THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE GREEN BELT, ENGLAND'S HOUSING CRISIS AND THE PLANNING SYSTEM

By

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Abstract

The Green Belt is probably England's most popular and longstanding planning policy commanding widespread political support locally and nationally yet it is regularly critiqued as one of the main causes of England's Housing Crisis by academics, think tanks and housebuilders. More broadly, following Hall's seminal work *The Containment of Urban England* (1973), it is often argued that it contributes to wider inequitable outcomes in the planning system, which is disproportionately skewed in favour of campaigners and homeowners. This thesis critically evaluates the extent to which the Green Belt contributes to the housing crisis and whether the policy needs reforming. The broader question of power in planning is addressed through exploring why and how the public and campaigners support the Green Belt and oppose housebuilding generally. It therefore aims to add nuance to, and move forward the often polarised Green Belt debate by focusing principally on the views of planners, which are often under-represented in the Green Belt debate, despite being the main actor in the planning system. The study focuses on the importance of space through a geographically based case study of the West Midlands.

The thesis finds that the housing crisis is a complex, multi-faceted problem consisting of multi-scalar factors although the Green Belt exacerbates the crisis in particular locations, especially on the edge of conurbations. It argues that the policy should not be abolished but modified for the 21st century with a focus on sustainability, especially recreation and environmental improvement, and that there should be national conversation on the policy's overall spatial extent and purpose, perhaps as part of a national plan. The study also finds that people *primarily* support the policy because of popular planning principles and place attachment rather than house prices. There is a gap between the *attempted* exercises of power and *effective* power of campaigners with significant circumscription and modulation of power in the planning system. Finally, many of the issues associated with the Green Belt and community opposition to development generally are related to the lack of strategic planning in the current system so the thesis underlines the need for integrated, strategic planning to protect the environment *and* meet housing need.

Dedicated to the loving memory of my dear Mother, Rachel Margaret Rose Goode, who fell asleep through Jesus 26th November 2019 aged 57 (Songs of Songs 3:17; Revelation 22:20).

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List of Key Terms/Glossary

Local Planning Authority (LPA)/Local Authority/Local Council: LPA is used throughout the thesis to describe the governance body of planning in a location, whether a unitary authority, such as Birmingham City Council (BCC), or a district council, like Warwick (Raynsford Review, 2018a, p. 16). The development of 'counties' in England has deep historical roots in administrative, manorial and ecclesiastical boundaries and were formalised by the 1888 Local Government Act (Hall *et al.*, 1973a, pp. 617–622; Wannop and Cherry, 1994, p. 167). The 1947 Town and Country (Planning Act) gave planning powers to the districts although the 1968 Planning Act introduced county Structure Plans to which district plans had to accord (Hall, 1973a, p. 419; Carnwth and Dale-Harris, 2020, p. 3). Concurrently, the Labour Government proposed implementing the Redcliffe-Maud Report (1969), which recommended rationalising local government boundaries in a more favourable way to urban areas, but this was rejected by the subsequent Conservative Government in the 1972 Local Government Act (Elson, 1986, p. 36). This maintained the two-tier system of counties and districts (which, despite some alternations, fundamentally remains to this day) (County Councils Network, 2020b, p. 7). Structure planning continued until the 2004 Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act which introduced Local Development Frameworks (LDFs) alongside RSSs (Raynsford Review, 2018a, pp. 16–17). This setup was only short-lived with the subsequent Conservative-led Government attempting to simplify LDFs to a single plan through the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 and the NPPF (DCLG, 2012; Carnwth and Dale-Harris, 2020, p. 9).

County Counties/District Councils/Unitary Authorities: Geographically, England's 25 county councils largely cover the traditional counties of England and have responsibility for transport, highways, education and social care (although 'academy' status removes a school from a Local Education Authority's control) (Raynsford Review, 2018a, p. 10; Goode, 2019c). There are 188 District Councils in England and the Districts generally have responsibility for planning, parks, and waste whilst Unitary Authorities, including 56 urban and rural areas, combine the responsibilities of District and County Councils (Raynsford Review, 2018b, pp. 28, 48). Across the country, some previously two-tier counties are restructuring as Unitary Authorities, like Buckinghamshire and Dorset (2019), and, more historically, Cornwall and Wiltshire (2009) and Herefordshire (1998) (Marrs, 2018; Goode, 2019c).

