

# **What influence has Green Belt policy been on housing supply in the UK?**

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## **Contents**

|                                                                 | <b>Page No.</b> |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|
| <b>1. Key Words</b>                                             | <b>3</b>        |
| <b>2. Introduction</b>                                          | <b>3</b>        |
| Dissertation question                                           | 5               |
| <b>3. Research Methodology</b>                                  | <b>7</b>        |
| <b>4. Literature Review</b>                                     | <b>15</b>       |
| The housing challenge in the UK                                 | 15              |
| Housing supply – economic and social consequences for the UK    | 19              |
| Housing supply – solutions to a historic problem                | 20              |
| Housing supply – further tinkering                              | 22              |
| Green Belts – urban containment                                 | 24              |
| Green Belts – conflicts and tension                             | 27              |
| Green Belts – different approaches to delivering housing supply | 30              |
| <b>5. Case Study – Cambridge</b>                                | <b>37</b>       |
| <b>6. Results – Interview</b>                                   | <b>46</b>       |
| <b>7. Discussion</b>                                            | <b>55</b>       |
| <b>8. Conclusion</b>                                            | <b>59</b>       |
| <b>9. Recommendation</b>                                        | <b>60</b>       |
| <b>10. Acknowledgments</b>                                      | <b>63</b>       |
| References                                                      | 63              |
| Bibliography                                                    | 75              |
| Appendices                                                      | 88              |

## **1. Key Words**

Green Belt, brownfield, housing supply, housing demand, housing need, land supply, sustainability.

## **2. Introduction**

The failure of successive Governments to address the under-supply of housing in the UK to meet demand has been a long term problem (Wilson 2014; Lyons 2014; Overman 2012). There is a requirement to build at least 220,000 homes a year up to 2022, to maintain the number of newly formed households. However, over the last 10 years, on average the UK has only constructed 137,000 homes a year (DCLG 2015a; Lyons 2014) and despite a 15 per cent increase in housing completions in England in the last 12 months to 131,060 (DCLG 2015), there still remains a significant shortage in housing supply (DCLG 2011; Wilson 2014). As a result, the UK is facing a growing housing crisis (IPPR 2011; Lyons 2014), which has resulted in both economic and social consequences (DCLG 2011) and based on current projections and without an alternative strategy, the country will be short of up to two million homes by 2020 (Lyons 2014).

The Green Belt policy has occupied a central position in England's planning system, since its conception in the 1930's (Amati 2007). Its role and purposes, that of preventing urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open (DCLG 2012a) and providing a 'green lung' around towns and cities (Smith 2014) have effectively remained unchanged since the Government Circular in 1955 (MHLG 1955).

There is significant tension and increasing polarisation amongst academics, policy groups, town planning organisations and politicians between the desire to protect the Green Belt and the need to house the UK's rising population (DCLG 2012a; Shelter 2015; IPPR 2015). This debate has intensified, expounded more recently following the announcement that between 2013 and 2015 there has been an overall decrease of 2,000 hectares (0.1 per cent) of land classified as Green Belt (DLGG 2015d), primarily as a result of the adoption by local authorities of new local plans.

Furthermore, recent research has indicated that sufficient Green Belt land to construct 219,535 houses is proposed to be released by local authorities in England, through the local plan review process (CPRE 2015). A recent poll indicates that 64 per cent of people agree the Green Belt should be protected (CPRE 2015) and that the government's passion for the protection of the Green Belt is being undermined by planning guidelines that, with their emphasis on meeting unrealistic housing numbers and supporting economic growth, have inadvertently declared 'open season' on the Green Belt (CPRE 2015; Gosden 2015).

It has been argued that Green Belts in the UK are outdated, inflexible and a blunt instrument for addressing the complex challenges associated with the urban fringe (Hall 2007; Amati and Taylor 2010), that restricts the supply of future housing land (IPPR 2015; Amati and Taylor 2010) and prevents local authorities from delivering the strategic priority (DCLG 2012) of building the homes needed in their area (IPPR 2015). Moreover, Green Belts inflate land and property prices (KPMG 2015; IPPR 2015; Pryce 1999) preventing millions of young people from affording a home (Cheshire 2014) and promotes unsustainable development, congestion and pollution (Hall 1963; Echenique 1999; Freestone 2003; Echenique 1999; Papworth 2015; SCDC 2013; KPMG 2015).

Conversely, the Green Belt as a spatial planning tool has been crucial in preventing urban sprawl in the UK (CPRE 2010; Amati and Taylor 2010), which imposes significant costs on society (Litman 2015), including loss of food production, ecology, reduced accessibility and higher costs of public infrastructure (Litman 2015). In addition it has been argued that Green Belts generate benefits for health and wellbeing (Motion 2015), providing access to the countryside to 30 million people, 30,000km of public rights of way, 89,000 ha of Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and 220,000 ha of broadleaf and mixed woodland. Green Belt contains 33 per cent of Local Nature Reserves and 19 per cent ancient woodland and in the face of climate change, it has been argued that it is likely to have an increasingly significant role storing carbon and preventing flooding (CPRE 2015).

There has been a long history of Green Belt reform proposals (Hall 1963; Thornburn 1970; Herington 1990), ranging from its abolition to meet the UK's housing shortage and stimulate economic growth

(Heartfield 2005), to a more flexible Green Belt Policy (Amati 2008; Gunn 2007; Hall 2007) or an alternative policy, such as green wedges (Barker 2006). Conversely, it has been argued that the Green Belt should remain protected for future generations and enhanced (CPRE 2010; Natural England 2010; Helm 2015) and that the UK's housing need should be built on previously developed 'brownfield' land, which is not a finite resource (as opposed to Green Belt) and is constantly being replenished, of which that it has been projected there is enough suitable brownfield land available now for at least 1 million new homes (CPRE 2015c).

### ***Dissertation Question***

This discourse aims to explore the following question; what influence has Green Belt policy been on housing supply in the UK? Arising from this overarching question, the following sub-questions will be investigated each in turn:

1. *What is the role and purpose of the Green Belt, both historically and currently?;*
2. *How successful has Green Belt policy been in its role and purpose?;*
3. *What tensions does Green Belt policy generate for local authorities in delivering a housing supply and ability to grow a settlement naturally?;and*
4. *What potential responses are available to increasing land supply in the UK?*

This discourse is valid and relevant to current issues in society and will adopt a position of acceptance that Green Belt is a legitimate policy, that there is a need within the UK for a containment policy and will not question the principle of its existence, although reference to academics who adopt this opinion will be referred to.

The objectives of this discourse are to explore the following:

- the Green Belt: its role, emergence and origins;
- the housing challenge in the UK;
- the tensions experienced by local authorities between delivering a housing supply and protecting the Green Belt;

- the practical problems experienced as a result of Green Belt policy in the planning process from a legislative framework perspective;
- different approaches to the Green Belt that have been proposed theoretically and adopted practically to deliver housing supply; and
- Solutions for the future challenge; option(s) to improve the existing UK system in order to deliver the UK's housing need.

### **3. Research Methodology**

This discourse is relevant to the philosophical pragmatist worldview in which the study's focus of attention is the research problem, arising out of actions, situations and consequences, as opposed to antecedent conditions (Creswell 2009).

The suitability of the research approach has been informed by the pragmatist worldview of freedom of choice and the best method to meet the needs and purposes of the study (Cherryholmes 1992; Creswell 2009). Set against the criteria of time and financial constraints, limitation in personnel to design the research and accessibility to collection of data, evidence base and analysis of results, it was not feasible to undertake a quantitative approach and investigate the potential cause and effect of Green Belt policy on actual housing numbers on a national scale.

To render the discourse manageable, a qualitative research approach to investigation was adopted, which employed a narrow but holistic approach, with a broad remit, and used multiple sources of data and research methods (Hammersley 1992; Denscombe 2001). The research design used a specific single case study. The aim of this approach was to illuminate the general by looking at the particular (Denscombe 2001), on the basis that by concentrating efforts on one case, as opposed to a mass study, insights may be garnered from focusing at the individual case that can have wider implications and, importantly would not have come to light through the use of a survey approach research strategy, that tried to cover a large number of instances (Denscombe 2001).

The case study approach is a holistic, in-depth study that provides the researcher with a greater opportunity to obtain both valuable and a unique insight that is not necessarily achievable through more superficial research using different approaches (Denscombe 2001). In addition, given that relationships and processes within social settings are more likely to be interconnected and interrelated, this approach offered more opportunity than a survey approach of going into sufficient detail to unravel the complexities of a given situation. The aim of this approach was to identify the detailed workings of the relationships and social processes, in order to discover how these many parts affect each other and to

explain why certain outcomes might happen, rather than restrict attention to the outcomes of these interactions (Denscombe 2001).

The case study chosen to form the basis of the investigation is a natural setting and a ‘naturally occurring’ phenomenon; it exists prior to and potentially after the research project. It is not a situation that is artificially generated specifically for the purposes of the research, nor can the researcher impose controls. For example, on variables through an experiment research design, so that the impact of a specific ingredient can be measured (Yin 1994; Denscombe 2001). The case study was chosen, based on its suitability, in that it is similar in crucial respects with other case studies that could have been chosen, and the findings from the case study were likely to apply elsewhere (Denscombe 2001). In determining the case study’s suitability, the following ‘naturally occurring’ (Yin 1994) criterion was set out within the research strategy:

- i. *historic and current pressure to develop and meet its housing need;*
- ii. *tight Green Belt boundary around its settlement;*
- iii. *low brownfield allocation;*
- iv. *at the Local Plan review stage; and*
- v. *solutions involving Green Belt have been proposed/adopted*

In electing the geographical location of the case study, a comparative analysis was undertaken by the author, using recent research available within the regional context of England. The criteria of the research included available brownfield land for housing, estimated annual demand for housing and total gap between annual housing demand and housing completions (see *figure 1* below).

**Figure 1.** Comparative analysis of regions

| Region                                     | Available Brownfield (ha)<br>(2010-2012) | Estimated Housing Need | Total Gap (Housing demand<br>– Completions (2010-14) |
|--------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|------------------------|------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Northern England &amp;<br/>Midlands</b> |                                          |                        |                                                      |
| East Midlands                              | 4,085                                    | 20,450                 | -40,940                                              |
| East of England                            | 5,187                                    | 30,550                 | -62,520                                              |
| North East                                 | 3,700                                    | 9,000                  | -16,720                                              |
| North West                                 | 9,042                                    | 19,600                 | -38,340                                              |
| West Midlands                              | 3,946                                    | 20,800                 | -47,170                                              |
| Yorkshire & Humber                         | 5,149                                    | 20,650                 | -45,750                                              |
| <b>Sub total</b>                           | <b>31,109</b>                            | <b>121,050</b>         | <b>251,440</b>                                       |
| <b>Southern England</b>                    |                                          |                        |                                                      |
| London                                     | 3,330                                    | 56,400                 | -153,390                                             |
| South East                                 | 6,768                                    | 41,700                 | -85,950                                              |
| South West                                 | 3,916                                    | 24,150                 | -36,030                                              |
| <b>Sub total</b>                           | <b>14,014</b>                            | <b>122,250</b>         | <b>275,370</b>                                       |
| <b>Total</b>                               | <b>45,123</b>                            | <b>243,300</b>         | <b>526,810</b>                                       |

Source: (Holmans 2013; Sinnett et al 2014)

The research identified that Southern England (31 per cent) contains a lower allocation of brownfield land, when compared to the Northern England and the Midlands (61 per cent). In addition, Southern England has both a higher estimated annual demand for housing at just over 50 per cent and a greater restricted market (52.27 per cent), as a result of a higher ‘demand gap’ between estimated annual housing demand and housing completions. It was determined that the geographic location for the chosen case study would therefore be located in Southern England. However, the research indicates London is an extreme instance (Denscombe 2001), when compared to the others regions and the author elected to exclude London on the basis that it is far from typical and may provide evidence that is of contrast to the norm (Denscombe 2001).

Based on the findings above, the author assessed the suitability of a range of potential case studies located in Southern England. The author elected to choose the self-contained joint administrative boundaries of Cambridge City Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council as the case study, on the justification that it explicitly met all the research criteria and is typical to others that might have been chosen (Denscombe 2001).

There has been both historic pressure in Cambridge to develop and meet its housing need (Echenique 1999), and more recently, due to the expectation that its population will significantly increase (CCC 2013). Tightly bounded and completely surrounded by South Cambridgeshire District Council, the majority of land available for future housing growth is located outside the administrative boundaries of Cambridge City Council and within the Green Belt, as a result of the limited brownfield land available (IPPR 2015). Cambridge has been a leader on Green Belt redevelopment, as a result of its strong cross boundary consensus on housing growth (IPPR 2015). In addition, both Cambridge City Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council's local plans are presently being examined by the Secretary of State for their soundness and legal compliance. The evidence indicated that this case study is a typical instance and the researcher considered that there was a high probability the findings of the case study would apply elsewhere and could be credibly generalised in the wider context (Denscombe 2001).

The qualitative research methods employed also consisted of conducting interviews with a carefully selected, suitable and diverse coverage and were able to provide data based on privileged information. The selection criteria specifically included one planning policy officer employed from each case study areas of Cambridge City Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council. Both the interviewed officers' were chosen based on two key overarching criteria; firstly their specific knowledge of the authorities previous local plans and decision making associated with the release of Green Belt land for housing; secondly, their seniority of involvement with the ongoing examination in public (EiP) of both authorities' submitted local plans to the Planning Inspectorate, including the following sub-criteria that inform the local plan:

- i. *Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA);*

- ii. *Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA);*
- iii. *Green Belt Land Review;*
- iv. *Public Consultation stages on Local Plan;*
- v. *Housing Allocations; and*
- vi. *Safeguarded Land Allocations.*

In order to provide a more diverse coverage, the interviewees were carefully selected from localities that either had a professional involvement specifically in the geographical territory of Northern England or had a national involvement in areas that met the research criteria set out above. Based on the research criteria, the geographical areas chosen were Greater Manchester, Merseyside and West Lancashire. Interviewees were classified into four groups; firstly, public sector planners who would have a direct involvement in their local plan process; secondly professional agents, including private sector planning consultants, developers, planning barrister, architects and agents for landowners, who would represent clients during the local plan submission process (Amati 2008) and may have an positive interest in obtaining release of Green Belt for housing or even for personal gain, if a landowner or developer. The work of planning consultants, developers and barristers would normally involve submitting arguments for greater housing supply and Green Belt release or its protection. The third group of interviewees were classified as objectors and included two parish councillors. It was considered that this group would inform the wider debate, as they would potentially seek to retain, protect and enhance the Green Belt from encroachment and housing development. Fourthly, an academic commentator on both Green Belt and housing supply was interviewed in order to obtain a more objective view on the debate. It was chosen that members of the public would not be interviewed, given the contentiousness of the subject matter, complexity of the sub-questions and taking into consideration there is existing research available on the publics' viewpoints on the Green Belt, which has been expounded upon within the literature review.

