



Green Belt land, 2020/2021

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David Jenks, Research and intelligence officer

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For further information on the work of Business Intelligence, please contact us at:

Business Intelligence
Lancashire County Council
2nd floor Christ Church Precinct
County Hall
Fishergate Hill
Preston
PR1 8XJ
E: BusinessIntelligence.insight@lancashire.gov.uk
www.lancashire.gov.uk/lancashire-insight
Follow us on Twitter @lancsinsight

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1 Summary

According to [Green Belt statistics](#) published by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (now known as the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities), the Lancashire 12-authority area contained around 69,790 hectares (ha) designated as 'Green Belt' in 2020/21, or approximately 24% of the land area. A substantial proportion of the Green Belt land in the Lancashire-12 area is designated in West Lancashire (44.3%), where it covers 90% of the district, owing to the large amount of top grade farmland.

At a national level, there have been noticeable changes in eleven authorities in England as a result of adoption of, or changes to, development, allocation or local plans or core strategies. The net result is a decrease of 1,750 hectares in the total Green Belt land figure for England compared to 2019/20; in 2020/21, the Green Belt covered 1,614,000 hectares or 12.4% of England's total land area. The area of Green Belt land fell by the largest extent for a single authority (490 hectares) in Broxbourne and combined with a fall of 170 ha in Harlow gave the East of England region a total fall of 660 hectares. This was a smaller fall than the South East region where 740 hectares were removed, this being made up from 330 hectares removed in Runnymede, 270 in Cherwell, 140 in New Forest district with some minor adjustments in other authorities.

The only authority in Lancashire to have any change in Green Belt land area, significant or otherwise, was Lancaster, where nearly 200 hectares was removed from the local plan, although not all of this will be made available for development. This was the fourth largest decrease in England.

2 Introduction

Green belts have been an enduring element of national planning policy and enjoy a high level of public understanding and support, although the dangers of overly-tight containment policies on housing and economic development are well recognized. Green belts are characterized by their degree of openness and permanence: once designated, they are intended to be maintained and sustainable as far as can be planned ahead and only be altered in exceptional circumstances.

The first official proposal to provide a reserve supply of public open spaces and of recreational areas and to establish a green belt or girdle of open space was made by the Greater London Regional Planning Committee in 1935. New provisions in the 1947 Town and Country Planning Act allowed local authorities to incorporate green belt proposals into their first development plans. The codification of green belt policy and its extension to areas other than London came in 1955 with a circular inviting local planning authorities to consider the establishment of green belts.

Section nine of the [National Planning Policy Framework](#) mentions the current policy on protecting the green belt land. It states that green belt serves five purposes:

- to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;
- to prevent neighbouring towns from merging into one another;
- to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;
- to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns;

- to assist in urban regeneration by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.

3 The extent of Green Belts 2020/21

The figures for the regional distribution of Green Belts are shown in Table 1.

Table 1, Area of designated Green Belt land by region, 2020/21

Region	Area (ha)	Region	Area (ha)	Region	Area (ha)
North East	71,840	E Midlands	77,500	London	34,790
North West	255,900	W Midlands	264,980	South West	107,610
Yorkshire & the Humber	262,500	East of England	233,290	England total ^[1]	1,614,000

Source: Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (DLUHC)– Local Planning Authority Green Belt Statistics: England, 2020/21. (Notes in 'Notes' section at end)