Regional Planning/Regional Spatial Strategies (RSS): Regional planning has had a troubled, contentious history in England. There were regional plans for post-war reconstruction, such as the Abercrombie Plans and the West Midlands Group's *Conurbation*, alongside Government-commissioned growth studies in the 1960s, like the 1964 South East Study (Wannop and Cherry, 1994, p. 39; Lainton, 2014). Metropolitan 'counties', which had been introduced by the 1972 Act, such as the West Midlands County Council, were largely abolished alongside the Greater London Council by the 1985 Local Government Act although Regional Planning Guidance continued until 1990s (Law, 2000, p. 223; Allmendinger and Haughton, 2012). New Labour established Regional Assemblies in 1998 and RSSs were introduced in 2004 covering the Office of National Statistics (ONS) NUTS definition of regions (Gant *et al*, 2011, p. 267; Morphet, 2011). Although progress was made on developing RSSs, Eric Pickles, the Communities Secretary of the subsequent Conservative-led Government, signalled his intention to abolish RSSs in 2010 and they were formally abolished by the Localism Act 2011 (Allmendinger and Haughton, 2011, p. 317; Carnwth and Dale-Harris, 2020, p. 8). The Conservatives did not return to structure planning but this maybe proposed in the repeatedly delayed Devolution White Paper (Riddell, 2020b; Simons, 2020a; Young, 2020).

Duty to Cooperate (DtC): Introduced in the Localism Act as a mechanism to try to ensure that LPAs work together on strategic matters when preparing a local plan (Boddy and Hickman, 2018; Grekos, 2020). Although often accused of being a 'weak' duty, several LPAs, such as Tonbridge and Malling, Wealden, St Albans, Sevenoaks and the West of England Joint Spatial Plan, have failed at Examination through not properly explaining development locations or housing needs with the DtC being vital in justifying Green Belt release (Lainton, 2019; Marrs, 2019a; MHCLG, 2019b, p. 40; Kochan, 2020b). It is due to be scrapped by the Planning White Paper but it is unclear what will replace it (MHCLG, 2020a, p. 20; Riddell, 2020b).

Joint Local/Strategic Plans: Without statutory strategic planning, some LPAs are voluntary coming together to develop plans – some include 'fully' joint plans with detailed allocations, such as the Plymouth and South West Devon Joint Local Plan, South Worcestershire Development Plan and Gloucester, Cheltenham and Tewkesbury Joint Core Strategy whilst others are more strategic, including broad development locations, like the South Essex Strategic Plan and, until recently, the Greater Exeter Strategic Plan and West of England Plan (Branson, 2019a; Goode, 2019c).

Raymond Unwin: (1863-1940) An architect who, alongside Barry Parker, worked on Rowntree's garden village, New Earswick, Hampstead Garden Suburb and Letchworth Garden City (Hall, 2014, pp. 59, 106). As a follower of Howard, Unwin was the leading figure in calls for a green belt around London for recreation in the inter-war period (Hall, 1973b, p. 55; Miller, 1992, p. 200).

Sir Patrick Abercrombie: (1879-1957) The leading planner of his generation who founded the Council for the Preservation of Rural England (CPRE) in 1926 (Wannop and Cherry, 1994, p. 38; Whitehand, 2001). Abercrombie developed several regional plans, including the famous County of London Plan (1943) and Greater London Plan (1944), which fused together the concept of the Green Belt and new towns (Hall *et al.*, 1973a, pp. 49–55; Roosmalen, 1997, pp. 258–260; Amati and Freestone, 2015).

Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE): A leading conservation charity which, with over 40,000 members, has fought a 'ceaseless war' against 'sprawl' since 1926 (Wannop and Cherry, 1994, p. 35; Amati and Yokohari, 2003, p. 321; CPRE, 2018). CPRE is regularly involved in planning, especially protecting the Green Belt, with the media often covering its high profile national campaigns whilst its regional branches campaign on specific developments (Amati, 2008, p. 2).

Ebenezer Howard: (1850-1928) A Hansard writer but largely remembered as the leading thinker and advocate for Garden Cities, set out in his book *Tomorrow: A Peaceful Path to Real Reform* (1898), which was reprinted as *Garden Cities of Tomorrow* (1902) (Howard, 1946, pp. 44–48; Manns, 2014, p. 3). In 1899, he founded the *Garden City Association*, now known as the Town and Country Planning Association (TCPA) (Hall, 1973a, p. 82, 2014, p. 190).