Each interview was semi-structured, based on the sub-questions 1 - 4 and conducted on a one-to-one basis at their chosen location. Due to work commitments on behalf of the interviewee, one of the interviews was conducted by telephone. Contact was made in advance by way of letter and followed up

by telephone and email correspondence to confirm availability, the venue (an undisturbed and good acoustic location) and length of the interview, which on average, lasted for approximately one hour. The cost associated with the research was covered by the author, which included disbursements, fuel, transport, lunch, parking and printing. The researcher has concluded that weighted against the cost, there was a better response rate as the majority of parties who were approached responded and agreed to be interviewed, the data obtained was of greater detail and provided a form of immediate means of validating the data collected (Denscombe 2001), as opposed to a telephone, email survey or questionnaire approach, which would have been of less expense but not appropriate for this context.

In obtaining confirmation that the interviewee took part, the following assumptions were applied, in that there was consent to take part, the interviewee's works could be treated as 'on the record' and 'for the record' and the agenda for the discussion was set by the researcher (Denscombe 1983; Silverman 1985). The interviewer confirmed at the commencement of the interviews that the interviewees' would not be named in the discourse and would remain anonymous. In order to identify the interviewees, each individual has been referred to by way of both their different professional type, (for example a private sector planner) and their organisational type. This data has been recorded in a schedule produced at *Appendix 1*. It was considered that this anonymity enabled the interviewee to express more of their own personal opinion and in turn provide a greater weight attributed to the research data. Notwithstanding, the interviewer acknowledged that in all interviews, it was necessary and out of courtesy (given their professional status) to obtain authorisation from relevant 'authorities' (Denscombe 2001). Appropriate interview techniques were adopted, including the interviewer presenting himself, so as to not antagonise or upset the interviewee and the interviewer remained neutral and non-committal on the statements made during the interview.

The interviewer also sought permission to capture the interview data by way of a functioning audio tape recorder. No interviewee declined to be tape recorded, nor was any failure in power resource experienced. In addition, as a cross check, the interview was recorded by way of note taking. Following the completion of the interview, the data collected was transcribed in order to close the data (Denscombe 2001).

Empirical research was based on a literature review, in order to enable the researcher to gain an understanding of the existing work undertaken, including the existing theories and principles that have been influential in the research strategy. This in turn enabled the author to establish the key issues, questions and any gaps in the existing state of knowledge (Denscombe 2001). The literature review helped to inform the research questions that the author endeavours will assist in the advancement of the understanding of the Green Belt debate.

The research strategy associated with the literature review has been purposeful and structured (Denscombe 2001), using written documentary sources in the public domain, including books and journals, website page, newspapers reports, records, Government legislation, publications and official statistics, research reports, national planning policy and academic literature on the Green Belt debate. The data has been evaluated against the criteria of authenticity, credibility, representativeness and meaning (Platt 1981; Scott 1990).

All qualitative data collated using both primary and secondary research has been analysed using a procedure of analytic coding and categorising the data, reflections on the early coding and categories, identification patterns and processes commonalities and differences (Miles and Huberman 1994). Having undertaken this analysis procedure, the researcher then returned to check the validity of emerging explanations and themes, and refined a set of generalisation statements that explain the themes and relationships in the data. Finally, the researcher compared the new set of generalisation statements with existing theories and developed these in line with the findings from the field work (Denscombe 2001).

In conducting the research, the researcher has remained objective and un-biased throughout the process. However, the impact of the researcher's own identity and values in the analysis of data and the limitations of the adopted research approach in the context of the case study have been acknowledged, in that the data may be less representative. The researcher does note that the action group promoting the protection of Green Belt declined to be interviewed, due to commitments and referred the researcher to their official publication material available in the public domain on this topic. Accordingly, the

researcher has utilised this material as secondary data. In addition, there was a slow up take up of the proposed interviewees who agreed to take part in the interviews in arranging appointments, due to their workload commitments. This resulted in the researcher having to revise the scheduled timetable for the research and this in turn impacted on the time frame allocated to allow for transcription and analysis of the data.

This research strategy has been feasible in terms of the resources and time available and appropriate under the circumstances for collecting the necessary type of data. In addition, the research strategy has been suitable for addressing the tensions that underpin the research, provides a professional standard in that it has rigour, coherence and consistency, produces data that are representative, valid and reliable (Kirk and Miller 1986; Silverman 1993; Miles and Huberman 1994) and conforms with ethical standards (Denscombe 2001).

## 4. Literature Review

### *The housing challenge in the UK*

A number of studies have been recently published, investigating the primary factors driving the housing undersupply imbalance in the UK. The debate focuses on three main arguments; the impact of socio-economic factors through increasing demand for housing (IPPR 2010; Pennington 2012); a long term decline in house building (Pretty and Hackett 2009; Schmuecker 2011; Lyons 2014) and the restriction in land supply (HBF 2014; Pennington 2012; Morton 2012), which forms the primary focus of this discourse. It is critical to establish at the outset, that there are two important distinctions between housing supply and demand and land supply and demand. Both are inherently linked, but are distinctive.

There has been a long term substantial mismatch between estimated annual demand for housing and the number of housing completions (supply) each year, both regionally and nationally that has built up over the last three decades (Schmuecker 2011). This gap has been coined the ‘demand gap’ (Heath 2014) and based on Holmans (2013) estimated annual demand of 243,000 dwellings, this would result in a shortfall of -396,610 across England between 2010 and 2013 (Gov.uk 2014; Heath 2014). This ‘demand gap’ by region trend is elaborated at *Figure 2* below.

**Figure 2.** Housing completions by region (England) and ‘demand gap’ for the period 2010 to 2014

|                          | Estimated annual demand | 2010/11     |         | 2011/12     |         | 2012/13     |         | 2013/14     |         | Total Gap 2010/11 to 2013/14 |
|--------------------------|-------------------------|-------------|---------|-------------|---------|-------------|---------|-------------|---------|------------------------------|
|                          |                         | Completions | Gap     | Completions | Gap     | Completions | Gap     | Completions | Gap     |                              |
| East Midlands            | 20,450                  | 10,710      | -9,740  | 10,040      | -10,410 | 9,910       | -10,540 | 10,200      | -10,250 | -40,940                      |
| East of England          | 30,550                  | 15,280      | -15,270 | 15,690      | -14,860 | 14,060      | -16,490 | 14,650      | -15,900 | -62,520                      |
| London                   | 56,400                  | 15,530      | -40,870 | 20,200      | -36,200 | 18,470      | -37,930 | 18,010      | -38,390 | -153,390                     |
| North East               | 9,000                   | 4,630       | -4,370  | 5,270       | -3,730  | 4,570       | -4,430  | 4,810       | -4,190  | -16,720                      |
| North West               | 19,600                  | 9,840       | -9,760  | 9,560       | -10,040 | 10,610      | -8,990  | 10,050      | -9,550  | -38,340                      |
| South East               | 41,700                  | 20,190      | -21,510 | 21,710      | -19,990 | 19,630      | -22,070 | 19,320      | -22,380 | -85,950                      |
| South West               | 24,150                  | 13,780      | -10,370 | 16,640      | -7,510  | 14,120      | -10,030 | 16,030      | -8,120  | -36,030                      |
| West Midlands            | 20,800                  | 8,530       | -12,270 | 8,680       | -12,120 | 8,790       | -12,010 | 10,030      | -10,770 | -47,170                      |
| Yorkshire and The Humber | 20,650                  | 9,460       | -11,190 | 9,870       | -10,780 | 7,970       | -12,680 | 9,550       | -11,100 | -45,750                      |

Source: Holmans (2012)

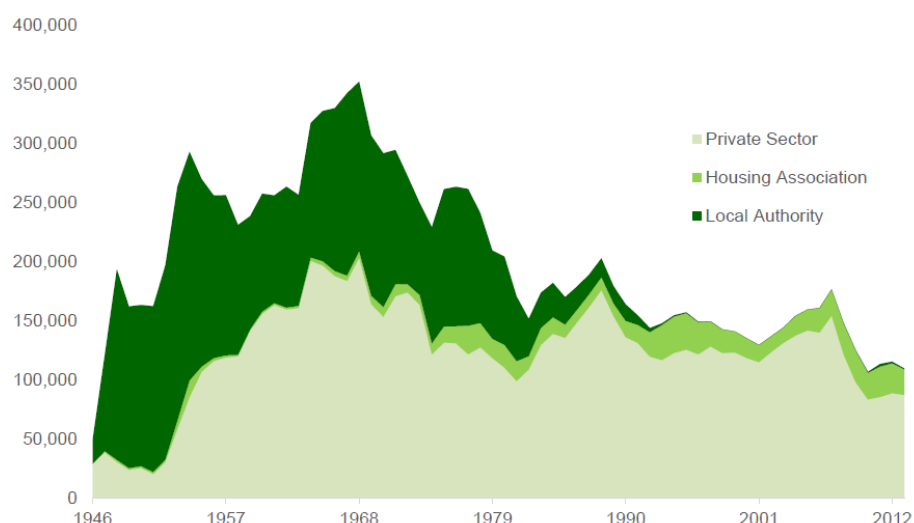
In addition to Lyon’s (2014) projection that at least 220,000 homes a year up to 2022, must be built to maintain the number of newly formed households in the UK, there have been several different

projections, based on both past and modified trends of household formation (Holmans 2013). These include the Future Homes Commission (2012) who have calculated that approximately 300,000 new homes should be constructed each year in the UK, in order to meet demand and Holmans (2013), who concluded that by taking into consideration an improvement in the economy, a modified projection of 26,593,000 households by 2031, would result in between 240,000 to 245,000 additional homes required each year to meet newly arising demand and need. However, Holmans (2013) has emphasised that if the economy moves back towards longer-term patterns of growth, even more housing investment will be required to meet resultant demand and this assertion has been supported by the Town and Country Planning Association, which recently projected that 312,000 houses per year would now need to be constructed (Savills 2015).

It is accepted that population growth plays a key part in driving housing demand (IPPR 2010; Pennington 2012). During the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, the UK has experienced significant growth, in which the number of households in Britain grew from 20 to 26 million between 1981 and 2011 (ONS 2011a; ONS 2011b). More recently, 98 per cent of household formation projections for the period 2001 to 2021 have increased as a result of population changes and complex economic, social and demographic factors (IPPR 2011; Heath 2014), including increasing life expectancy, which reduces the supply of properties available to new households and hidden demand, as a result of a large-scale shift in the mix of household types and generational changes, in the form of adults returning to live with their parents or sharing houses. This is in part due to younger people delaying forming separate households until later in life, resultant from marrying later and spending further time in education or sharing accommodation for longer (Holmans 2013; Schmuecker 2011; IPPR 2011; DCLG 2014b). Further influential factors include a significant increase in net immigration, estimated at 27 per cent of additional households per year, for the period 2012 to 2021 (Heath 2014), divorce and separation of cohabiting couples, estimated at a net increase in households of 52,000 per year between 2001 and 2021 (Holmans 2006) and existing or ‘backlog’ need (Heath 2014) estimated at just under 2 million households in 2009; the most common categories being overcrowded and concealed households (Bramley et al (2010).

In addition to an increasing demand for housing, there is a consensus between commentators that the second primary factor driving housing undersupply, is the long-term steep declining trend in house building in England, which has been evident across all sectors since the late 1970's (see *Figure 3* below) (Pretty and Hackett 2009; Schmuecker 2011; Lyons 2014).

**Figure 3.** Housing completions in England 1946 to 2012



Source: Gov.uk Live tables on house building. Table 209 [Updated 15 May 2014].

*Figure 3* shows the largest number of dwellings constructed across all tenures in England peaked in 1968 at 352,540 but this has significantly fallen to 107,820 in 2012-2013 (Gov.uk 2014; DCLG 2015b; Heath 2014). It is interesting to note that the largest contribution during this period from private enterprise was 164,070 new dwellings in 1969, compared to 84,420 dwellings in 2012-13 (Lyons 2014).

It has been argued there are many complex reasons for this systematic failure in house building (KMPPG 2014), exacerbated by the particularly dramatic collapse in 'social housing' as shown at *Figure 3* and once accounted for over 50 per cent of total housing output from its peak of 135,700, reducing to 1,360 dwellings in 2012-2013, and by Margaret Thatcher's controversial Right to Buy policy, introduced at a period of complacency in British housing policy, where for the first time in over a century there was not a shortage (Jones and Murie 2006; Pretty and Hackett 2009). The exception is housing association tenure, which has increased from 7,100 dwellings in 1969-70 to 22,030 dwellings in 2012-13 (Gov.uk

2014; DCLG 2015b; Heath 2014), and whilst the growth in housing associations (supported by housing grant) has partly offset the loss of council housing, this has never made up for this historic shortfall (Pretty and Hackett 2009). The economic recession in 2008 has also had a significant influence in limiting delivery, leading to a dramatic reduction in housing delivery, from its peak of 154,000 in 2007 to 83,000 in 2010 (Lyons 2014).

More recently, it has been argued that an underlying reason is the complexity, time-consuming and expensive process of house building, which crucially intersects between three markets: land, construction and home sales (KPMG 2014). Lyons (2014) argues that there has been a change in the shape of the present private construction industry, which now comprises a small number of volume house builders, as opposed to during the 1980's, where there were on average 10,000 active SME builders (those building 500 units or less) delivering around 57 per cent of all output. In contrast, there were approximately only 2,800 active small builders producing 27 per cent of all new homes in 2013 (Lyons 2014).

