

15 April 2011

# Local Planning Authority Green Belt Statistics: England 2010/11



- The area of designated Green Belt land in England at 31 March 2011 was estimated at 1,639,540 hectares, about 13 per cent of the land area of England.
- Between March 2010 and March 2011, boundary changes in three authorities - Enfield, Slough and Vale of White Horse - resulted in a small increase (less than 5 hectares) in the total area of Green Belt.
- Over the longer term, since these statistics were first compiled for 1997, there has been an increase in the area of Green Belt after taking account of the re-designation of some Green Belt as part of the New Forest National Park in 2005.

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## Introduction

This Statistical Release presents estimates of the area of designated Green Belt land in England by region and by local authority, as at 31 March 2011. The estimates are based on an improving methodology whereby an increasing number of local authority estimates are provided from digital mapping. This means that the latest estimates are regarded as more reliable than those in previous years.

## Area of the Green Belt at 31 March 2011

The area of designated Green Belt in England at 31 March 2011 was estimated at 1,639,540 hectares, around 13% of the land area of England. Regional estimates are shown in the table below.

### Area of designated Green Belt land 2010/11 <sup>1</sup>

	<i>Hectares</i>
<b>England</b>	<b>1,639,540</b>
North East	72,990
North West	262,770
Yorkshire and the Humber	264,640
East Midlands	78,930
West Midlands	269,380
East Anglia <sup>2</sup>	26,030
London/wider South East <sup>3</sup>	554,670
South West	110,130

<sup>1</sup> Green Belt estimates as at 31 March 2011.

<sup>2</sup> East of England region, excluding Bedfordshire, Essex and Hertfordshire.

<sup>3</sup> London and the South East of England regions, including Bedfordshire, Essex and Hertfordshire.

Information is not presented by the usual regions. This is because for example, the Green Belt for London straddles the London, East of England and South East regional boundaries.

*Note: that there may be discrepancies between individual figures and totals due to rounding.*

*Table 1 (Annex 1) shows estimates of the area of Green Belt land in each local authority for 2010/11. Table 2 (Annex 1) compares, by region and by local authority, the 2010/11 estimates with the revised 2009/10 estimates.*

## Net change

Actual boundary changes are rare and are the results of new or amended local plans being adopted, which must satisfy the strong tests for protecting Green Belt land set out in Planning Policy Guidance Note 2.

In 2010/11 three authorities adopted new plans which resulted in a small net increase in the extent of Green Belt land in England:

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## Boundary Change Increases

Slough (30 hectares); Vale of White Horse (less than 5 hectares)

## Boundary Change Decreases

Enfield (30 hectares)

## 2009/10 and 2010/11 Green Belt area estimates

At 31 March 2011, the area of designated Green Belt in England was estimated at 1,639,540 hectares. The revised estimate for the area of Green Belt land at 31 March 2010 is 1,639,530 hectares. Note that the actual difference of less than 5 hectares between the estimates for 2009/10 and 2010/11 is less than the apparent difference due to rounding.

The 2009/10 estimate has been revised downward by about 30 hectares compared with the estimate of 1,639,560 hectares as published in April 2010. The revision is due to local authorities reporting corrections and using improved measuring techniques from digitised data (such as using geographic information systems as opposed to measurements from paper maps) and the impact of Ordnance Survey's positional accuracy improvement exercise on some local authorities' data

A list of reasons for changes to the Green Belt estimate, where provided by local authorities, is in *Annex 2*.

## Longer term changes

Statistics on the area of Green Belt are available back to 1997 (Annex 3). These show an overall increase in the area of Green Belt between 1997 and 2010/11, after taking account of the re-designation of some Green Belt as part of the New Forest National Park in 2005. Some of this increase is, however, due to improved measurement rather than actual changes.

## Data collection

Estimates of the area of Green Belt land in individual local authorities in England are collected annually on the AGB1 (Annual Green Belt) return via Interform, the Department's housing and planning electronic data collection system.

Robust estimates of the area of Green Belt land in England by local planning authority were first published in 1997. Between 1998 and 2002 there was no further publication on Green Belt estimates, but from 2003, Green Belt estimates were collated on an annual basis to monitor the department's target on the area of Green Belt land in England. However, figures were not published for 2005 due to the extensive quality assurance required in that year.

There are 186 authorities that have designated Green Belt land within their boundaries.

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## Data quality

The Department originally captured its own Green Belt data from local authority paper records. This activity was then outsourced to a private sector supplier. Considerable effort was required from Departmental staff to quality assure the data provided by the supplier. Given resource constraints and technological advancements by local authorities, many of whom are now able to produce digital map data of Green Belt boundaries, in 2007 it was concluded that a more cost effective approach would be for the Department to build and maintain a new Green Belt dataset from the increasingly available local authority digital data, thus also improving quality assurance.

The Department's preferred method of calculating estimates of the area of Green Belt land for each local authority is using Cartesian coordinates. However, some local authorities have provided estimates using spherical coordinates, which produces a different calculation of the area of the Green Belt compared to using Cartesian coordinates. As more authorities convert to using the Department's preferred system, revisions to previous estimates will occur where there are no actual boundary changes to the area of Green Belt land in such authorities. Published areas will eventually be based solely on measurements using Cartesian coordinates.

Local authorities were invited to review their published Green Belt estimates for 2009/10 and provide estimates of Green Belt land in 2010/11. Where there was an increase (or decrease) of more than 10 hectares between the 2009/10 and 2010/11 estimates, or where the revised 2009/10 estimate differs by more than 10 hectares from that previously published, authorities have been approached to obtain an explanation.

From April 2007 an indication on the level of quality assurance undertaken by the local authority is recorded as part of the final sign-off for this return.

## Accompanying annexes

Accompanying Annexes are available to download alongside this release. These are:

### **Annexes:**

- Annex 1 (Table 1): Area of designated Green Belt land by local planning authority in 2010/11.
- Annex 1 (Table 2): Area of designated Green Belt land by region and by local planning authority: 2009/10, 2010/11
- Annex 2: Reasons for changes in Green Belt Estimates in 2010.
- Annex 3: Regional trend in the area of Green Belt land since 1997.

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## Background notes

### Green Belt policy

1. There are five purposes of including land in Green Belts:

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

2. Once Green Belts have been identified, the use of land in them has a positive role to play in fulfilling the following objectives:

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

3. This Release is a web-only publication.

4. Details of officials who receive pre-release access to this statistical release 24 hours before publication can be found at

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/corporate/researchandstatistics/statistics/nationalstatistics/>

5. National Statistics are produced to high professional standards set out in the National Statistics Code of Practice. They undergo regular quality assurance reviews to ensure they meet customer needs.

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## Further information

### **Date of next publication**

We are currently consulting on the frequency of this statistical release. The date of the next publication will be announced in due course.

## Enquiries

1. This Statistical Release, as well as previous Releases, can be accessed from the Communities and Local Government website at:

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/planningandbuilding/planningbuilding/planningstatistics/localplanningauthority/>

2. Information on Green Belt statistics can be obtained as follows:

Office hours: 0303 444 1156

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Email: [press@communities.gov.uk](mailto:press@communities.gov.uk)

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Information on Official Statistics is available via the UK Statistics Authority website:

[www.statistics.gov.uk](http://www.statistics.gov.uk)

Information about Communities and Local Government is available via the Department's website:

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