Planning Policy and Powers in the Green Belt

National planning policy for Green Belts is set out in Planning Policy Guidance Note 2 (PPG 2), which is entitled Green Belts.

The aims of the Green Belt are to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open, with the most important attribute of Green Belts being their openness. It also states that Green Belts can shape patterns of Urban Development at sub regional and regional scale and help to ensure the development occurs in locations allocated in development plans. They help to protect the countryside, be it in agricultural, forestry or other use. They can assist in moving towards more sustainable patterns of urban development.

PPG 2 published in 1995 sets out the five purposes of including land in Green Belts as follows:

- Checking the unrestricted sprawl of large built up areas
- Preventing neighbouring towns merging into one other
- Safeguarding the surrounding countryside from further encroachment
- Preserving the setting and special character of historic towns
- And assisting in urban regeneration

There is a general presumption against inappropriate development within the Green Belt as such development is, by definition harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances unless it is for the following purposes.

- Agriculture and forestry
- Essential facilities for outdoor sport and outdoor recreation for cemeteries
- And for other uses of land which preserve the openness of the greenbelt
- Limited extension, alteration or replacement of existing dwellings.
- Limited infilling or redevelopment of major existing sites identified in adopted local plans

PPG2 also states that the use of land in Green Belt 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 out door sport and 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
- To retain land in agricultural forestry and related uses
Regional Policy

The London Plan states that the protection of London’s Green Belt should be maintained and points out that there is a general presumption against inappropriate development in the Green Belt and such development should not be approved except in very special circumstances. The reference to inappropriate development directly flows from PPG 2.

Local Policy

The Green Belt Policies within the Unitary Development Plan follow the principles of PPG2. The UDP published in 1994 states in policy (I) G1 states that the principle of the Green Belt will be strongly supported and inappropriate developments resisted. Policy (II) G1 adds that within the Green Belt, except in very special circumstances, the construction of buildings for purposes not normally appropriate in the Green Belt will be resisted. Policy (II) G11 states that development in the Green Belt should not be detrimental to landscape interests. It also requires the siting, scale and height and bulk of new development should be compatible with its landscape setting and for new schemes to display a high standard of design.

The emerging Local Development Framework

The Local Development Framework will eventually replace the Unitary Development Plan. The Core strategy Preferred options are currently out for consultation. The preferred option for Core Policy 19: Green Belt and Countryside states that the council will continue to protect and enhance Enfield’s Green Belt and countryside. This gives an indication of the direction of the Councils strategic planning policy direction on Green belts.

Planning Powers

In considering planning applications for development in the Green Belt the council should have regard for the national, regional and local planning policy framework referred to above in arriving at a decision.

Also in deciding as to whether to take enforcement action on unauthorised development in the Green belt the council need to consider whether the development would be harmful to the Green belt and as such is clearly contrary to the national, regional and local planning policies. These policy considerations are extremely important because if there is an appeal against an enforcement notice the planning merits of any case will be fully reviewed by a planning Inspector.