Garden Cities: Howard recognised the benefits of cities alongside rural areas which were brought together in his garden city concept (Hall, 2014, p. 98). Garden cities would have non-polluting industries employing local people, be economically self-sufficient through purchasing land at low agricultural prices and then recuperating the expense through rents, an abundance of greenspace for recreation and agriculture in a surrounding green 'belt' (Howard, 1946, pp. 47–55, 2003, p. 191). When it reached 32,000 people, a new garden city would be built, separated by this 'belt', allowing for planned, 'cellular growth' rather than a fixed spatial 'blueprint' (Hall *et al.*, 1973a, p. 389; Elson, 1986, p. 3). Howard's vision came to fruition at Letchworth (1903) and Welwyn (1920).

New Towns: Following Howard's garden city concept, Abercrombie planned for eight new towns in a 'necklace' around London in the *Greater London Plan* with populations of 60,000 (Wannop and Cherry, 1994, p. 38; Hall, 2014, p. 216). In 1946, Lord Reith was appointed the Chair of a Commission which examined how new towns should be built and concluded that, like the BBC, new towns should be outside local government control and funded by the Treasury purchasing land at agricultural value (Roosmalen, 1997, p. 264; Hall, 2012, pp. 64–68). Following the 1946 New Towns Act, 14 New Towns were designated by 1950 with 32 designated in total (Cherry, 1996, p. 153). New Towns were home to 2.5 million people around the country by 1990 (Ward, 2005, p. 330).

Green Belt/Green Belts/green belt: Throughout the thesis capitalises 'Green Belt' where it refers to the legally designated Green Belt following the 1938 and 1947 Acts. For the ideas surrounding green belts before this time, the general concept, and green belts internationally, it is spelt using lower case. Technically, there are 'Green Belts' rather than it being a single entity, *the* Green Belt, but the *policy* is still invariably referred to as the Green Belt so this thesis uses this rendering.

Exceptional Circumstances/Very special circumstances: The acceptable circumstances in which land is released from the Green Belt for development in appeals or local plans (Watson, 2019). Housing need of itself is not a sufficient exceptional circumstance but it is often combined with the need to take neighbours unmet need, like the Guildford/South Oxfordshire Local Plans, and the shortage of particular types of housing, such as the appeal in 2018 for Axa's retirement village in West Malling (Mellor, 2018; Marrs, 2019b; Young, 2019c, p. 2; Lowe, 2020). Historically, policy has not explicitly specified what 'exceptional' circumstances are for releasing land for housing (Morrison, 2010, p. 156) although it became clearer in NPPFII (MHCLG, 2018a, pp. 40–41) which outlined that an 'exceptional' circumstance for housing is when plans have explored 'all other reasonable options for meeting its need for development…a) makes as much use as possible of brownfield sites and underutilised land; b) optimises the density of development…including whether policies promote a significant uplift in density standards in town and city centres and other locations well served by public transport; and c) has been informed by discussions with neighbouring authorities about some of the identified need for development, as demonstrated through the Statement of Common Ground'.

Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI): Founded in 1914 as the Town Planning Institute, the RTPI is the professional institute representing planners with over 25,000 members (Kenny, 2019c, p. 6).

Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG)/Housing Minister/Secretary of State for Housing/Secretary of State for Communities: This Department has had numerous names including the Ministry of Housing and Local Government (1951-1970) before being subsumed into the Department of Environment (1970-1997), which was renamed the Department for the Environment, Transport and the Regions (1997-2001) (Cherry, 1996). In 2001, the Environment and Transport/Planning responsibilities were divided up so it became the Department for Transport, Local Government and the Regions (2001-2002), part of the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister under John Prescott (2002-2006), then renamed Department for Communities and Local Government (2006-2018) before being again renamed the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government in 2018 (Moor, 2010; Marshall, 2020). The Housing Minister has direct responsibility for housing and planning and is (currently) Christopher Pincher whilst the Secretary of State, Robert Jenrick, has overall responsibility for the Ministry (Boddy and Hickman, 2020). The Ministry is responsible for the formulation and maintenance of national planning policy, including the Green Belt, and has scope, especially following the Housing and Planning Act 2016, for the 'calling in' and determining appeals and can place 'holding directions' on local plans (Boddy and Hickman, 2020, p.

31). There have been 10 Housing Ministers in the last 10 years, reflecting the Ministry 'low' status among the Whitehall Departments, but this has caused uncertainty in the planning/development industry (Young, 2019a).

