

A Green Belt for Norwich?

Unlike many other cities, Norwich does not have a Green Belt. It may historically have been compact and surrounded by countryside, but this is becoming threatened and lost to development.

The creation of the Greater Norwich Local Plan (GNLP) provides an opportunity to redress this.



The countryside charity
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CPRE's Vision

CPRE Norfolk's vision for a Norwich Green Belt takes a form of 'green wedges' radiating from the city into the countryside. These would follow existing corridors such as river valleys, railway lines (used and disused), footpaths and cycleways. This form of Green Belt would still allow for development but would protect Norwich's special character for generations to come as well as allowing a new green network to be created serving the whole of Greater Norwich.

The creation of a Green Belt for Norwich was included in early consultations for the GNLP but it has not been included in the draft plan submitted to the

Regulation 19 consultation. We are concerned that the case for the green wedges model has not been sufficiently considered. Circumstances have changed dramatically, due to COVID-19, highlighting the benefits of green spaces. The Government's proposed changes to the planning system suggest that robust protection of green spaces is more pressing than ever. These major changes in circumstances provide ample justification for adoption of the exceptional measure of the creation of a Green Belt for Norwich, as required by the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF.)

Wellbeing, Social and Community Benefits

- Research suggests a strong association between green space and mental wellbeing.¹
- As well as growth, we urge authorities to improve Norfolk's health and wellbeing through focusing on green spaces, nature and wildlife.
- Many evaluations show leisure activities in green spaces have a positive impact on feelings of loneliness and isolation.²
- Green spaces and community woodlands can create community cohesion.³
- The link between physical health and green space is due to increased levels of physical activity, such as a decreased risk of type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular morbidity, stroke and heart disease.⁴



Economic Benefits

A green belt will not restrict the local economy; in fact it will bring benefits by:

- Boosting income and jobs in businesses involved in tourism and outdoor and countryside recreation.
- Providing savings to the NHS as a result of improvements in physical and mental health.

What happens next?

Green belt legislation is the only effective way to prevent urban sprawl and protect the countryside around Norwich.

The GNLP provides an opportunity for appreciating the value our countryside and green spaces bring in terms of health, well-being, economic and ecosystem benefits, and what is lost if they're built on.

These values must be considered when considering the location of development – we urge a genuine 'brownfield first' approach, combined with alternative uses of existing city centre properties, in the light of high street decline.

We want to make sure Norwich continues to have a countryside next door for current and future generations. Identifying and including in the GNLP a series of green wedges and applying to have these protected under the Green Belt legislation once the plan is adopted. This not only causes no delay to the plan, but it creates an opportunity for the GNLP to show a strong lead in finding ways to protect our environment, biodiversity and people's wellbeing.

Local decision-makers are asked to support CPRE Norfolk's proposal for a Green Belt for Norwich based on the green wedges model.



Data from the Office of National Statistics shows that one in every eight households doesn't have access to a garden, so daily exercise in nearby green spaces has become a lifeline to many during times of lockdown. We at CPRE have long campaigned for us all to have easy access to quality green spaces

from our doorsteps. New online research that we commissioned just as lockdown started, working with the HomeOwners Alliance, shows that our time in a pandemic has really reinforced just how much people want these green spaces to be the best they can be.

¹ CPRE and Women's Institute commissioned poll on attitudes to green spaces, the Wildlife Trusts' '30 Days Wild', YouGov survey commissioned by CPRE and the HomeOwners Alliance.

² Mytton, O.T., Townsend, N., Rutter, H., & Foster, C. (2012). Green space and physical activity: An observational study using Health Survey for England data. *Health & Place*, 18(5), 1034-1041, and others.

³ Alcock, I., White, M.P., Lovell, R., Higgins, S.L., Osborne, N.J., Husk, K. & Wheeler, B.W. (2015). What accounts for 'England's green and pleasant land'?

⁴ Mytton, O.T., Townsend, N., Rutter, H., & Foster, C. (2012). Green space and physical activity: An observational study using Health Survey for England data. *Health & Place*, 18(5), 1034-1041 and others.

Full references at www.cprenorfolk.org.uk.



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