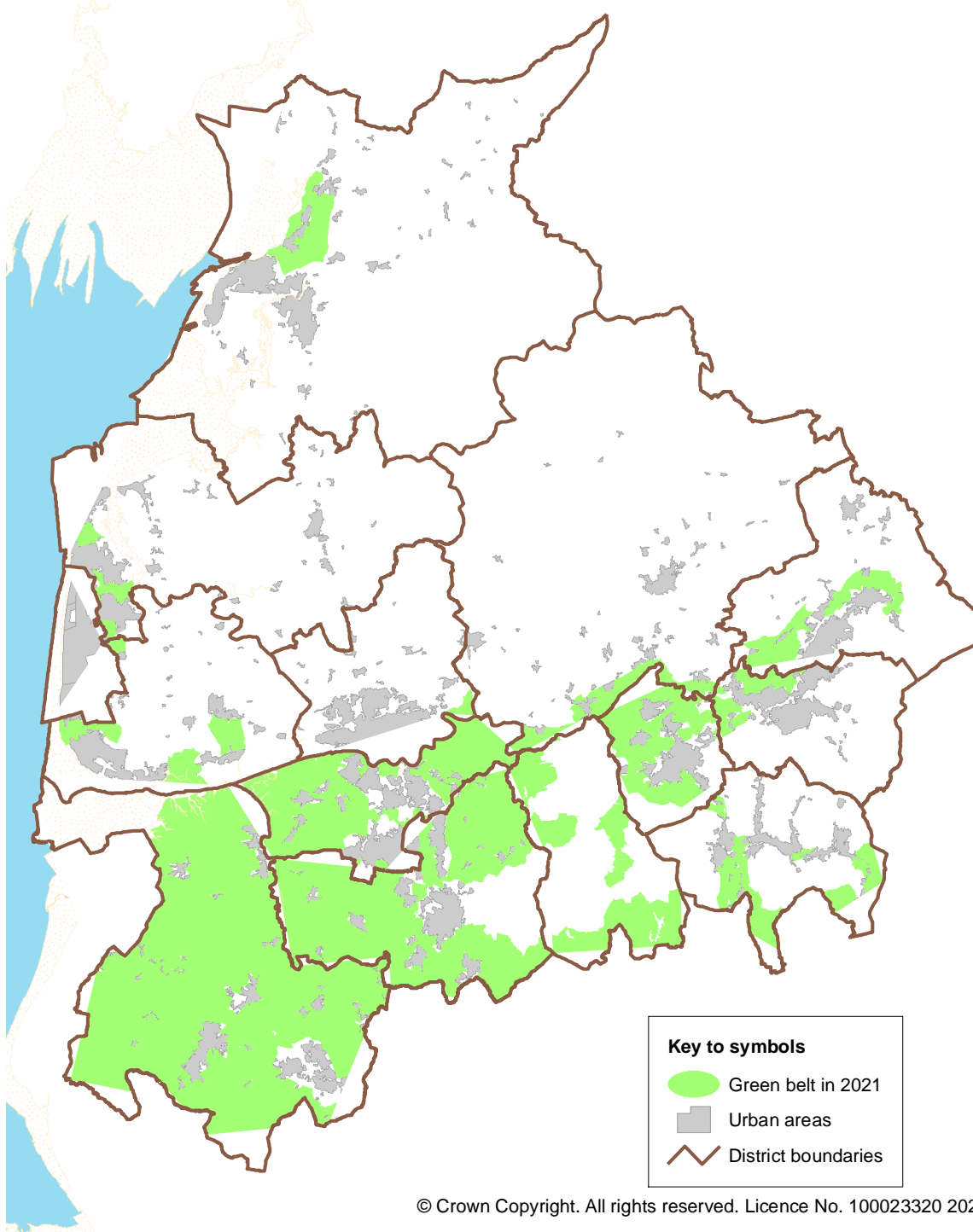
At a national level the designated green belt land in England was estimated at 1,614,000 hectares as at 31st March 2021, about 12.4% of the land area of England. This represents a fall of -1,750 hectares (-17.5 kilometres²) on the 2019/20 figure estimated at 1,615,750. Eleven local authorities were affected, of which one, Lancaster, is in the Lancashire sub-region. Green Belt land in Broxbourne reduced by 490 ha, a 15% reduction. In Runnymede the area fell by 330 ha, or 5%, in Cherwell by 270 ha and in Lancaster by 200 ha (11.4%). The national fall was only about half of the change in the previous year.

Table 2: Area of designated Green Belt land, 2020/21 and annual change 19/20–20/21

Local authority	Area (hectares)	Change from 2019/20 (hectares)
Burnley	1,050	
Chorley	14,560	
Fylde	1,750	
Hyndburn	4,000	
Lancaster	1,540	-200
Pendle	2,040	
Preston	660	
Ribble Valley	1,730	
Rosendale	3,120	
South Ribble	7,620	
West Lancashire	31,030	
Wyre	680	
Lancashire-12	69,790	-200
Blackburn with Darwen	5,280	
Blackpool	70	
Lancashire-14	75,140	-200
England	1,614,000	-1,750

Source: Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities) – Local Planning Authority Green Belt Statistics: England, 2020/21 (Notes in 'Notes' section at end)

Figure 1: Designated areas of Green Belt in the Lancashire-14 area, 2021



The general extent of green belt across Lancashire was defined in the late 1970s/early 1980s and the reasons for the definition still by and large endure. Within the Lancashire sub-region, 75,140 hectares are designated Green Belt, covering around a quarter of the total land area and representing 4.7% of the England total. Some parts of every single Lancashire authority, including highly urbanised Blackpool, have been designated as Green

Belt but coverage is particularly large in Chorley, South Ribble and especially West Lancashire (Table 2). The areas of Lancaster affected by the latest change are to the south of the Bay Gateway Link Road, which was completed in 2017, and to the east of Torrisholme, an area including Torrisholme Barrow, although the latter part will not be made available for development. Details are given in Lancaster City Council's [report](#).

The [MHCLG \(DLUHC\) report](#) explains the changes for all affected local authorities.

4 Previous changes to Green Belt land extent in Lancashire

Prior to this year's major change of -200 hectares in Lancaster, the only statistics in quite some time when there were any significant changes in any of the Lancashire-14 authorities, were during 2015/16 and only then affecting three authorities: Blackburn with Darwen (-290 hectares), South Ribble (-40 ha) and Pendle (-40 ha). The areas of Green Belt prior to this in these authority areas were 5,550 ha in Blackburn with Darwen, 7,810 ha in South Ribble and 2,070 ha in Pendle. All of these changes pale into insignificance if compared with the 1,550 ha reduction of Green Belt land in Coventry and the 1,470 ha reduction in Warwick in the year to March 2018, the 1,090 ha reduction in East Hertfordshire in the year to March 2019 and the 1,470 ha reduction in Guildford in the year to March 2020.

5 Change to methodology

A methodological change was introduced for the 2019/20 release providing general improvements to mapping accuracy, boundary definitions and area calculations. The area of land designated as Green Belt for each Local Authority was previously calculated by local authorities but is now calculated by MHCLG (DLUHC) using the digital Green Belt boundary files provided by the local authorities. The Local Authority Green Belt boundaries are mapped against ONS Local Authority District (Mean High Water mark) boundaries for the corresponding period. This results in greater accuracy in the delimiting of land designated as Green Belt where it meets coastal or estuarine areas and ensures a consistent national approach.

6 Notes

Table 1: Note: [1]. The regional totals are found by summing the district values, which are all rounded to the nearest 10, so the sum of the regional totals does not match the given England total.