

# Local Planning Authority Green Belt Statistics: England 2009/10

23 April 2010

- Designated Green Belt land in England as at 31 March 2010 was estimated at 1,639,560 hectares, about 13 per cent of the land area of England.
- Designated Green Belt land in England as at 31 March 2009 has been revised and now is estimated at 1,639,650 hectares. This is an increase of 810 hectares from the estimate of 1,638,840 hectares published in April 2009. This is due to corrections, improved measurements and Positional Accuracy Improvements from several authorities
- Between 1 April 2009 and 31 March 2010 there has been a net decrease of 80 hectares when compared with the latest 2008/09 estimates. This is due to two authorities who adopted new plans which resulted in a real net decrease in the 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 redesignation of some Green Belt as part of the New Forest National Park in 2005.



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## Introduction

This Statistical Release presents National Statistics on the estimates of the area of designated Green Belt land in England by region and by local authority, as at 31 March 2010. 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 2009/10 estimates are regarded as more reliable than those in previous years.

At 31 March 2010, designated Green Belt land was estimated at 1,639,560 hectares of the land area of England. Local authority Green Belt estimates, as at 31 March 2010, are shown below by region.

### Area of designated Green Belt land: 2009/10<sup>1</sup>

	Hectares
	Area
<b>England</b>	<b>1,639,560</b>
North East	72,990
North West	262,780
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>	554,700
South West	110,130

<sup>1</sup> Green Belt estimates as at 31 March 2010.

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

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

Information is not presented by the standard Government Office Regions. This is because for example, the Green Belt for London straddles the London, East of England and South East regional boundaries.

*Table 1 (Annex 1)* shows estimates of the area of Green Belt land in each local authority for 2009/10. *Table 2 (Annex 1)* compares, by region and by local authority, the 2009/10 estimates with the revised 2008/09 estimates.

## Changes to the area of Green Belt between 2008/09 and 2009/10

In 2008/09 the revised Green Belt in England was estimated at 1,639,650 hectares, while the 2009/10 area of Green Belt is estimated at 1,639,560 hectares. There has been a net decrease of 80 hectares compared with the latest 2008/09 estimate. Note that differences between years are calculated using unrounded data. Also there may be discrepancies between individual figures and totals due to rounding.

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### **Changes due to new adopted plans (real changes)**

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

Between 1 April 2009 and 31 March 2010 two authorities adopted new plans which resulted in a net decrease of 80 hectares:

#### **Real decreases**

South Cambridgeshire (70 hectares) and Mole Valley (10 hectares).

### **Changes to 2008/09 estimates**

Changes in the estimates of the area of Green Belt land at local authority level in 2008-09 were due to corrections and 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 (*Table 2 of Annex 1*). Designated Green Belt land in England as at 31 March 2009 is now estimated at 1,639,650 hectares. This is an increase of 810 hectares from the estimate of 1,638,840 hectares published in April 2009. Estimates have been calculated using the set of new authorities introduced in April 2009 for comparison purposes.

The largest net increase due to corrections or improved measuring techniques was in New Forest District Council (390 hectares).

The largest net decrease due to corrections or improved measuring techniques was in Warrington (40 hectares).

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

## **Department Strategic Objective**

The Comprehensive Spending Review 2007 (CSR07) settlement set out strategic objectives which the Department is committed to deliver. Indicator 7 of the Department's Strategic Objective on Planning (DSO5) relates to the Net change in the area of Green Belt land. The measure of success of this indicator is to sustain the level of Green Belt nationally, measured by region, over the CSR period. There has been a net decrease of 80 hectares between March 2009 and March 2010 due to two authorities adopting new plans which resulted in changes to their Green Belt boundaries.

### **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 2009/10, 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.

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## Data collection

Estimates of Green Belt land in individual local authorities in England are collected annually on 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 other publication on Green Belt estimates. 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 who have designated Green Belt land within their boundaries. This is down from the 197 authorities with Green Belt last year due to local government reorganisation.

## 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 which are now able to produce digital map data of Green Belt, 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 the Cartesian mapping method. However, not all local authorities with Green Belt land in their area are able to provide estimates using this method. As more authorities convert to the Cartesian method, revisions to previous estimates will occur where there are no actual changes to the area of Green Belt land in such authorities. Published areas will eventually be based solely on measurements using the Cartesian method.

Local authorities were invited to review their published Green Belt estimates for 2008/09 and provide estimates of Green Belt land as at 31 March 2010.

Where there was an increase (or decrease) of more than 10 hectares between the 2008/09 estimates and those as at 31 March 2010, or where the revised 2008/09 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.

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## 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 as at 31 March 2010.

Annex 1 (Table 2): Area of designated Green Belt land by region and by local planning authority: 2008/09, 2009/10

Annex 2: Reasons for changes in Green Belt Estimates in 2008/09.

Annex 3: Regional trend in the area of Green Belt land since 1997.

## 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 the 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

Local Planning Authority Green Belt estimates as at 31 March 2010 will be published in **April 2011**.

## 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 from [greenbelt@communities.gov.uk](mailto:greenbelt@communities.gov.uk)

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

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