



Department for
Communities and
Local Government

**Department for Communities and Local
Government**

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Thank you for sending in a request, with the printed names of 1,110 local people as supporters, that unspecified 'loopholes' in the National Planning Policy Framework affecting the Green Belt be removed. I have been asked to reply.

The Government's expectations of the planning system are set out in the Framework, on the website www.gov.uk. The word 'loophole' suggests inadvertence, but I think that the Department has explained to you in previous correspondence that the text of the Framework is not law; it was deliberately designed to be capable of local interpretation, and to be applied to reflect local circumstances and the facts of planning cases. From the outset in the mid-1950s, Green Belt has been a planning tool for managing development and growth rather than a landscape or nature conservation measure. It is for the decision-makers – whether the local authority or a planning inspector examining a revised Plan or conducting an appeal hearing – to determine how much weight to give to each relevant factor, including national planning policy in the Framework.

This country went for decades without building enough homes. We need to build homes not only to cater for any projected population growth, but also for the backlog that has built up. That is the background to the ambitions for housing growth set out in our Housing White Paper, *Fixing our broken housing market*. Among its proposals is one that would clarify the policy on the exceptional circumstances in which a local authority may propose to alter a Green Belt boundary. Under the new test, a local authority would be able to remove land from its Green Belt only when it can show it has examined all other reasonable options for meeting its identified development needs. If you would like to comment please use the link <https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/QLLWWSS> before 2 May.

There is to be a further, technical consultation on improving the way local authorities carry out their housing need assessments. We will announce this in due course.

You may find it helpful to see the advice on the Parliament website on creating and handling petitions: <https://www.parliament.uk/get-involved/sign-a-petition/>

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