grant@scotland.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:rosie.grant@scotland.gsi.gov.uk). Further copies can be obtained by telephoning 0131 244 7543. This draft SPP, other SPPs, Planning Advice Notes and a list of Circulars can be viewed on the Scottish Executive website: [www.scotland.gov.uk/planning](http://www.scotland.gov.uk/planning).





