



## **THREATS TO LONDON'S GREEN BELT *TREBLE* IN JUST FOUR YEARS**

### **233,000 New Homes Currently Planned for 'Protected' Green Belt Countryside**

The amount of 'protected' Green Belt land around London is poised to shrink further, despite repeated Government assurances that it is safe from development. In the past four years alone, the number of sites in the London Metropolitan Green Belt that have been offered up for new housing has trebled.

A new report from the London Green Belt Council – which brings together over a hundred organisations, including local councils, residents' associations and environmental groups – reveals that the number of sites earmarked for housebuilding in the supposedly protected ring around the capital rose from 203 in 2016 to 632 in 2020.

The report, entitled "Safe Under Us? The shrinking of London's local countryside", says that these sites are planned to take nearly twice as many new houses as four years ago. In 2016, 123,000 houses were proposed for the London Green Belt; this figure has now risen to a staggering 233,000.

All but 12 of the 66 local authorities in the London Green Belt are proposing to allocate Green Belt land for housing. The three worst affected counties are Essex, Hertfordshire and Surrey. The trend towards building on the Green Belt is expected to continue as the region's population grows, unless policies change.

The report concludes that one of the main causes of the increase is “interference” by Government planning inspectors in local councils’ plans, “forcing local authorities to allocate more Green Belt land for development”. It goes on: “This could be considered abuse of their power.”

Planning inspectors are also accused of appearing to ignore abundant brownfield land in urban areas that could accommodate the new housing. Councils across the region have enough previously developed land to deliver nearly 250,000 homes, more than enough to take the 233,000 new houses currently planned for the Green Belt.

The report also explodes assertions that developing the Green Belt could provide affordable homes for young people. That houses built on it are typically 4-5 bedroom, premium price houses built at less than half the average density of homes constructed elsewhere, says the report. “There is little evidence that any affordable development in the London Metropolitan Green Belt is taking place. It is not providing homes for young people,” says the report.

London Green Belt Council chair Richard Knox-Johnston calls for the Government to change its policy and to block development of Green Belt countryside and green spaces. He also calls for the establishment of a statutory authority to take forward a long-term strategy to protect and enhance the London Metropolitan Green Belt.

-ENDS

Full report attached: *“Safe Under Us? The shrinking of London’s local countryside”*

**For further information, please contact: Richard Knox-Johnston, Chair, London Green Belt Council, tel. 01795 844086, mobile 07899 795386; Andy Smith, Secretary, London Green Belt Council, tel. 07737 271676.**