The third casual factor in the housing undersupply crisis is the restriction in land supply. The two main arguments for this restriction, are the results of the slow release of land held by public authorities for development (Morton 2012) and constraints in the planning system (HBF 2014; Pennington 2012), which not only restricts the supply of housing by severely rationing the release of land for development, causing long lags between permission being sought and granted (Pennington 2012), but significantly distorts behaviour in the market (FTI Consulting 2012). It has been argued that regulatory constraints have become more binding over the last few decades (Cheshire and Hiber 2008; Glaeser et al 2005) and are likely to become even more binding in the future, resulting in greater restrictions in the release of land supply (Hilber and Robert-Nicoud 2009; DCLG 2010b).

This lack of enough land being brought forward for new homes, has resulted in an artificial scarcity and has created a distortion in the land market, limiting the rate at which new homes are built and incentivising the acquisition and trading of land (Lyons 2014). In addition, these constraints have contributed to driving up the cost of land significantly faster than the price of houses (Hull and Cooke

2012; Morton 2012), which affects the ability for developers to secure finance for new developments and represents a significant barrier to development (Pennington 2012). This is compounded by the significant reduction in capital subsidy for housing during the last three decades, which represents a radical shift in the balance of government spending from the latter part of twentieth century away from constructing homes towards subsidising rents (Pennington 2012).

### ***Housing Supply – economic and social consequences for the UK***

This long term failure to address the under-supply of housing in the UK has resulted in both economic and social consequences (DCLG 2011). As evidenced above, demand has outstripped supply, leading to real house prices increasing at a faster rate than earnings and resulting in a significant deterioration in affordability, whereby the average home now costs eight times the average wage (Dolphin and Griffin 2011; OECD 2011; Stephens 2011; Hilber and Vermeulen 2012; NHF 2013; Lyons 2014). This wide divergence in the ratio between house prices and household earnings is termed the ‘affordability ratio’ and is particularly evident between 2001 and 2011, in which wages increased by 29 per cent while house prices increased by 95 per cent (Dolphin and Griffiths 2011).

The Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) have reported that house prices will continue along their upward trajectory by 6 per cent a year on average over the next five years, as the economy recovers unless more homes are put on the market (BBC 2014). In the likely event that population growth continues, supply response remains sluggish, exacerbated by the decline in social housing and prediction that regulatory constraints will become even more binding in the future (FTI Consulting 2012; Hilber and Robert-Bocoud 2009), housing affordability problems are now more likely to worsen during upswings and house price booms in the future, especially in highly urbanised areas, where the ratio between house prices and income may rise even more dramatically than elsewhere (Barker 2004; Stephens 2011; DCLG 2010; FTI Consulting 2012). This is particularly relevant in the London and the South East regions (Holmans 2012), as evidenced by the ‘demand gap’ diagram at *Figure 2*. It has been argued that the most vulnerable of society have been affected and given housing market responds to demand, rather than need, the housing market may still not be able to deliver the UK’s housing

requirement, as currently structured. Thus, there remains a requirement for the government to play a pivotal role in providing affordable housing (FTI Consulting 2012).

This failure has also resulted in housing market volatility, which impacts on the wider national economy, reducing labour mobility and damaging the prospect of growth (Lyons 2014; OECD 2011). It has been argued that a freer, more responsive housing market can play a major role in delivering economic growth, creating employment without creating inflation. Indeed, housing construction has directly impacted on economic output at an average 3 per cent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in the last decade (HCA 2010; DCLG 2011). In addition, for every £1 of construction output, generates £2.84 of demand in the wider economy (LEK Consulting 2009) and the provision of up to 200,000 homes before 2020 could generate 200,000 jobs and add 1.2 per cent to GDP (Lyons 2014).

### ***Housing Supply – solutions to a historic problem?***

In an attempt to boost significantly the supply of housing (CLGC 2012), the coalition government focused on two key areas; firstly, the introduction of economic policies and financial incentives in an attempt to stimulate the house building sector to build houses in the UK (Nathan and Overman 2011; Overman 2012; Smith 2015a) and secondly, the increase in supply of sufficient and appropriate land allocated by local authorities for housing development (CLGC 2014; Smith 2015), by reforming the UK planning system. This has been enacted through the abolition of the Labour Government's top-down regional planning and replacement with a more bottom-up consensus based planning system in the National Planning Policy Framework (2012) ('NPPF') and more recently the introduction of its National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG), (Nathan and Overman 2011; Overman 2012; Smith 2015).

There remains a mixed consensus as to whether the NPPF is successfully working to increase the supply of sufficient and appropriate land for housing and in turn, boost the supply of housing (CLGC 2014), although in England there has seen a 15 per cent increase in housing completions in the last 12 months (DCLG 2015). Significant criticism have been levied at the NPPF's housing land viability provisions, in which it has failed to prevent unsustainable development and imposed inappropriate housing upon

communities as a result of speculative planning applications, where there is an absence of a local plan, combined with a lack of identifying a full five year housing land supply (CLGC 2014; RTPI 2014). This has arisen as a result of paragraph 49 of the NPPF, which states that relevant policies for the supply of housing should not be considered up-to date if the local planning authority cannot demonstrate a five-year supply of deliverable housing sites (Paragraph 47). Therefore, if the local authority has not identified and updated annually, a five year supply of housing land, with an additional buffer of 5 per cent, or where there has been a persistent under-delivery of housing 20 per cent (Paragraph 47), planning decisions have to be made in accordance with the presumption in favour of sustainable development (Paragraph 14).

The Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) has argued this policy creates a single-minded focus on one short-term criterion that risks placing the country in difficulty over the long-term horizon (CLGC 2014), whereby volume house builders persistently challenge the brownfield element of the five year supply, thus putting pressure on greenfield and safeguarded sites (CLGC 2014). As at 2014, only 54 per cent of local authorities were able to demonstrate a five-year housing supply (PAS 2014) and recent research has indicated that nine out of ten planning appeals for housing (which had been refused), were allowed by the Planning Inspectorate, where local authorities did not have a five-year housing supply (CPRE 2014a). Following its previous revocation (DCLG 2007), criticism by Lord Taylor (2014) is levied at the lack of guidance in the NPPG on Strategic Housing Market Assessments (SHMA), which would help underpin the delivery of the NPPF in plan making and ensure it is used effectively (DCLG 2014).

Moreover, significant criticism has been directed towards the government's reduction in emphasis on the use of brownfield land (CLGC 2014), through its removal of the 'brownfield first' target policy and replacement with paragraph 111 of the NPPF, which only 'encourages' local authorities to re-use land that has been previously developed (DCLG 2012a). However, it has been argued that it is difficult in any event to assess how effective the NPPF policy on brownfield has been, given the government has not published national data on building on previously-used land since 2011 (CLGC 2014).

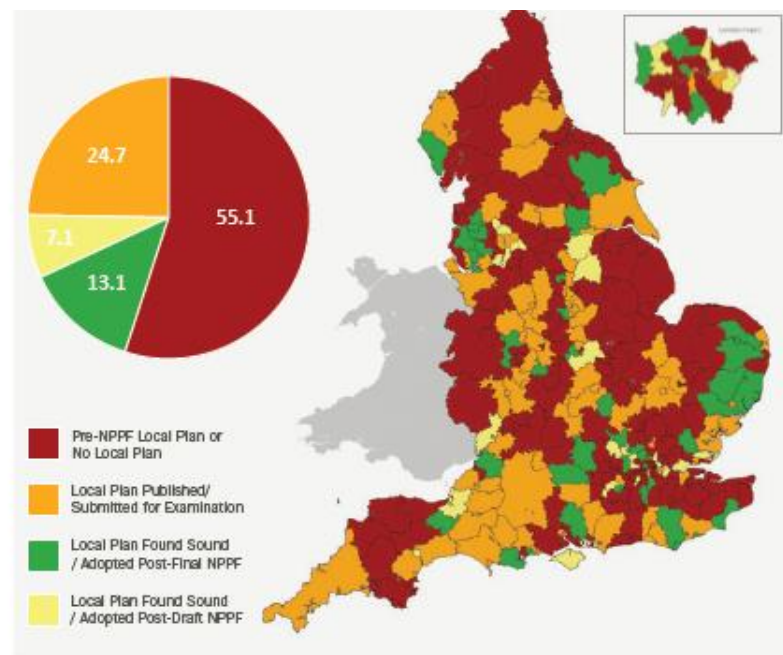
### ***Housing Supply – Further tinkering***

There still remains a significant under-supply of housing in the UK and a recent report published by the Home Builders Federation, *Barker Review: a decade on* (2014) argues that despite the best efforts and intentions of successive ministers, the 10 years since the Barker Review (2004) has ultimately been a lost decade in terms of addressing the shortcomings of the housing market. The report concludes that there can be no doubt that the housing crisis facing the country in 2014 is far greater than that discussed by Barker in 2004 (HBF 2014). In their 2015 Manifesto, the recently elected Conservative government set out a further range of economic and land supply based objectives, targeted at increasing market affordability and additional changes to policies and planning legislation.

These policies aimed at increasing land supply include locally led garden cities and *prima facie*, the re-prioritisation of brownfield development. The proposal is to introduce a statutory register for local authorities of available brownfield land through a Local Development Order (LDO), akin to the ‘zonal system’ in many other countries (HM Treasury 2015). The government has also announced placing an obligation on authorities to grant planning permission on 90 per cent of suitable brownfield sites by 2020, which could provide up to 200,000 homes (HM Treasury 2015). The government has argued that this policy will increase land supply for housing, by reducing unnecessary delay and uncertainty for brownfield development and lower costs, as there would be no requirement for a planning application fee or commitment for resources of preparing a planning application (HM Treasury 2015; Smith 2015c). The proposal has received a mixed response and given their complexity, it has been argued that further measures will be needed if the government wants to see a significant amount of housing delivered on brownfield land (BPF 2015; Morris 2015).

Despite the announcement that 82 per cent of authorities have now published local plans and 64 per cent adopted plans compared with 32 per cent and 17 per cent in May 2010 respectively (see *Figure 4* below) (DCLG 2015c), the government’s recently published Productivity Plan, seeks to incorporate a tighter planning performance regime and direct intervention by the Secretary of State, where local authorities are judged to be too slow on the production of their local plan and determination for planning applications (HM Government 2015 Smith 2015; DCLG 2015c).

**Figure 4.** Local Plan Progress, as at March 2014



Source: NLP (2014)

Further legislation amendments has been introduced, aimed at increasing the speed in which land supply is released for housing before, during and after the planning application process. These measures include strengthening the Localism Act 2011 and the duty to cooperate on key housing and planning issues, to ensure that housing and infrastructure needs are identified and planned for (HM Treasury 2011). The amendment of the Planning Act 2008 seeks to allow major infrastructure projects with an element of housing to be treated as Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIP) (Planning Portal 2015) and the introduction of an alternative dispute resolution (ADR) mechanism for section 106 agreements aims to speed up negotiations between developers and local authorities (HM Treasury 2015).

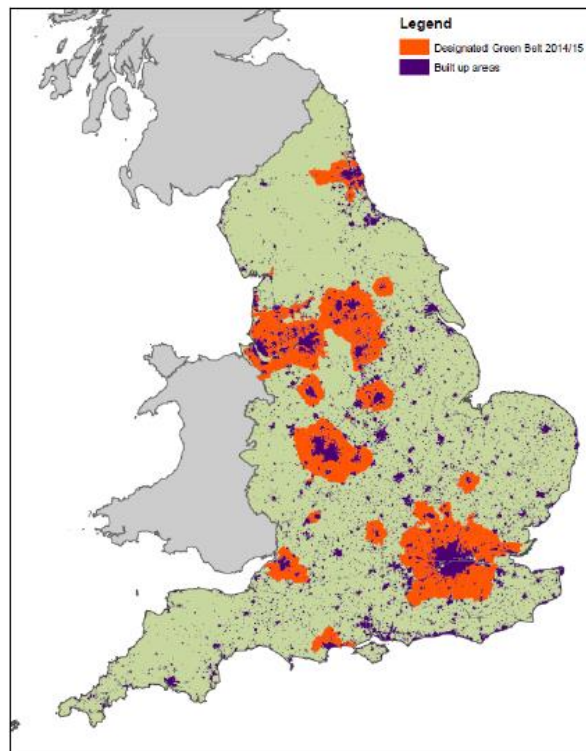
One key UK urban containment policy; Green Belts, which restricts land supply, development and growth (RTPI 2015; IPPR 2015; Amati and Taylor 2010) has to date, not been substantially addressed by the Government in its systematic pursuit of boosting housing supply and access to home ownership (HM Government 2015). The next chapter explores the origins and emergence of the Green Belt and its historical and present role; the tensions experienced by local authorities between delivering a housing

supply and protecting the Green Belt and different approaches to the Green Belt that have been proposed theoretically and adopted practically to enable the release of land from the Green Belt in order to deliver housing supply.

### ***Green Belts – urban containment***

Successive Governments have attached great importance to Green Belts; the fundamental aim of which is an urban containment policy (Amati and Taylor 2010), conceived to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open (ODPM 2006). The construction of new buildings in the Green Belt (there are exceptions) should be considered to be inappropriate (DCLG 2012a) and has remained effectively thus, since its codification in 1955 (MHLG 1955). The concept of a permanent area of encircling green space dates back to the attempts in the 17<sup>th</sup> century pattern of development on British colonial possessions (Reps 1960) and also spontaneously arose during the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, in locations such as Berlin and Vienna (Brieling and Ruland 2008; Kuhn and Gailing 2008). The first official proposal to establish a Green Belt in the UK originated by the Greater London Regional Planning Committee in 1935 (ODPM 2006), inspired by Ebenezer Howard's Garden City concept and furthered by some of the Green Belts proponents, including Raymond Unwin, F. J. Osborn and Patrick Abercrombie's advisory Greater London Plan in 1944 (Amati and Taylor 2010). Under the Town and Country Planning Act 1947, local planning authorities were permitted to incorporate Green Belts into their development plans and this was extended under the historic Circular 42/55 (MHLG 1955), where local planning authorities were invited to consider the establishment of Green Belts outside London (ODPM 2006).

