



MINISTRY OF HOUSING AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT
WHITEHALL, LONDON, S.W.1

SIR,

3rd August, 1955

GREEN BELTS

1. Following upon his statement in the House of Commons on April 26th last (copy attached), I am directed by the Minister of Housing and Local Government to draw your attention to the importance of checking the unrestricted sprawl of the built-up areas, and of safeguarding the surrounding countryside against further encroachment.
2. He is satisfied that the only really effective way to achieve this object is by the formal designation of clearly defined Green Belts around the areas concerned.
3. The Minister accordingly recommends Planning Authorities to consider establishing a Green Belt wherever this is desirable in order:
 - (a) to check the further growth of a large built-up area;
 - (b) to prevent neighbouring towns from merging into one another; or
 - (c) to preserve the special character of a town.
4. Wherever practicable, a Green Belt should be several miles wide, so as to ensure an appreciable rural zone all round the built-up area concerned.
5. Inside a Green Belt, approval should not be given, except in very special circumstances, for the construction of new buildings or for the change of use of existing buildings for purposes other than agriculture, sport, cemeteries, institutions standing in extensive grounds, or other uses appropriate to a rural area.
6. Apart from a strictly limited amount of "infilling" or "rounding off" (within boundaries to be defined in Town Maps) existing towns and villages inside a Green Belt should not be allowed to expand further. Even within the urban areas thus defined, every effort should be made to prevent any further building for industrial or commercial purposes; since this, if allowed, would lead to a demand for more labour, which in turn would create a need for the development of additional land for housing.
7. A Planning Authority which wishes to establish a Green Belt in its area should, after consulting any neighbouring Planning Authority affected, submit to the Minister, as soon as possible, a Sketch Plan, indicating the approximate boundaries of the proposed Belt. Before officially submitting their plans, authorities may find it helpful to discuss them informally with this Ministry either through its regional representative or in Whitehall.
8. In due course, a detailed survey will be needed to define precisely the inner and outer boundaries of the Green Belt, as well as the boundaries of towns and villages within it. Thereafter, these particulars will have to be incorporated as amendments in the Development Plan.

9. This procedure may take some time to complete. Meanwhile, it is desirable to prevent any further deterioration in the position. The Minister, therefore, asks that, where a Planning Authority has submitted a Sketch Plan for a Green Belt, it should forthwith apply provisionally, in the area proposed, the arrangements outlined in paragraphs 5 and 6 above.

I am, Sir,

Your obedient Servant,

A. B. VALENTINE.
Under Secretary.

The Clerk of the Council,
Local Planning Authorities.
County District Councils (for information).
England and Wales.

Annex to Circular No. 42/55

STATEMENT BY THE RT. HON. DUNCAN SANDYS, M.P., MINISTER
OF HOUSING AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT, IN THE HOUSE OF
COMMONS ON 25th APRIL, 1955

"I am convinced that, for the well-being of our people and for the preservation of the countryside, we have a clear duty to do all we can to prevent the further unrestricted sprawl of the great cities.

The Development Plans submitted by the local planning authorities for the Home Counties provide for a Green Belt, some 7 to 10 miles deep, all around the built-up area of Greater London. Apart from some limited rounding-off of existing small towns and villages, no further urban expansion is to be allowed within this belt.

These proposals if strictly adhered to, should prove most effective. For this the authorities in the Home Counties deserve much credit.

In other parts of the country, certain planning authorities are endeavouring, by administrative action, to restrict further building development around the large urban areas. But I regret that nowhere has any formal Green Belt as yet been proposed. I am accordingly asking all planning authorities concerned to give this matter further consideration, with a view to submitting to me proposals for the creation of clearly defined Green Belts, wherever this is appropriate.

However, I do not intend on this account to hold up my approval of Development Plans already before me. Additional provisions for Green Belts can be incorporated later."

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Printed in England and published by
HER MAJESTY'S STATIONERY OFFICE

1955: Reprinted 1962

Price 3d. net