5 Year Housing Land Supply (5YHLS): This is a requirement, introduced in the NPPF (DCLG, 2012, p. 12), for LPAs to demonstrate a 5 years' worth of 'deliverable' land supply for housing.

Housing Delivery Test (HDT): Introduced in 2018, this monitors the delivery of housing in a LPA with sanctions, including a larger housing requirement, if the test is 'failed' (Goode, 2018, p. 1, 2019f, pp. 3–4; Bradley, 2020b, p. 11).

Appeal: This takes place when an applicant feels that an LPA has not acted unfairly/not in accord with national planning policy and where the LPA lacks a 5YHLS. An appeal is determined by an independent Planning Inspectorate Inspector (Goode, 2019f, p. 6; Bradley, 2020b, pp. 7–8).

Planning Inspectorate: This is an independent, quasi-judicial body which makes decisions on appeals and local plans, based upon national planning policy, on behalf on the Housing Secretary (Boddy and Hickman, 2018, 2020).

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF): NPPFI was introduced in 2012 and reduced over 1,300 pages of planning guidance into one document just 65 pages long (DCLG, 2012, p. ii; Raynsford Review, 2018b, p. 25). Its 'golden thread' of the 'presumption in favour of sustainable development' led to it being widely critiqued as too pro-development (DCLG, 2012, p. 4; Upton, 2019; Bradley, 2020b, 2020a). NPPFII was introduced in 2018, updated in 2019 although, with the Government's Planning White Paper, it is due to be updated again (MHCLG, 2018b, 2019b; Simons, 2020a).

Viability Testing: NPPFI stressed the need to 'provide competitive returns to a willing land owner and developer' (DCLG, 2012, pp. 12, 40) so viability testing involves testing whether planning obligations detrimentally affect a development schemes profitability (McAllister, 2017, 2019).

Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL): A tariff levied on new development with the charge varying according to the type and size of development (Crosby and Wyatt, 2015; Crook and Whitehead, 2019). Viability considerations mean that many LPAs cannot charge CIL and the Planning White Paper proposes its abolition and replacement with an Infrastructure Levy (Ferm and Raco, 2020; MHCLG, 2020a, p. 22).

Section 106: Legally binding obligations between LPAs and developers attached to planning permissions to secure 'planning gain' (Crook and Whitehead, 2019, p. 369). They were introduced in the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and can be financial and non-financial, such as conditions on the build out rate (Rydin, 2011, p. 65; Cullingworth *et al.*, 2015).

West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA): Established in 2016 as consisting of the councils which formed the former West Midlands County (WMCA, 2019). It is led by the Conservative Andy Street.

West of England Combined Authority (WECA)/West of England Joint Spatial Plan: This proposed Plan covered the sub-region (four authorities - North Somerset, South Gloucestershire, Bristol and Bath and North East Somerset) (WECA, 2019). However, it ran into difficulties with the Inspectorate and has been withdrawn (Branson, 2019a; Lainton, 2019; Marrs, 2019a). There is WECA (2019), which has strategic planning powers, although North Somerset is not a member (Goode, 2019c).

Holding Direction: A 'Holding Direction', issued by the Secretary of State, prevents an LPA from adopting a local plan to give the Ministry of Housing time to scrutinise it (Boddy and Hickman, 2018, p. 213, 2020, p. 31). Examples include the South Oxfordshire, Bradford and Birmingham Local Plans (Carpenter, 2016a; Dewar, 2016; Johnston, 2017a).

Land Value Capture: This involves taxing the increase in land values flowing from the granting of planning permission (Crook *et al*, 2016; Ryan-Collins *et al*, 2017; Crook and Whitehead, 2019, p. 359). The Development Charge, introduced by Labour in 1947, was levied at 100% but was repealed by the Conservatives in 1952 (Blundell, 1993, p. 4). Labour reintroduced a land tax with the Land Commission Act 1967, which was levied at 40%, but this was again repealed by the Conservatives in 1971 (Catney and Henneberry, 2019, p. 345). Finally, Labour re-introduced a land tax with the Community Land Act 1975 and Development Land Tax Act 1976 which were repealed by the Thatcher Governments (Blundell, 1993, p. 8). Since then, successive Governments have relied on planning gain rather than a land tax (Catney and Henneberry, 2019). Many reports across the political spectrum alongside academic studies have described land value uplift as skewed in favour of landowners (For example: Bentley, 2017; Monbiot *et al.*, 2019; Bradley, 2020b; Ferm and Raco, 2020) although other academics have stressed the difficulties in capturing land value (Crook *et al*, 2016) demonstrating the issue's complexity.