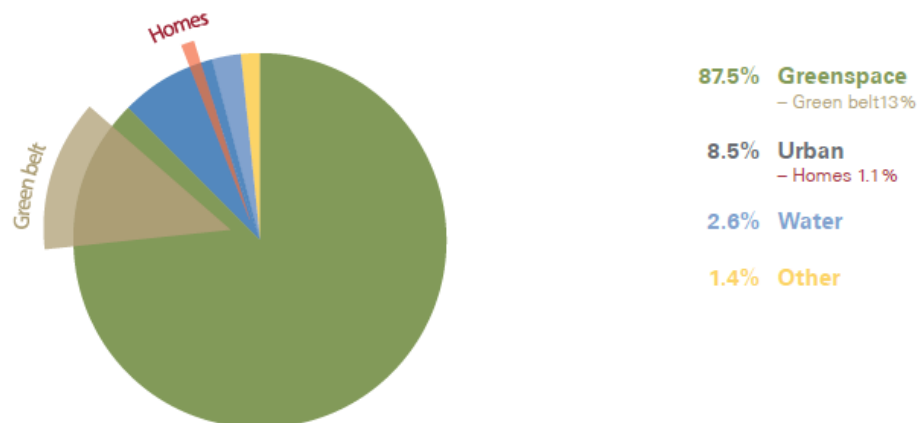
**Figure 5.** Extent of Green Belt as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2015



Source: Smith (2014)

There are 14 separate Green Belts in England (see *figure 5* above) and since 1979 Green Belt has increased nationally from 721,500 hectares to 1,639,090 hectares, around 13% of the land area of England (see *figure 6* below) (Papworth 2015; Smith 2014; CPRE 2015a). The Government's policies and purposes of Green Belt are contained within the NPPF, which superseded the previous Planning Policy Guidance 2 ('PPG 2') and requires local authorities to establish Green Belt boundaries in their Local Plans. Once established, Green Belt boundaries should only be altered in exceptional circumstances, through the preparation of the Local Plan (DCLG 2012a), following which, unmet housing need is unlikely to constitute the very special circumstances justifying inappropriate development (PPG 2014). More recently the Prime Minister has re-asserted his commitment to protecting the Green Belt, announcing that the line remains scored in the sand; that land is precious (Gosden 2015).

**Figure 6:** Land use in England, including Green Belt and homes



Source: KPMG (2015)

Amati (2008) argues Green Belt is a normative top-down policy implemented as a universal solution to urban growth, in response to Lewis Keeble (1961) and Ian Nairn's (1955) criticism of urbanisation during the pre-World War II (WWII) period (Nairn 1955; Bruegmann 2000), but also fitted with a modernist planners' master plan vision (Taylor 1998; Amati 2008). By keeping settlements small, this would improve inhabitant's health (Donald 1992), resulting in planners applying assumptions to sizes of cities, on the belief that beyond a point they would be unmanageable or uneconomic (Amati 2008). This early post-war modernist ideal spread along colonial channels, through the influence of UK planning in the 1940's and 1950's and around several international cities through ambitious regional plans with mixed success (Amati 2008; Amati and Taylor 2010; Friedmann and Miller 1965). However, whilst the UK's Green Belt grew from a deep-rooted revulsion towards rapid and uncontrolled urban growth during the pre-war period (Matless 1998), in other countries, their implementation was founded on alternative reasons. For example, Japan and Korea implemented Green Belts for strategic and military purposes (Kim and Kim 2008; Watanabe et al 2008) and in Jerusalem, the Green Belt was demarcated through a highly political afforestation programme, which prevented alternative land uses mainly by the Palestinians (Cohen 1994).

The Green Belts fundamental purpose has been highly effective (CPRE 2010), despite significant pressure from development in the latter half of the last century (Elson 1993), in which land surrounding

towns and cities, that are subject to Green Belt policy, have remained to the greater extent undeveloped, when compared to conurbations that are not subject to such a planning control (CPRE 2010). As a comparison, Tristian Hunt MP has analysed the increasing trend of low density suburban living in countries with no Green Belt or a similar spatial planning tool (Amati and Taylor 2010), and the urban sprawl that has resulted as a consequence (Times 2010). More recently the CPRE (2015) has referred to a recent report published by the London School of Economics (LSE) on the experience of urban sprawl in America, as justification for why the Green Belt is so crucial. The report concluded that urban sprawl in the USA imposes costs to society as a whole of \$1 trillion (Litman 2015), referring to loss of undeveloped land for food production and ecological services and more dispersed activity, reduced accessibility and higher costs of public infrastructure (Litman 2015). The CPRE argue modestly, that the UK should feel forever indebted to the wisdom and foresight of the campaigners who forged a consensus against urban sprawl and the benefits for health and wellbeing that Green Belt brings (Motion 2015).

PPG 2 widened the roles of the Green Belt to include six subsidiary positive land uses (ODPM 2006), although under the NPPF, these have been reduced to four (paragraph 81); 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 (DCLG 2012a). It is however, important to note, that land is not included in Green Belts due to its landscape or ecological value (RTPI 2015).

### ***Green Belt – conflicts and tensions***

Notwithstanding the historical success of this ‘blanket’ prohibition policy in development restraint (Amati 2007), the Green Belt is a controversial and contentious issue (Barker 2006; Amati 2008), but has proven to be remarkably adaptable to the zeitgeist (Amati and Taylor 2010), recently celebrating its 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary as government policy (CPRE 2015b). Significant criticism has been levied at the Green Belt for being outdated, restricting the supply of future housing land (IPPR 2015) and a blunt instrument for addressing the complex challenges associated with the urban fringe (Amati and Taylor 2010). For

example, it has been argued that the UK's housing requirement of 2 million homes by 2020 could be resolved by building on 2 per cent of the nationally designated Green Belt (Papworth 2015).

It has been argued that while the Green Belt in the UK remains primarily a spatial planning tool with an amenity rationale, the terms of the environmental debate has shifted from a romantic aesthetic to become more concerned with economic, ecological and social values of preserving land since the early post war period (Davison 2010; Amati and Taylor 2010). Consequently the Green Belts inherited from previous eras are outdated and their boundaries arbitrary (Amati and Taylor 2010). Moreover, Green Belts in the UK are viewed as too inflexible and were never conceived to be a permanent as it has been during the last 50 years (Hall 2007), which is in contrast internationally, where Green Belt is appreciated as a more flexible concept (Amati and Taylor 2010) and where criticism of the Green Belt is more varied (Amati and Taylor 2010). For example, in Japan and Korea, landowners rose up and defended their property rights against the imposed Green Belts (Kim and Kim 2008; Watanabe 2008) and State Government in New South Wales, were forced to revise Green Belt boundaries around Sydney, as a result of landowner interests. However in Toronto, Canada, the concept remains attractive to implement a new policy (Amati and Taylor 2010).

Hall (1963) and Freestone (2003) argue that development pressure as a result of Green Belts has allowed development to 'leapfrog' and over-spill into the surrounding countryside. This has a consequence for sustainable development (Hall et al 1973; DCLG 2012a), where people would commute back to employment in the city or town, contributing to congestion, greenhouse gas emissions, air quality problems and other quality of life issues (Papworth 2015; SCDC 2013). Conversely CPRE (2015) argue that building in the Green Belt is not a solution to unsustainable commuting, rather it would lead to further 'leapfrogging' over the suburbs into the city centre. CPRE (2015) submit that jobs should be created near where people live or enable them to work 'remotely' across distance, through the use of digital technologies and that commuting beyond the Green Belt can be sustainable if there is fast public transport links available. Critically, Freestone's (2003) central theoretical argument is that Green Belt imposes costs on society through higher house prices, as this political-economic control (Hall 2007;

Abbott 2012), reduces the supply of available land (Evans 1985; McCann 2001). This near theological protection of Green Belt in turn, has inflated land and property prices (KPMG 2015; IPPR 2015; Pryce 1999), preventing millions of young people from affording a home (Cheshire 2014) and combined with the failure to deliver housing development on brownfield land as a result of its complexity and financial expense to remediate and develop (Pryce 1999; CLGC 2014; RICS 2014; RTPI 2014; BPF 2014), these forms of urban control have been a significant barrier to house building and type (Pennington 2000; Abbott 2012).

Conversely, CPRE (2015b) argue that house price inflation is not as a result of the Green Belt, but down to economic factors, including 'land banking' by major house builders, low interest rates, poor performance of equities and pensions and the growth in treatment of houses as an investment opportunity rather than somewhere to live. Furthermore, CPRE (2015b) argues there is no evidence to support the argument that household demand in the post war period is linked to the increase in Green Belt (IPPR 2015) and that it would be more expensive to buy a house in a city protected by Green Belt than not (CPRE 2015b). CPRE contest that if Green Belt controls were loosened, then this would simply allow more land to be built upon, where developers can maximise profit, as experienced in Europe and in particular Spain and Ireland (CPRE 2015d).

Amati and Taylor (2010) argue that the concept of social justice that is inherent to many definitions of sustainability and by restricting development and raising land values within constrained urban areas, using a Green Belt could harm society and contribute to a shortage of affordable housing (Amati and Taylor 2010). This is furthered by Hall (2002), who argues that sustainable development, effectively means pulling up the drawbridge against newcomers, especially if they lack the right income or right accent. Hall (2002) defines Green Belt as the polite English version of apartheid; a system of controlling and regulating the suburban tide. This social class hierarchical concept of the upper class loathing of the semi-human masses swarming into the suburbs (Carey 1992) dates back to the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, evidenced by commentators including Crossland (1905), who describes the occupants of UK suburbs as a low and inferior species and H.G. Wells description of suburbs as a tumorous growth. Cheshire (2015) argues that

Green Belt is being used as a form of exclusionary zoning by the more affluent residents who had got there already and Amati and Taylor (2010) argue those who are motivated to protect and advocate for the Green Belt, are often those whose property prices would suffer if the land was developed. Conversely, CPRE (2015b) have argued that the growing inequalities between rich and poor is a global phenomenon, and the concept that post-war English planning policies promote the ‘confinement’ of the poor is not supported by evidence.

### ***Green Belt – different approaches to delivering housing supply***

There has been a long history of Green Belt reform proposals (Hall 1963; Thorburn 1970; Herington 1990), although more recent governments have resisted reform, in order to appease influential environmental organisations, including the Campaign to Protect Rural England (‘CPRE’) (CPRE 2005) and political constituents in rural areas (Elson 1986; Edwards 2000; Allmendinger and Tewdwr-Jones 2000). Commentators have argued that the problem with Green Belt is that it has become politically sacrosanct, but people forget Green Belt can include car parks, industrial land and scrub that are of no use to anybody (Wright 2015). Amati (2008) also notes that whilst a Green Belt reform is overdue, there is little research available to guide their implementation and the fragmented (KPMG 2015) mixture of central government control and local authority policy making in the UK, frustrates the implementation of radical solutions and new ideas to deal with the large scale problem of urban growth and housing, and the more localised problems of the urban fringe (Amati and Taylor 2010).

Whilst several commentators have called for the abolition of Green Belt, in order to solve the UK’s housing shortage and stimulate economic growth (Heartfield 2005; Papworth 2015), the three most prominent themes for Green Belt reform that have emerged over the last fifteen years are firstly, the improvement to the Green Belt’s value to society and strengthening of its boundaries (RTPI 2002; Natural England 2008; CPRE 2010; RCEP 2007); secondly that government should consider an alternative to Green Belt policy, such as green wedges (Barker 2006); or thirdly a more flexible method to plan for urban fringe, including greater discretion for local authorities to release land from the Green Belt for development (TCPA 2002).

Natural England (2008) has argued for a refresh of Green Belt policy to see how it might evolve to fit twenty first century circumstances and deliver more positive benefits for the natural environment and people's enjoyment and CPRE (2010) has called for more ambition to further enhance Green Belt protection for future generations. More recently the CPRE (2015b) have launched a new campaign *Our Green Belt*, in which they have called for three key changes; firstly ministers must intervene when authorities attempt to justify the relaxing of Green Belt boundaries as necessary for economic growth and to be more specific on the limited circumstances in which Green Belt boundaries can be changed through the local plan. Secondly, the government should make better use of its powers to direct local authorities to refuse applications for Green Belt boundaries and thirdly, more funds should be allocated to assist in the redevelopment of minority Green Belt land that is neglected and often in the most strategically important parts of the urban fringe (CPRE 2015b).

The CPRE argue that by turning neglected sites into community parks, allotments or nature reserves and creating new footpaths to improve access, the public's strong support of the Green Belt can be further enhanced and secure its vital protection for the next 60 years and beyond (Moore 2014). Helm (2015) has argued that where the quality of Green Belt is poor, the solution is to improve it, using the example of the Community Forrester initiative, which has turned more than 200,000 hectares of degraded Green Belt into woodland and other natural habitats since 1990. However, it has been argued that the CPRE's stance ignores those who are marginalised and condemned to poor housing (Moore 2014) and others have argued that we need to move away from the idea that the countryside is a sacrosanct patchwork of medieval hedgerows and towards a recognition of housing as a need to be met in locations with appropriate environmental capacity (Moore 2014).

