

Green Belt and Metropolitan Open Land Assessment

Frequently Asked Questions

December 2018

What is Green Belt?

Green Belt is a national policy to stop cities from expanding further and further into the countryside, and to ensure there is permanent open space to protect the countryside. Kingston's Green Belt covers mainly the southern parts of the borough and forms part of the wider Metropolitan Green Belt for London.

Green Belt serves five purposes:

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

Paragraph 134, [National Planning Policy Framework](#), 2018

Green Belt policy is set nationally, but its boundaries are set locally through local plans. National policy means any changes to those boundaries through a new Local Plan or Local Plan review would only be made in exceptional circumstances.

There is also reference to Green Belt policy in the [London Plan](#), and changes have been proposed to this policy in the draft new London Plan, which, if agreed, will be finalised in 2019. Changes to the London Plan are separate to the council, and we are objecting to some of these changes including the text relating to Green Belt.

What is Metropolitan Open Land?

The Metropolitan Open Land (MOL) is a regional designation in the [London Plan](#), covering open spaces within London. MOL is similar to the Green Belt in that it is open land near to urban space and it is also protected from inappropriate development by planning policies.

Currently, national Green Belt policy also applies to MOL because of a policy in the London Plan. The new London Plan proposes to change this: instead of requiring refusal of MOL boundary changes (in line with the new London Plan Green Belt policy), MOL boundaries could also be changed through a local plan (not just in exceptional circumstances like the Green Belt). Changes to the London Plan are separate to the council, and we are objecting to some of these changes including the text relating to MOL.

What is evidence base? Why do an assessment of Green Belt and MOL?

The council is starting to prepare its new Local Plan, which will guide development in the borough from 2019-2041. As part of this, we need to provide evidence and carry out studies to help form the basis of policies and help guide how we use land within Kingston. The preparation and review of policies in local plans should be underpinned by relevant and up to date evidence.

What is the council doing?

The council commissioned independent consultants, the Wood Group, to objectively assess both the Green Belt and the MOL in Kingston as part of the Local Plan. The report has been published on the council's [evidence base](#) pages for the Local Plan, which is a live page and updated as soon as new evidence becomes available.

When can I have my say?

This Green Belt and MOL assessment is one of many pieces of evidence produced in preparation for the new Local Plan.

We will consult on what should be included in Kingston's new local plan in early 2019. The Strategic Housing and Planning Committee gave permission to consult on 8 November 2018. We look forward to getting as much feedback from our community as possible during this engagement, including what they think about the future of Kingston's areas of Green Belt and Metropolitan Open Land. This will help inform the planning policies we include in our new plan and therefore where and what type of development is allowed in the future.

In early 2019, the council will engage with our communities about:

1. **developing a new local plan for Kingston** - this looks at the issues we face as a borough and seeks views from the public about the future of Kingston.
2. **a range of sites submitted to the council** - this provides the public with the opportunity to comment on a range of sites which were submitted by the community, landowners and developers to the council as part of our Call for Sites, which was run in 2017. The council have not filtered any of the sites, even those in the Green Belt. This is so we can build up a clear picture of the community's views, telling us both what options people do want, and what they don't want.

What are the key findings of the study?

Green Belt

All of the sites within the assessment met one or more requirements to be Green Belt land. Even though all sites met the Green Belt purposes generally, there were examples where the containment of sprawl (keeping development within city boundaries) has been less successful than in other places. An example of this is around Chessington World of Adventures.

MOL

All Metropolitan Open Land within the assessment met the criteria in the London Plan. MOL has lots of different land uses, including extensive development, most notably around the Thames Water Hogsmill Sewage Treatments Works in Berrylands.

The study also identifies two areas which could have the potential for designation as MOL, because of their character and geography. These are:

- Manor Park, off Malden Road, Motspur Park
- Fishponds, off Ewell Road/Hollyfield Road

What will happen next?

A report on the Issues and Options (the first stage of the Local Plan) was considered at the Strategic Housing and Planning Committee on 8 November 2018. The Issues and Options will be consulted upon early in 2019.