

DCLG set to update guidance on green belt

6 October 2014 by Jamie Carpenter , [2 comments](#)

Town halls should take account of green belt constraints when determining how many new homes they intend to plan for in their local plans, new government guidance will stress today.

Pickles: guidance will ensure councils can meet their housing needs by prioritising brownfield sites

According to a [statement](#) issued by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG), the guidance will reaffirm "how councils should use their local plan, drawing on protections in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) to safeguard their local area against urban sprawl and protect the green lungs around towns and cities".

According to the DCLG's statement, the guidance will say that local authorities should prepare a Strategic Housing Market Assessment to assess their full housing needs, but that "assessing need is just the first stage in developing a local plan".

According to the DCLG, the guidance will say: "Once need has been assessed, the local planning authority should prepare a strategic housing land availability assessment to establish realistic assumptions about the availability, suitability and economic viability of land to meet the identified need for housing over the plan period, and in doing so take account of any constraints such as the green belt, which indicate that development should be restricted and which may restrain the ability of an authority to meet its need."

[A government source told the *Daily Telegraph*](#): "Many council planning officers are telling their councillors that they have to remove green belt protection when drawing up their local plans, in order to meet [housing] demand.

"We are making clear that this isn't the case, and they can take into account development restrictions – such ongoing green belt protection – when drawing up their local plans and determining how many houses they want to plan for."

In a new section on whether housing and economic needs "override constraints on the use of land, such as green belt", the guidance says that the NPPF "makes clear that, once established, green belt boundaries should only be altered in exceptional circumstances, through the preparation of review of the local plan".

Communities secretary Eric Pickles said: "This government has been very clear that when planning for new buildings, protecting our precious green belt must be paramount.

"Local people don't want to lose their countryside to urban sprawl, or see the vital green lungs around their towns and cities lost to unnecessary development.

"Today's guidance will ensure councils can meet their housing needs by prioritising brownfield sites and fortify the green belt in their area."

[Last month](#), the DCLG outlined measures to strengthen green belt protection in relation to gypsy sites as part of a series of proposed changes to traveller planning policies.

jamie.carpenter@haymarket.com