Freestone (2003) and several other commentators argue that the amenity and ecological value of wasteland and suburban land inside the city may be higher than the land that the Green Belt preserves (Davidson and Wibberley 1977; Wyatt 1998; Lock 2000; Bovill 2002). Amati and Taylor (2010) argue that out of the various changes in planning during the last 60 years, the adoption of sustainability has resulted in planners viewing green spaces in a nuanced way, making the green belt appear arbitrary (Amati and Taylor 2010). The main criterion within the NPPF for keeping land in the Green Belt is its

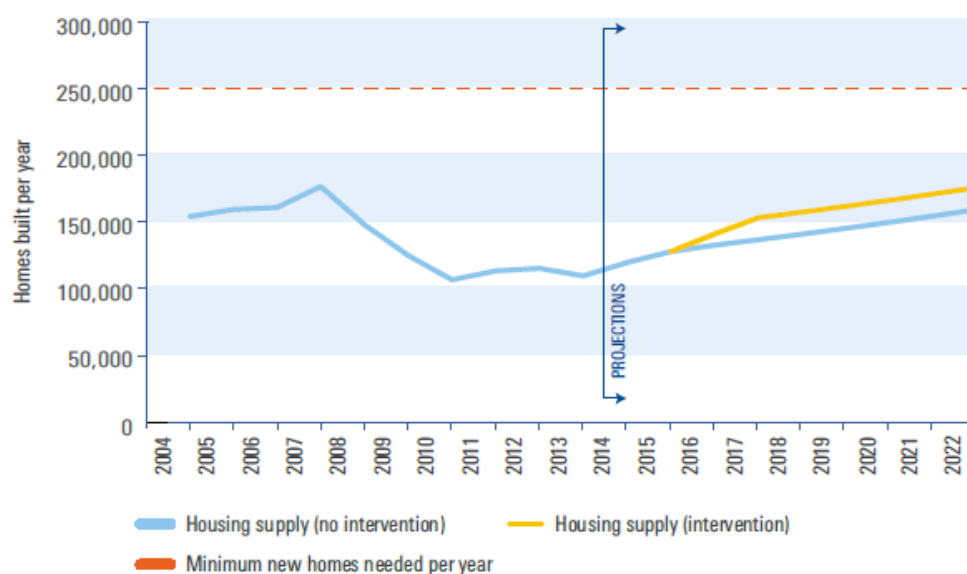
‘openness’, allowing green spaces with agricultural, ecological and aesthetic values to be preserved. Amati and Taylor (2010) argue that viewing the Green Belt inherited from previous eras through a sustainability lens makes them outdated and permits a re-evaluation of the spaces it preserves, as it adds an additional ecological justification. An example of this criticism is whilst industrial agriculture is low in biodiversity and contrary to ecosystem principles, it has been preserved by the Green Belt because of its openness (Amati and Taylor 2010). Indeed, 37 per cent of Green Belt is intensively farmed agricultural farmland (Papworth 2015). Conversely, suburban gardens, which are higher in biodiversity and more productive, are however, not protected by the Green Belt (Davidson and Wibberley 1977; Cheshire 2015). Moreover, constraining land supply on the urban fringe through a Green Belt may result in higher density and consequently less gardens in suburban areas (Williams 2000). Niemietz (2014) argues campaigners for the protection of the Green Belt will never agree to this argument, on the belief that once it is conceded that not every square centimetre of Green Belt is a piece of the Garden of Eden, then the principle of Green Belt is undermined and the whole concept will then be lost. This is supported by Bunce (1994), who argues that the residual support on Green Belt is based on the countryside ideal, and not the planned function as an urban containment and urban separator or on the reality of the existing landscape. Consequently, Niemietz (2014) proposes the way forward to resolving the housing crisis, is not to engage in ‘dialogue’ with the drawbridge-pullers, as they are beyond argument. Rather, the remainder of the population need to be informed that the Green Belt isn’t what they think it is; a landscape or ecological designation policy.

Amati (2008) argues the more recent shift to an emergent bottom-up consensus politics, cannot support a Green Belt policy of urban control against a direction towards the growth of cities and sustainable patterns of land-use and a more discretionary approach needs to be applied on the urban fringe in order to meet the UK’s housing need (Amati 2007; Gunn 2007; Hall 2007). This is evident in other countries that combine urban containment with flexibility to allow for future growth, through the revisiting of boundaries at regular intervals (Monk et al 2013). The OECD (2011) has recommended that the land use planning system should be made more flexible, by replacing Green Belts by land-use restrictions that better reflect environmental designations, in criticism to policies that restricted housing development,

including Green Belts, which they opined as a major obstacle to development around cities, where housing is often needed. This in turn would free up land for housing, while preserving the environment. The IPPR (2015) has recommended that tools to overcome the physical and political constraints on their current land supply, notably new ways to carefully release Green Belt land in ways that control land prices, protect beauty and benefit the community should be adopted. Cheshire (2013) argues an approach of building on the least attractive and lowest amenity parts of Green Belts could assist in solving the housing supply and affordability problems and the IOD (2011) have proposed (amongst other measures) the release of a substantial proportion of Green Belt land for development, to relieve the ever increasing pressure for higher urban densities, due to expected population growth, which could lead to lower land and housing prices and greater affordability.

KPMG (2015) has recommended the increase in Green Belt flexibility, by allowing authorities to swap agricultural land out of the Green Belt, if there is a strong case for new homes and replace it with allocating unallocated land of higher aesthetic or natural value, as Green Belt elsewhere, at the local plan review stage. Amati and Taylor (2010) argue there must be a clear public perception of the Green Belt in order to generate the political will for successful implementation and management and interestingly, the National Trust have stated that whilst communities would be very concerned about big incursions into the Green Belt, they would be acceptable to small adjustments made as part of the local plan process (CLGC 2014). Indeed, KPMG (2015) argue that if only 0.5 per cent of the Green Belt is swapped over a fifteen year period, it would provide over 16,000 additional homes per year (see *Figure 7* below).

**Figure 7.** Impact of Green Belt swaps alone on UK housing supply



Source: KPMG (2015)

Papworth (2015) recommends two alternative options; firstly the removal of Green Belt designation from intensive agricultural land and secondly, in the short term the removal of Green Belt on land within 10 minutes walk of a railway station, which could facilitate the development of 1 million more homes within the Green Belt surrounding London (Papworth 2015). Shelter (2015) have recommended a reduction in the top-down approach to Green Belt planning (KPMG 2015) and increase community involvement through Green Belt Community Trusts, using the example of the Letchworth Garden City Heritage Trust, which would enable communities to capture the land value created by releasing Green Belt land for housing.

Interestingly, Amati (2008) argues that a substantial amount of flexibility already existed under the planning system prior to the Barker Review (2006) and more recently the NPPF, due to substantial variations in types of policies adopted at a local level, which can lead to a hardening or softening of Green Belt policy (Amati and Yokohari 2006). It has been argued by campaign groups, politicians and particularly CPRE (2015) that by incorporating flexibility into the Green Belt policy and releasing just a small percentage of land from the Green Belt for housing, would result in the reduction of the Green Belts integrity and the policy's benefits will be lost. Amati and Taylor (2010) argue that the public

perception of the Green Belt is essential to generate the political will for successful implementation and management; if neither planners nor the public perceive value in the Green Belt, other visions will supplant the Green Belt. Consequently, this flexibility would inevitably lead to the beginning of the end for the Green Belt policy (CPRE 2015; Niemietz 2014; Stringer 2014) and by only adopting a robust stance towards the Green Belt policy in its prohibition against development, will ensure the maintenance of its effectiveness as a spatial planning tool (CPRE 2015).

As a comparison, commentators in Toronto, Canada have argued that in addition to proposing the release of land from the Green Belt for housing, which they are permitted to do so, under their flexible system, municipalities have actually been using their Green Belt Plan review period, to advocate for the fundamental dismantling of the rules around Green Belt (Javed 2015). Taking this into consideration, in the UK, between 2013 and 2015, there has been a decrease in the overall area of Green Belt by 2,000 hectares (0.1 per cent overall), as a result of eleven authorities who have, in their new adopted plans released land for development, previously designated as Green Belt (DCLG 2015d) (see *Figure 8* below).

**Figure 8.** Authorities which adopted new boundaries for the designated Green Belt 2014/15

| Authority                    | Area of designated Green Belt land 2014/15 (hectares) | Change from 2013/14 |
|------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|---------------------|
| Bath and North East Somerset | 24,090                                                | -100 (0%)           |
| Bolton                       | 7,230                                                 | -50 (-1%)           |
| Broxtowe                     | 5,130                                                 | -20 (0%)            |
| Cheshire West and Chester    | 39,170                                                | -80 (0%)            |
| Christchurch                 | 3,270                                                 | -200 (-6%)          |
| East Dorset                  | 16,720                                                | -160 (-1%)          |
| Gateshead                    | 8,530                                                 | -150 (-2%)          |
| Newcastle upon Tyne          | 3,980                                                 | -410 (-9%)          |
| Rushcliffe                   | 16,570                                                | -670 (-4%)          |
| Solihull                     | 11,870                                                | -40 (0%)            |
| Three Rivers                 | 6,720                                                 | -110 (-2%)          |

Source: DCLG (2015d)

This has led to considerable criticism from commentators, particularly from CPRE (2015), who have argued the Green Belt is facing an unprecedented threat of destruction from 226,000 homes, as a result

of the NPPF, compounded by a growing number of think tanks, developers and business groups arguing with very little evidence that the Green Belt needs to be build on in order to tackle the country's housing crisis (CPRE 2015). Local authorities find themselves squeezed on one side by planning inspectors demanding that housing targets are met, and by powerful developers pushing speculative development on the other (Goden 2015). Other commentators have argued that contrary to the NPPF, the Green Belts surrounding strategic urban areas are merely local authority land banks, reserved for development, managed by the Local Planning Authority and available for release to speculators whenever appropriate (CLGC 2014).

The government has responded to these concerns in the CLGC (2014) report on the overall impact of the NPPF on the Green Belt as unfounded, clarifying that whilst planning policy states that Green Belt boundaries should only be altered in exceptional circumstances (paragraph 83; 88), and Council's should not look to alter the Green Belt when making individual planning decisions (paragraph 88), this does not mean that Green Belt should forever be maintained to its existing boundaries. Councils should amend their Green Belts if local circumstances demand it, through the local plan process in which Councils set out their strategic priorities (including *inter alia* homes and jobs) for their area (paragraph 156). The report concludes it is sensible that as part of the process, they examine their Green Belts and consider whether they are fit for purpose and where adjustments to the size and boundaries should be made and the rigorous requirement of public consultation, examination by an inspector and adoption by the Council will ensure that any changes have been subject to thorough consideration (CLGC 2014d).

## **5. Case Study - Cambridge**

Cambridge City Council is tightly bounded and completely surrounded by South Cambridgeshire District Council. The majority of land available for future housing growth is located outside its administrative boundaries and within the Green Belt, as a result of the limited brownfield land available (IPPR 2015). Its population is predicted to significantly increase from 123,900 in 2011 to 150,000 by 2031 (CCC 2013) and has a large student population from the University of Cambridge and Anglia Ruskin University, estimated at 29,087 (CCC 2012). An estimated 4.5 million people visit Cambridge annually (CCC 2013) and house prices are presently 8.67 times the average salary and an annual average of 344 new homes were completed between 2008 to 2015 (IPPR 2015).

Cambridge has been a leader on Green Belt re-development as a result of its strong cross boundary consensus on housing growth (IPPR 2015). This has been primarily achieved through release of Green Belt land located in South Cambridgeshire to meet their strategic housing need, made possible by close inter-authority relationships that have evolved since the mid 1990's, but more importantly through a long history of strategic planning, that has facilitated a broader regional view of housing need and land supply (IPPR 2015).

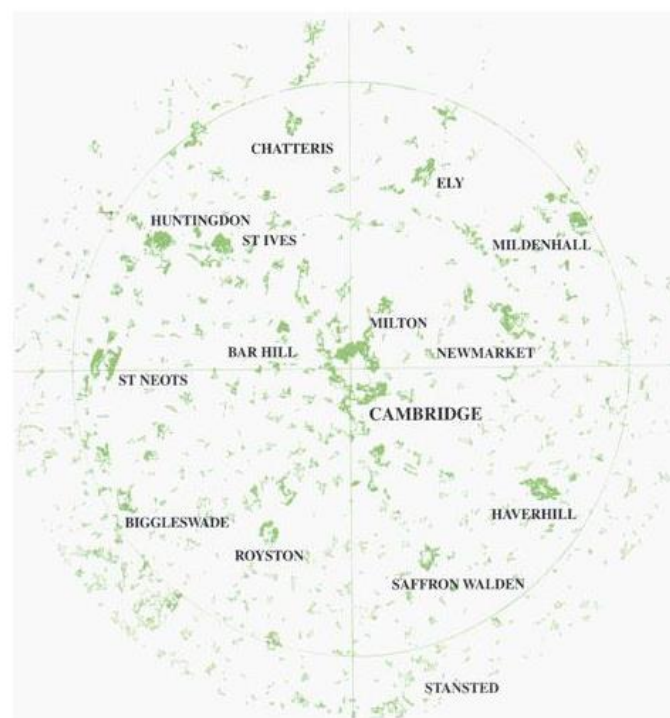
Prior to 1997, planning policy in Cambridge was dictated by the Holford and Wright Report (1950), which recommended that its population should be limited to 100,000 people and restricted development in both the city and neighbouring villages (Holford and Wright 1950; Platt 2015; Echenique 1999). The policy's primary objective was to preserve the special character of Cambridge as a university town within a rural setting, reinforced by the introduction of a strong Green Belt boundary around the city and neighbouring villages (Echenique 1999).

As an exception, the Mott Report (1969) advocated the development of science and university research-based activities, which has led to the Cambridge Phenomenon (CCC 2013; Kirk and Cotton 2012) and is now the centre of the greatest concentration of hi-tech and bio-tech industry firms in Europe (Platt 2015). A unique collaborative research study (CAR 2015; IPPR 2015) produced by Cambridge Futures; awarded the prestigious RTPI Award for Innovation (2000) and set up as a local, bottom-up response

to Cambridge's planning paralysis and plan for future development through informing the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan (2003) (Wicksteed 2010; CABE 2015) identified that both these policies resulted in a number of negative impacts.

A result of the increase in the number of jobs and households within a restricted land supply, this led to rising property prices, in which just under 11 per cent of the population could not afford market housing (CCC 1998). Consequently, people employed in the City and its fringe on low and middle income salaries were forced to live beyond the Green Belt, in areas where cheaper housing more than offset the cost of travel into Cambridge. This particularly affected traditional employers such as the University, who found it increasingly difficult to attract qualified personnel, whilst this disparity resulted in mainly wealthy and managerial groups being able to afford to locate in the city (Echenique 1999).

**Figure 9.** Land development in Cambridge area 1947 to 1997.



Source: Echenique (1999)

Following the two council studies, which identified a limited future housing development capacity, it was concluded that land shortage was the principle restraint to increasing housing supply (CCC 1997;

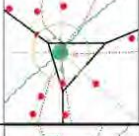
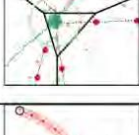
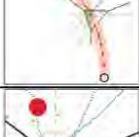
CCC 1998). In tandem, Cambridge Futures found the majority of new developments were expanding onto market towns within 25 miles of the city, including Ely, Mildenhall, and Newmarket. New villages such as Barr Hill and Cambourne had been developed beyond the Green Belt, resulting in population growth in these localities amongst the highest in the UK (Echenique 1999) (see *Figure 9* above).

Cambridge Futures calculated there to be a daily influx of nearly 40,000 commuter journeys from outside the City that increasingly outnumbered resident workers; the majority by car and 50 per cent commuted from South Cambridgeshire and the remainder from East Cambridgeshire and beyond, resulting in congestion and increasing emissions and pollution (KPMG 2015; Echenique 1999).

The research identified that Cambridge was experiencing a significant tension between the pressure from both economic (47 per cent) and household growth (80 per cent) and restraint, which resulted in ‘vociferous’ opposition against unsustainable development in the countryside and villages, including flood plains (Echenique 1999). As a result, Cambridge Futures identified seven different planning options over a 25 mile radius that would enable Cambridge to meet both projected household and economic growth, over a long term period of 50 years, which were evaluated in terms of their sustainability; economic efficiency, social equity and environmental equality (see *figure 10* below).

Commentators have agreed that the strategy adopted for the public consultation was influential, highlighting that if options are explained clearly, the general public are less intransigent about change and although matters of dispute remain, including clear evidence of ‘nimbyism’, there is general agreement about the requirement for new land for housing and development in the Green Belt (Platt 1999).

**Figure 10.** Cambridge Futures 1: likely consequences and key issues

|                                                                                     | Option                                                                                                                                                                                   | Likely Consequences                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | Key Issue                                                                                                          |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|    | <b>1 Minimum Growth</b><br>Preserves the City of Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire with the minimum of change. New development will be directed to Huntingdonshire and East Cambs.      | Substantial Increase In cost of living and production in the City means Cambridge would cease to develop as a world-class centre of high tech development. Considerable increase In congestion on the access roads would continue to erode the quality of life in the city.                                                                | Rising property prices would force all but the wealthiest new resident to look for accommodation outside the city. |
|    | <b>2 Densification</b><br>Puts as much development as possible in the only where demand is highest. Higher buildings will replace low density.                                           | The cost of living would be stabilised, promoting regional prosperity. The social balance of the City would be improved, but its character would change as there would be less green space around homes. Car use would need to be further restricted while the provision for cycling and public transport would need dramatic improvement. | The City environment would deteriorate if there were less green space and more cars.                               |
|    | <b>3 Necklace</b><br>A continuation of the policy of the last 50 years of restricting growth in the city and green belt while infilling existing villages and creating new ones.         | Substantial increase In cost of living and production in the City and South Cambs. would put at risk regional prosperity. Social segregation would increase. Congestion on access roads would increase substantially and the character of the countryside between villages would deteriorate.                                              | Traffic and congestion would reach totally unacceptable levels.                                                    |
|    | <b>4 Green Swap</b><br>Allows development in selected areas of the green belt which are of less scenic value in exchange for public amenities further out of town.                       | This option would produce the lowest increase in the cost of living and production, encouraging regional prosperity and a balanced social mix. But traffic congestion in the City would increase.                                                                                                                                          | The quality of the city environment would be maintained at the expense of the open space in the Green Belt.        |
|   | <b>5 Transport Links</b><br>Encourages all new development to be in easy reach of a public transport corridor. This would mean investment in enhanced public transport and new stations. | A 100% increase in rail use would reduce car use compared with most other options. Because there would be less traffic congestion and pollution, the quality of life in the city and surrounding area would be better protected than under the other options, but the cost of living and production would increase somewhat.               | People who locate in these corridors may continue to use their cars rather than public transport.                  |
|  | <b>6 Virtual Highway</b><br>A high capacity electronic communications system that would allow people to work, shop and study from home.                                                  | Restricting development to the corridor would increase the cost of living and production, putting at risk regional prosperity. There may be a reduction in car use but the technology is too new to know if there would be any impact on traffic congestion.                                                                               | This possibility of tele-working and tele-shopping might have an insignificant impact on traffic and congestion.   |
|  | <b>7 New Town</b><br>Concentrates most new development in a single new town which would be large enough to offer an alternative to the city.                                             | The cost of living and production would increase, except in the New Town, putting at risk the competitiveness of the region. Social imbalance would increase generally. There would be a substantial increase in traffic between the new town and the city and extra road capacity would be needed to avoid congestion.                    | The new town would generate more traffic into the city.                                                            |

Source: Platt (2015)

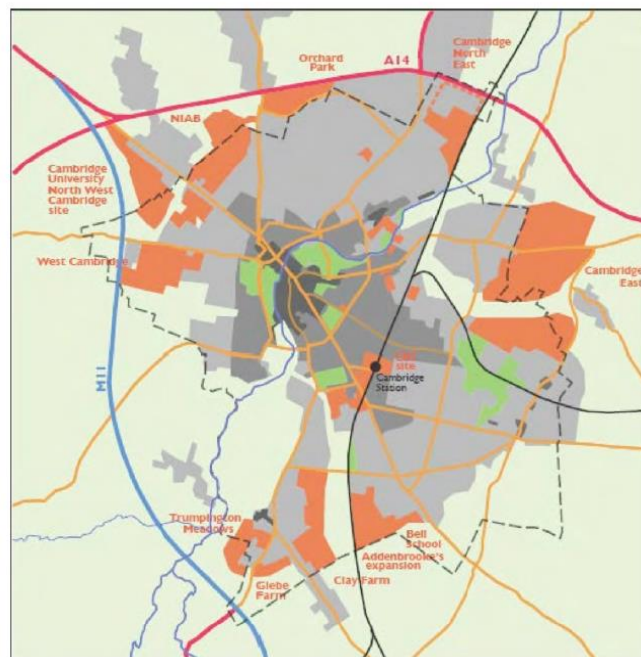
The main findings of the study identified that the least supported options of ‘necklace development’ and ‘minimum growth’ were closest to the planning policies that existed at the time (Platt 2015). The study identified that more people favoured allowing development in areas of less scenic value, independent of where people lived and overall 43 per cent of respondents supported this option, as it produced the lowest increase in the cost of living (Platt 2015). The study found that opinion was divided on the merits of ‘densification’, on the basis that whilst house prices were of significant concern and appreciated the merit of allowing development where demand is highest, they remained concerned above the impact on the quality of life in the city (Platt 2015). Conversely, only 28 per cent of respondents supported the ‘new town’ proposal, particularly those who lived in the north west of the

city, who were affected by proposed new town developments at the time, set against a view that it would substantially increase traffic, but would offer lower house prices (Platt 2015).

The report concluded the respondents aspirations supported a balance of development in Cambridge and the region, through a planning strategy that would deliver an element of growth through densification, particularly around the railway line and station and selective expansion into the Green Belt including green corridors, together with growth outside Cambridge City Council's administrative boundary through Green Belt release in South Cambridgeshire in the form of a new settlement at Northstow, based on public transport links (Platt 2015; IPPR 2015).

The report's findings were incorporated into the Cambridge sub-regional strategy, the Regional Planning Guidance 6 (RPG) and further studies that informed the spatial strategy adopted in the Structure Plan 2003 (See *Figure 11* below) and is what the City is experiencing presently (Platt 2015).

**Figure 11.** Cambridge Structure Plan 2004: new development in and around the city.



Source: Platt (2015)

In terms of assisting the wider debate, Platt (2015) identifies that the strategic options did not meet the level of opposition experienced in other localities, as there was a clear evidence base, which was

influential in altering the public's mindset. In addition, the public participation was informed at a strategic level, but importantly Cambridge Futures were able to engage with communities in a more accessible way than the more formal statutory process set out in the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. More critically, the success of Cambridge on Green Belt redevelopment has been directly as a result of the cross boundary consensus on growth between the different local authorities within Cambridgeshire, that was not evident prior to 1996 (Platt 2015; IPPR 2015), more particularly South Cambridgeshire District Council.

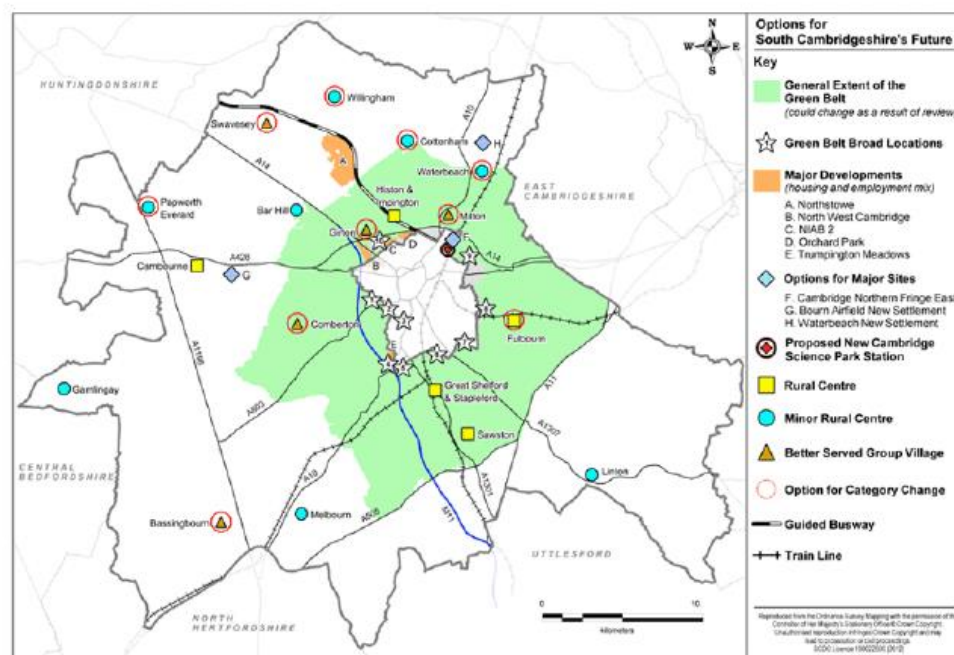
Professor Echenique (1999) argues that the approach adopted by Cambridge Futures is replicable; promoting a less confrontational way, so that people can follow reasoning and Platt (2015) refers to success achieved by adopting a similar consultation process in Aylesbury, Maidenhead and Medway. Platt (2015) refers to four key factors in delivering the Cambridge model; firstly an agreed strategic vision amongst key players, both within the various local authorities, but within the business community, academia and the wider community; secondly, a coherent structure of strategic planning across an economic sub-region to make decisions about the location of growth; thirdly, continuity of local leadership, both from political leaders and from planning directors and fourthly, a dedicated delivery team to support the local authorities.

As many commentators agree, as a result of the collaborative work undertaken by Cambridge Futures since the mid 1990's, this has resulted in an outstanding recent record and is a leader and exemplar in the housing growth agenda (IPPR 2015) and Cambridge has successfully articulated a pro growth housing agenda with support of Councillors, the University, businesses and neighbouring authorities (Boddy and Hickman 2014; IPPR 2015). Intrinsic within the agenda is a full recognition of the importance of housing in securing Cambridge's future, including unequivocally addressing the highly political and contentious issue of releasing Green Belt for housing (IPPR 2015).

However, a recent study by the IPPR (2015) and verified by the policy officers interviewed by the researcher has found that despite Cambridge's ambitions, only part of the vision for Cambridge has been achieved (See *figure 12* below) (Platt 2015). Densification of the city and part of the urban

extension has been constructed, but the two largest strategic priorities; the North Fringe East and the new settlement of Northstowe has failed to be delivered (Platt 2014). Moreover, despite the large release of land from the Green Belt for 22,000 homes between 2006 and 2010 in both administrative boundaries and the safeguarding of land for future development, housing output has been disappointing (IPPR 2015).

**Figure 12.** Options for South Cambridgeshire's Future



Source: South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2013.

The report identifies that there has been a time lag of over a decade to progress from the original vision set out in 1999 to sustained output from growth sites (see *Figure 13* below). Meaningful scale of housing completions only started in 2011(CCC 2013b) with projected site outputs that range between 30 and 100 new homes annually (CCC 2014). Both the IPPR (2015) study and interviewees identified that to compound this lag, Cambridge suffers from a significant shortfall between affordable housing need and affordable housing completions, as evidenced by a projected annual need of 2,346 affordable homes, set against an average delivery of 208 (IPPR 2015).

Amongst other economic factors, how affordable housing provision influences housing delivery can be examined through the IPPR (2015) report's case study of Clay Farm; a key strategic site for Cambridge's economic, employment and housing growth, comprising flat agricultural land, located 2.5 miles south of Cambridge City Centre. The site was located within Cambridge's Green Belt and in 2002, the developer entered into an Option Agreement with the sole landowner. In 2006, the land was released from the Green Belt and designated for housing development in Cambridge's local plan (2006), following which the first development application was submitted. In March 2007, the land was purchased by the developer for £62 million and during 2007 and 2008 the developer contested the affordable housing obligation on the site within the s.106 Agreement, in order to maintain a 20 per cent profit margin. In 2010, the appeal was turned down by the Secretary of State and the first housing completions for the site were delivered in 2012 (IPPR 2015).

**Figure 13.** Cambridge City urban extensions with planning permission



Source: Platt (2015)

Platt (2015) raises the key question as to whether the degree of co-operation between the various local authorities can be maintained. Both policy officers interviewed confirmed their continued inter-authority relationship and commitment to a collaborative joint spatial approach (SC 2013), as evidenced in both the submitted local plans for examination. However, both officers expressed the abolition of the

Regional Spatial Strategy and replacement with the Duty to Co-operate has resulted in the process working less efficiently and has created uncertainty.

Despite the previous success, having both submitted their latest draft local plans for examination in March 2014, there has been considerable objection from campaign groups, councillors, politicians and the public for the proposal to release a relatively small area of Green Belt for 430 homes, set against a housing requirement of 14,181 new homes in Cambridge City and 19,000 in South Cambridgeshire respectively up to 2031 (CCC 2013). In addition, the Planning Inspector identified a number of shortcomings on both Councils evidence base, at the examination in public (EiP). Despite both authorities undertaking both joint and individual Green Belt Reviews, the Inspector advised the exercise not been carried out through a Strategic Environmental Assessment/Sustainability Appraisal (SEA/SA). Thus, the Inspector has raised significant concerns regarding the robustness of the SEA/SA process and would find both local plans unsound, without ability to recommend modifications (Graham 2015). Consequently, the Inspector has suspended the EiP, to enable the Councils to revisit the SA and appraise reasonable alternative sites for the release of housing (including the urban edge), but emphasised that her request should not be interpreted that further Green Belt land should be released (Graham 2015).

One of the main criticisms from the policy officers interviewed is the lack of clear guidance on undertaking a Green Belt Review and inconsistency with other local authorities' local plans, which have used similar Green Belt Review methodologies, without objection from the Planning Inspectorate. Other criticism was levied at public confusion between Green Belt and greenfield and the significant cost and delay, set against public sector cut backs to undertake this additional work, requested by the Inspector and the impending risks associated with maintaining a five year housing supply. Finally, despite the Secretary of State's recent instruction to Planning Inspectors to work pragmatically with councils towards achieving a sound local plan and offer full opportunity to address any significant issues identified (Clark 2015), there remains in this case, just under a two year impasse and two unallocated local plans.

## **6. Results - Interview**

***What is the role and purpose of the Green Belt, both historically and currently?***

Through these interviews it was possible to establish there was a common understanding of the historic role and purpose of the Green Belt; a containment policy to prevent urban sprawl, expansion and the merging of settlements and to promote urban regeneration following the Second World War. When questioned on its current role and purpose, it was interesting to note that whilst it was accepted there has been no change to its historical context, in that the policy still prevents urban sprawl and the expansion of settlements, planners are more akin to the reasons of its origins and reference was made to former PPG 2 and the five purposes contained in the NPPF. However, a more cynical view was expressed, that members of the public do not understand its role and there is more emphasis on Green Belt as a policy to prevent development and restrict land supply. Both the public sector planning policy officer and planning barrister made specific reference that there is a misconception that Green Belt is a landscape designation; there is no sliding scale to measure Green Belt from an openness, visual amenity or ecological perspective and the local parish councillor viewed the Green Belt as a policy to prevent the expansion of ‘unwanted building’ in the countryside.

***How successful has Green Belt policy been in its role and purpose?***

The majority of interviewees expressed that the Green Belt policy has had a high degree of success in its role and purpose; that is preventing urban sprawl, expansion and merging of settlements and promoting urban regeneration, when compared to the pre 1950’s linear and ribbon type development and more latterly after 1979, when the overall Green Belt for England was reviewed and expanded. Given all interviewees were located in the North West region, several examples were elaborated upon including Manchester, Liverpool and West Lancashire, which have benefitted from significant urban regeneration and without very tight Green Belt boundaries, there would have been a high potential for the merging of settlements. The parish councillor poignantly responded by stating that it has been very successful in the particular parish, as no one gets planning permission in the Green Belt. It is interesting to note that the public sector planner argued that Green Belt policy had an element of time lag from implementation to effectiveness. Conversely, the planning barrister adopted a cynical opinion of the

Green Belt and queried whether London and Manchester would have sprawled without a Green Belt policy and argued that whilst it serves a purpose, it generates harm.

***What tensions does Green Belt policy generate for local authorities in delivering a housing supply and ability to grow a settlement naturally?***

The general consensus from the interviewees is that as a result of the Green Belts success in its role and purpose in the prevention of urban sprawl and the expansion and merging of settlements, its objective has inherently restricted the supply of future land for housing. The two main restrictions that Green Belt policy is perceived to create from a private sector viewpoint are a lack of available land supply on the edge of settlements and, a lack of suitable land, in terms of viable developable ‘greenfield’ land. Therefore, where a local authority has tight Green Belt boundaries, a local authority is restricted in its ability to release land for housing and growing a settlement naturally.

Both the private sector planners and barrister refer to an alternative option to the Green Belt, being the development on brownfield land. However, their view is that the brownfield first policy of the previous government did not work, as many authorities, in particular those located in Southern England, such as Oxford and Cambridge have a very low allocation of brownfield and therefore are highly restricted in where they are able to allocate housing. In addition, the brownfield land that is available tends not to be economically viable to be developed, due to abnormal costs associated with ground condition and remediation.

The public sector policy officer’s argued that as a direct result of the Green Belt policy, local authorities are failing to allocate sufficient land for their strategic housing need in their local plans. Consequently, there is a greater probability and risk of a local authority failing to deliver a five year housing supply, as required under the NPPF and as a result, developers are planning by appeal on greenfield sites, contrary to the local plan. In turn, this impacts on long term strategic planning and creates both tensions and pressure on local authorities, given time and cost resources required to deal with appeals set against national cut backs in the public sector. The only opportunity available for local authorities to release land for their future housing needs is therefore at the local plan stage through a Green Belt review, but

many local authorities adopt a short term strategy approach and fail to properly plan for the longer term, thereby electing not to release Green Belt land and then subsequently fail to deliver their housing supply

All interviewees agreed that the Green Belt therefore is a primary factor in the undersupply of land for housing and consequently the delivery of the UK's housing supply. In addition, due to the restrictive nature of the Green Belt containment policy so tightly around settlement boundaries, the interviewees generally agreed that the inability for the natural urban expansion of settlements, promotes unsustainable patterns of development and very expensive housing. Both private and public sector interviewees referred to the resultant unsustainable concept of 'leapfrogging', as a direct result of Green Belt policy and the consequences on transport and pollution. One of the private sector planning consultants had undertaken a socio-economic study on the Green Belt in Manchester and cited a further point in that Green Belt promotes a lack of choice and type of housing, which is what the economy needs.

They refer to Manchester, which has a tight Green Belt boundary and has a historical housing stock of small terraced properties, in urban locations originating from the mill industry of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. Taking into consideration the 'Northern Powerhouse', Manchester is attempting to attract the 'knowledge economy'; workers on higher paid incomes, more likely to live in larger housing in specific upper-market (gentrified) areas, within commuting distance to the city. There is however, a significant lack of suburban family housing to meet these workers needs, as a result of the Green Belt. Consequently, the locality loses the economic benefits in terms of employment retention. Moreover, those people living in sustainable locations close to the city centre, in close proximity to their employment and connectivity for transport (eg. lecturers, doctors) purchased their property, say 30 years ago and would not be able to afford to live there now. The interviewee provided a statistic that in the last 10 years three quarters of planning permission for housing constructed on brownfield land in central urban locations, were flats and only a quarter were for family housing, predominantly over £500,000, which is unaffordable to the majority of the demographic. Both parish councillors argued that this is also relevant in rural villages with tight Green Belt boundaries, in which it is very difficult to retain

younger family members, particularly those employed in agriculture, as they cannot afford to live in the village, due to the disparity between wages and high house prices.

The planning barrister argued that the problem is the UK is trying to dress a 21 year old in clothes for a 10 year old; it doesn't fit, and referred to the fundamental tensions in Oxford and Cambridge, both of which are 'dying' due to the Green Belt and the resultant un-affordability for professionals including lecturers, nurses and doctors. The barrister made reference to the statistics of the hidden homelessness and that the people affected by this housing crisis are poor who are marginalised with no voice.

It was interesting to note that one of the public sector policy officers argued that the problems experienced by local authorities in releasing land are not legislative, as the NPPF is clear and unambiguous and if a local authority is planning properly, then they should be able to release land to meet their housing supply, through their local plan process. One of the private sector planning consultants argued that the NPPF has restored the balance of housing growth by not repeating the brownfield first policy, restoring the 5 year housing supply and in favour of sustainable development, returning the UK towards a 1980's type development policy. Whilst this is a good basis for housing, the government has not relaxed its policy towards development in the Green Belt.

The common acceptance is that there the Green Belt is highly politicised, in terms of the desire to protect. It is this mudding of the waters that creates practical problems and this is a primary reason why many local authorities elect not to review their Green Belts, in order to release land for their future housing supply at the local plan stage, or alternatively, elect to release Green Belt land for housing, but become entrenched in political and public objection and opposition, which restricts the release of land supply for housing and protracts the local plan process. One of the private sector planning consultants argued that the government is 'schizophrenic' towards Green Belt, citing that the Green Belt policy as a development management tool has remained unchanged for the last 10 years. However, both recently and prior to the last general election, ministers have been running around writing letters to the Planning Inspectorate, clarifying that a lack of 5 year housing supply does not justify very special circumstances in terms of Green Belt. Furthermore, during a recent appeal, an MP raised a question whether an

inspector can recommend the release of Green Belt to meet the local authority's housing need, in an effort to promote localism against a top down agenda. This leads to uncertainty for local authorities, developers and land owners and delays in the release of land supply for housing through the local plan process.

The planning consultant argued that politicians have seen the Green Belt as a policy tool; to perform a function, akin to measuring a crime statistic. Reference was made to the 'deliberate political tool' of the annual release of the politically acceptable Green Belt statistics, which the government confidently announce to placate the likes of the CPRE and the Telegraph, having adopted a 'rob Peter to pay Paul' policy by removing land from the Green Belt and including unallocated land into the Green Belt elsewhere.

The barrister agreed that paragraph 47 NPPF generally promotes the release of land supply for housing. However, there remains two political problems, which delays the process and restricts land supply; firstly the overall structural context of the Green Belt and secondly, that demographic of planning committees are predominately "white and middle-class" and these decision makers have a small 'c' conservative political mindset.

Having discussed interviewees opinions on why a number of local plans have been found sound (Newcastle, Bath and North East Somerset, Cheshire West), as opposed to being unsound (Cambridge, Cheshire East), there was a collective agreement that the principle practical problem is no clear guidance from Government on how authorities should review Green Belt boundaries in order to release land from the Green Belt in order to meet their housing need at a local plan stage, which in turn can lead to delays at the local plan examination stage, including postponement by the Planning Inspector to undertake further assessment, finding the local plan unsound by the Planning Inspector and leaving the local plan open to a judicial review (JR), should the Local Plan be found sound. One of the planning consultants recommended clear 'top down' guidance, on how local authorities should review and update Green Belt boundaries, made available on PPG. The public sector policy officer went further suggesting a set formula on methodology and defined criteria on how to assess which land should be released for

housing by measuring land against the five purposes of the Green Belt (if this is the correct approach), and how these purposes overlap so there is consistency and reduce costs associated with potential protraction in the local plan process and local authorities having to outsource these types of studies to third party consultants.

***What potential responses are available to increasing land supply in the UK?***

All interviewees agreed that the current planning system fails to deliver sufficient suitable and available land for local authorities to allocate for housing, and that there was a general consensus that there should not be a reversion back to brownfield first policy, as this has historically failed to deliver the level of land supply needed to meet housing demand and is a contributor to the existing shortfall. All interviewees agreed that the Green Belt policy is a primary factor in restricting land supply. In addition, all interviewees agreed that there needs to be an increase in land supply to meet the UK's housing need and there should be greater flexibility in the planning system to enable local authorities to allocate land outside the settlement boundary land for housing.

In terms of options for increasing flexibility into the planning system to enable the release of land for housing, other than the barrister, who advocated the abolition of the Green Belt policy in its entirety, the interviewees agreed there was a need to have in place an urban containment policy. One of the planning consultants argued that without an urban containment policy, any greenfield site for a development would be "low hanging fruit". However, all interviewees agreed that nationally, a significant amount of Green Belt land will need to be released in order to increase land supply. In order to facilitate this release of land within the Green Belt, there was a general consensus that a strategic review of all the Green Belt through the local plan process should be undertaken, in a two stage process; firstly all existing boundaries and secondly, objectively assessed where boundaries should be to meet housing need.

It was commonly agreed by the majority of interviewees that there should be a longer term strategic view towards plan making and that local authorities should be assessing their housing need over two plan periods, say a 20-30 year period. Authorities should strategically review their Green Belt

boundaries through a 'top down' mechanism to identify land that is to be released to meet their identified housing need. In terms of strategic planning options, the preference from the interviewees were the formation of sustainable urban extensions, rather than isolated settlements beyond the Green Belt that would form new less sustainable settlements, for the reasons discussed above.

The majority of interviewees agreed that land should also be released from the Green Belt that is not needed immediately to meet their housing need but will be required over say a 30 year period, and that a 1980's type policy such as 'safeguarding' the land for future development, strategically identified on the urban fringe at the local plan stage that is developable and deliverable and would be a sustainable urban extension, should be adopted by authorities. Proposals for regular review mechanisms in the local plan were discussed, so that in the event of allocated land not coming forward for whatever reason, or if a local planning authority cannot meet their five year housing supply, then a mechanism to approve a planning application on the land allocated as safeguarded land should be incorporated. This would ensure that there is a sufficient continual land supply to meet housing need and would prevent developers from applying for planning permission on land that is not either allocated or safeguarded for future development and is transparent to the public on the future development of their locality, in conjunction with neighbourhood planning, if appropriate. Examples of this safeguarding include Wigan and West Lancashire who allocated a number of 'Plan B' sites, to address the 5 year housing supply issue.

There was a mixed response to whether there should be greater flexibility to the Green Belt policy itself, as opposed to the mechanism for determining whether land should be included in the Green Belt or not; this is an important distinction. A number of interviewees with particular reference to the architects promoted greater flexibility in the Green Belt policy, that would override effectively exceptional circumstances; these include allowance to build housing on land that is classified as brownfield land, identification of affordable housing exception sites in rural villages, allowance for small scale urban extensions (say up to 10 dwellings) on land abutting small rural settlements and greater flexibility for replacement dwellings and housing extensions in the Green Belt. This point was agreed with one of the policy officers, in that the Green Belt makes planning officers 'too picky'. Conversely, one of the

planning consultants argued that once the Green Belt boundaries are established, the policy on their use should be strengthened, with respect to their recreational use for the public. For example where there is private land, this should be made public, woodland creation and environmental and educational benefits. It was however, accepted that this would require the consent of the private landowner and given the land is likely to be in agricultural use, this may be resisted. In contrast, the parish councillor maintained that the Green Belt should remain protected from development.

Interestingly, one of the public sector policy officers argued that there is no requirement for an arbitrary national policy to contain urban encroachment and advocated the abolition of the Green Belt, replacing with a locally adopted 'open countryside' policy, in which any development outside the settlement boundary would meet locally set tests. They argued that it would be stronger than Green Belt because the policy is locally specific and enforced, citing Cumbria as a successful example.

Whilst it was accepted that Green Wedges as promoted by Barker (2006), were a good idea, there was little promotion of them as a workable concept, but both the planning consultant and barrister advocated Papworth's (2015) recommendation to remove Green Belt on land within 10 minutes walk of a railway station, but to adopt this nationally, to meet housing need as opposed to London. Finally, the barrister advocated not just the encroachment into land currently classed as Green Belt, but referred to the persuasive submission of Rudlin (2014) to the 2014 Wolfson Economics Prize of nodal extension and a figure of eight approach to urban extensions.

However, there was a majority consensus that it would be unlikely that the government will substantially change the Green Belt policy. The public sector policy officer commented that it would be 'political suicide', and that it would take a brave and secure government to do so, but this may happen in the longer term as a result of sustainability and climate change. Finally, both the public and private sector planner made reference to a wider context in that city developments should promote high quality constructed sustainable higher densities and open space. However, there would need to be a mental shift in how people live in the UK. Furthermore, the architects expressed their opinion that Green Belt releases should not be large scale sites of say 500 to 1,000 dwellings, rather small scale sustainable

urban extensions, as there is a perceived current trend for authorities to allocate large sites and they are failing to be delivered, due to economic and infrastructure reasons.

## **7. Discussion**

One important consideration derived from the discourse is that whilst inherently linked, and influenced by each other, housing demand and supply and land demand and supply are distinctive. The literature review informs us that there has been a long term failure by successive governments to address the undersupply of housing in the UK. Moreover, one can see from the literature review, there remains both a present and future need for housing in the UK, which is not abating and as this discourse explores, the factors driving this demand for housing in the UK are complex and are intrinsic combinations of economic, social and demographic factors.

The evidence presented in the literature review concludes that during the last 60 years, the UK planning system has been unable to deliver a sufficient supply of housing in order to meet this rising demand for housing. The discourse presents the three fold debate on the arguments why the system has failed to meet housing demand. The literature review and interview results makes explicit reference to the increase housing demand, as a result of socio-economics factors and how economics limited housing delivery during the UK recession and the changing market dynamics of the house building industry. The third debate presented and supported by the discourse is the housing industry cannot build enough houses to meet demand, as a result of local authorities not allocating enough suitable land in the UK for housing.

The literature review and interview results identifies that the previous government's brownfield land first policy failed to deliver a sufficient supply of suitable land to enable house builders to build the level of housing required to meet demand and this policy is a contributory factor to the existing housing undersupply. The case study identifies the existing problems for local authorities, particularly in Southern England, where there is low allocation of brownfield land available to allocate housing and have no choice but to 'leapfrog' housing development outside the Green Belt. Furthermore, both the literature review and interview results identify that where brownfield land is available, it is usually situated in an inner urban environment, which is in a location and of a housing type that does not necessarily meet socio-economic needs. The literature review and interview results also identifies that

available brownfield land is simply not being developed by housing developers as a result of its economic unavailability.

Put simplistically, the discourse identifies that there is a pent up and un-met demand in the market for suitable land in order to meet the housing demand, but nationally there is not enough supply of suitable land being brought forward through the planning system to build houses. Consequently, there is not enough suitable land to build the required number of houses to meet the level of demand in the UK and as a result there is an undersupply of housing.

Both the literature review and interview results concluded that governments reform of the planning system through the introduction of the NPPF (2012), has increased the delivery of planning permissions for housing and in turn, this has released land supply to meet housing need and increased housing supply. The discourse draws out the government's mechanism contained within the NPPF for increasing land supply, both during the local plan process and where local authorities have not allocated sufficient land for their housing need. What the discourse does inform us, however, is that the government's 'carrot' and 'stick' approach does not encroach into the Green Belt. As both the literature review and interview results both conclude, the Green Belt policy is highly politicised and the discourse leads us to understand that this is where the system critically fails.

Both the literature review and interview results advocate the fundamental need to retaining a spatial planning tool in the UK, such as the Green Belt, through drawing an analysis on the costs to society resultant from urban sprawl in America and European countries. However, supported by the case study of Cambridge, which is a typical instance and likely to apply to other localities, the discourse informs us that Green Belt policy clearly restricts land supply and prevents local authorities from enabling them to allocate sufficient suitable land for their housing needs and to grow a settlement naturally. In addition, the discourse highlights the negative effects of Green Belts, and resultant unsustainable development that is promotes; socially, environmentally and economically.

Critically, the discourse identifies that greater flexibility needs to be built into the UK planning system to facilitate the increase in land supply. This in turn will enable local authorities to allocate sufficient

housing land for both their present housing needs and to allow for future natural growth of settlements. The discourse clearly identifies that the Green Belt is a key policy that restricts land supply for housing and the literature review, case study and interview results all support the release of Green Belt land for housing as a solution to increasing land supply and reducing the unsustainable development generated from the Green Belt policy.

The discourse identifies several different arguments on reforming the Green Belt policy in order to increase land supply through the UK planning system. While the discourse presents proposals ranging from the retention and strengthening of the Green Belt policy to its abolition, the debate focuses on incorporating greater discretion or flexibility into the Green Belt policy, as a logical and coherent solution to increasing land supply. However, the literature review also presents an important argument that by incorporating greater flexibility may result in the loss of the Green Belt policy's integrity and, as identified in the example of Canada, local authorities will thus seek to fundamentally dismantle the policy. In parallel with this argument, the literature review identifies that if the public's perception of the Green Belts 'value' as a countryside ideal is lost, this will result in a loss of political momentum to continue in the maintenance and implementation of the Green Belt. In turn, the Green Belts principle will be undermined, resulting in the beginning of the end for the Green Belt policy.

The alternative debate presented by the discourse, is that only by adopting a robust stance towards the Green Belt policy in its prohibition against development, will ensure the maintenance of its effectiveness as a spatial planning tool and as identified in both the literature review and interview results, successive governments have maintained this position. Moreover, the literature review has identified that if the government did elect to reform the Green Belt, any radical solution is likely to be frustrated by the lack of research available to guide their implementation and compounded by the fragmented mixture of central government control and local authority policy making in the UK.

Both the case study and interview results present more detailed proposals on the mechanism for incorporating flexibility into the existing UK planning system and the debate focuses primarily on the need for a strategic review of the existing Green Belt boundaries. The evidence of the case study

provides a blueprint for undertaking a successful strategic review and the mechanism for releasing land from the Green Belt to meet the housing needs of the case study in the present UK planning system.

Importantly, the discourse presents the debate that there is to an extent, flexibility in the present UK planning system. The NPPF legitimately allows local authorities to amend their Green Belt boundaries to meet their strategic priorities, which includes homes at the local plan review stage, and permits authorities to safeguard land between the urban area and Green Belt in order to meet longer-term development needs beyond the plan period. However, the discourse identifies that this flexibility in the system is flawed and the debate focuses on the failure of local authorities to release a sufficient supply of land to meet housing needs for a period in excess of 15 years. Both the literature review and case study supported this proposal by intimating an approach of between 30 to 50 years. Both the case study and interview results present the further argument local authorities would be more successful if they adopted more of a strategic planning approach to land supply and housing demand, particularly where the release of Green Belt is required.

One key debate presented in the discourse is that the politicisation of the planning system, compounded by pressure from developers has discouraged local authorities from electing to release land from the Green Belt. Both the literature review and interview results have presented the argument that local authorities have perhaps misunderstood their ability to release land from the Green Belt to meet their housing need, given the more recent political ambiguity from government.

The discourse also highlights the economic cut backs in the public sector and lack of clear guidance on the criteria required to conduct a Green Belt review. Both the interview results and case study presents the debate that this contributed to submitting less than robust evidence on both retaining or releasing Green Belt, given their scale and complexity and has resulted in delays in the planning process and left authorities further exposed to planning by appeal.

Critically therefore, the discourse presents the debate that even if greater flexibility is built into the Green Belt policy that enables local authorities to release Green Belt land in order to allocate sufficient land for housing, there still remains a fundamental problem in this mechanism within the UK planning

system. The case study identifies that this problem can (to an extent) be overcome by adopting a collaborative approach between neighbouring authorities, in conjunction with stakeholders, developers and landowners, adopting a strategic approach on the sustainable future expansion in advance of local plan review stage. Both the literature review and case study informs the importance of de-politicising the process of releasing land from the Green Belt for housing and the use of a strategic consultation process, as a method for overcoming the problematic of engaging in dialogue with staunch supporters of absolute Green Belt protection. The evidence presented by the discourse also endorses fully engaging with the public on the strategic options for the release of land from the Green Belt, in order to enable authorities to deliver a housing pro-growth land supply objective, and the importance of providing the public with an informed, objective debate supported by a detailed evidence base. The case study highlights the importance of this point, when referencing the current problems that Cambridge is experiencing during this local plan process, as a result of choosing not to replicate their own successful model.

## **8. Conclusion**

The evidence presented in the discourse has identified that there is a critical need to meet both the current and future housing needs of the UK. Historically, this housing need has not been met, as a result of a historic undersupply in housing and the evidence presented indicates that it is unlikely the present system will be able to meet the UK current housing need. The discourse presents that this undersupply is the result of a combination between rising housing demand, market economics and a restriction in land supply.

The research indicates that the current system is in need of reform and in order to address the economics side of the debate, in conjunction with government's financial incentives to stimulate housing delivery, there needs to be a fundamental change in the house building market structure, in order to promote a greater number of smaller house builders to deliver housing on small scale sites.

The second part of the debate and the focus of the discourse presents that there is an insufficient supply of land to meet housing demand, as a result of the economic unavailability of the available residual

brownfield land and in areas where there is a tight Green Belt boundary around the urban settlement, local authorities are unable to allocate sufficient suitable land to meet their housing needs.

The evidence presented in this discourse therefore concludes that the Green Belt policy is a primary factor in restricting land supply and in turn, it is recognised that this has a significant effect on the undersupply of housing in the UK; that is its primary objective and has been highly successful in its purpose. In addition, the research presented has found that the Green Belt policy has promoted unsustainable development, which far outweighs the overarching benefits the containment policy is trying to achieve.

The research has identified that in order to increase the supply of land and in turn increase housing supply to meet demand, a different approach to the Green Belt is required within the UK planning system, in order to enable local authorities to allocate a sufficient supply of suitable land to meet their housing needs.

However, the evidence presented in the discourse identifies a potential risk that by adopting a more flexible approach to the Green Belt, may lead to fundamentally undermining its effectiveness and consequently resulting in the death knell of the policy. The evidence has also identified that any radical solution to the Green Belt is likely to be frustrated by the lack of research available to guide its implementation and the UK central government and local authority policy making structure.

## **9. Recommendations**

Having examined the research, the following areas need to be considered:

There is a fundamental requirement to adopt a different approach to the Green Belt policy within the present planning system. Sufficient Green Belt land has to be released in order to meet the existing and future UK's housing needs. The mechanism for releasing land from the Green Belt must be conducted through de-politicised, objective and strategic reviews by local authorities at regular intervals, scrutinised by a planning inspector during a local plan process.

Before this strategic Green Belt review can take place; Firstly, the government must implement a clear national guidance on how local authorities should undertake a Green Belt review, so there is consistency. Secondly, in order to remove the concept of permanence in terms of policy, not its application, the public need to be provided with a greater awareness of the Green Belts role and purpose, why the boundaries need to be reviewed and the benefits and negatives associated with each option.

Thirdly, Green Belt reviews should be undertaken collaboratively under a spatial approach with combined authorities, and in conjunction with stakeholders, as evidenced by the Cambridge case study and delivered through a spatial framework, as shown more recently in Greater Manchester; this facilitates strategic planning and a broader view on housing needs and available land supply.

It is recommended that the Green Belt review model adopted by Cambridge Futures in terms of evidence base, the presentation of strategic options, community engagement and consultation, collaboration and analysis is replicated as the blueprint for authorities in releasing land from the Green Belt in order to meet their housing needs.

As evidenced through the Cambridge case study, it is not necessary for the Green Belt Review to be undertaken during the local plan process, but should be undertaken beforehand in order to inform the strategic objectives of local plan.

The flexibility therefore, is incorporated into the strategic planning options chosen, informed through the evidence base and dependent on the strategic and spatial requirements of the collective authorities. Examples of such spatial options could include the release of Green Belt around railway stations, motorway junctions and urban extensions.

There would be no flexibility applied to the existing Green Belt policy, once the boundaries are adopted and would remain as per the NPPF. However, authorities should produce a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) or incorporate a policy in their local plan that sets out their policies on *inter alia* extensions to dwellings, replacement dwellings, agricultural occupancy dwellings, development on brownfield land in the Green Belt and barn conversions to residential.

Fourthly, paragraph 157 of the NPPF should be amended to promote combined authorities to master plan for a longer term of say, a minimum of 30 years for their strategic objectives and safeguarded land should be explicitly allocated to address their future growth housing and employment needs; this also provides clarity to the wider public.

Fifthly, as part of the Green Belt review to assess land for release for future housing and employment, options should be incorporated on improving accessibility for the public to the remaining land designated as Green Belt, but this is accepted would need landowner collaboration.

Finally, paragraph 85 of the NPPF should be amended by removing the following wording at sub-paragraph “*satisfy themselves that Green Belt boundaries will not need to altered at the end of the development plan period.*”

Local authorities should explicitly be able to review Green Belt boundaries at the end of any local plan period and a flexibility review mechanism should be incorporated into all local plans, to allow authorities to review their Green Belt boundaries during the local plan period, subject to specific criteria, for example significant increase in population or significant expansion in employment.

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## **Appendix 1**

### **Summary of the Interviewees**

| <b><u>Interview type</u></b> | <b><u>Organisation</u></b> | <b><u>Example of organisation</u></b>     |
|------------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------------------------|
| <b>Group 1</b>               |                            |                                           |
| Government <sup>a</sup>      | Public Sector              | Town planning officer                     |
| Government <sup>b</sup>      | Public Sector              | Town planning officer                     |
| Government <sup>c</sup>      | Public Sector              | Town planning officer                     |
| <b>Group 2</b>               |                            |                                           |
| Company <sup>a</sup>         | Private Practice           | Town planning consultant's                |
| Company <sup>b</sup>         | Private Practice           | Town planning consultant's                |
| Company <sup>c</sup>         | Private Practice           | Agent's for landowner, Chartered Surveyor |
| Company <sup>d</sup>         | Private Practice           | Developer, Chartered Surveyor             |
| Company <sup>d</sup>         | Private Practice           | Developer, Chartered surveyor             |
| Company <sup>e</sup>         | Private Practice           | Architect                                 |
| Company <sup>e</sup>         | Private Practice           | Architect                                 |
| Developer <sup>f</sup>       | Private Practice           | Planning barrister                        |
| <b>Group 3</b>               |                            |                                           |
| Government                   | Public Sector              | Parish Council                            |
| Government                   | Public Sector              | Parish Council                            |
| <b>Group 4</b>               |                            |                                           |
| Academic                     | Private Practice           | Town planning consultant                  |