Rural Exception Sites: Usually small scale sites in rural areas for affordable housing for people with a 'local' connection (Sturzaker, 2010, p. 1012). They were included in the NPPF (DCLG, 2012, p. 15).

Planning and Geographical Theory: 'Planning' theory can be broadly categorised as theorising the *management* of space, especially land and property (Barry *et al.*, 2018; Shepherd, 2018; Inch and Shepherd, 2019), whereas 'geographical' theory is concerned with the wider theorisation of space with these theoretical disciplines inseparably linked (Massey, 1994, 2001).

Planning Committee: Most planning applications are directly decided by officers, professional planners employed by an LPA, under devolved responsibility. However, many larger, more controversial applications are voted on by democratically elected councillors sitting on the Planning Committee on the advice and 'recommendation' of officers (based upon their professional expertise, evidence and national planning policy) (Tait and Campbell, 2000; Raynsford Review, 2018a, p. 38).

Windfall Sites: These are developable sites coming onto the market which were not predicted by the local plan (Wenban-Smith, 2018, p. 7).

Professor Alan Wenban-Smith: A well-known, retired local authority planner and statistical expert on household projections in the West Midlands who has published widely and wrote Reports for CPRE critiquing the GL Hearn Report (See: Wenban-Smith, 2017a, 2017b, 2018).

GL Hearn Greater Birmingham HMA Strategic Growth Study: A study jointly commissioned by LPAs in the West Midlands conurbation, which was based upon their household projections and conducted an 'area of search' on sites which could be used for development, including in the Green Belt (GL Hearn, 2018, p. 21).

Housing Targets: Under the RSSs, targets were 'given' to the regions by central government and cascaded to LPAs (Allmendinger and Haughton, 2012; Best, 2019). The time and effort involved in 'allowing' councils to set their 'own' housing targets under the localism agenda led the Government to develop Standard Method I and II for calculating housing need based on affordability. There have been numerous problems with these including that it reduced the housing figures for many

(ambitious) Northern/urban LPAs whilst increasing them in the South East/shires (Garlick, 2018; Geoghegan, 2018b; Young, 2020). The political backlash against Standard Method II led to the Government tweaking the Method to increase housing need in cities (Simons, 2020a).

Options: Where a landowner and housebuilder reach an agreement to share the profits of development on land if it receives planning permission (Ward, 2005, p. 333).

Meriden Gap: An area of the West Midlands Green Belt which separates Birmingham and Coventry and is roughly bounded by Knowle, Corley Moor, Berkswell and Hampton-in-Arden. It is one of the wealthiest areas of the West Midlands (Law, 2000; see Figure 23).

Green Belt 'Swaps': This 'give and take' approach involves adding land to the Green Belt, which is often at the outer boundaries or more ecologically valuable, to compensate for land, usually at the urban edge, being used for development (Gunn, 2007, p. 595; Healey, 2007; Morrison, 2010, p. 160).

NIMBYism (Not In My Back Yard): A pejorative term used to describe someone who recognises the general need for a controversial land use, i.e. housing, waste treatment etc., but opposes it in their own local area (Burningham *et al*, 2006; Inch, 2012; DeVerteuil, 2013).

'Growth Area 6': A famous growth area identified in the 1964 South East Study roughly bounded by Reading, Basingstoke, Aldershot and Bracknell (Wannop and Cherry, 1994, p. 57).

Professor Paul Cheshire: An academic economist at LSE and the leading proponent of the economic line of argument which critiques the Green Belt (Cheshire, 2013, 2014a, 2014b, 2014c)**.**

Policy Exchange/Jack Airey: An influential centre-right think tank established in 2002 (Haughton and Allmendinger, 2015). It has published reports critical of the planning system, such as *Rethinking The Planning System* (2020), authored by its Head of Housing, Jack Airey (For example: Airey, 2017; Airey *et al*, 2018; Airey and Blakeway, 2019; Airey and Doughty, 2020). Airey is now the chief Planning and Housing Advisor at 10 Downing Street and was reported to be highly influential in the Planning White Paper (Quinn, 2020).

Letwin Review: Established by the previous Prime Minister, Theresa May, and Chancellor, Philip Hammond, in the 2017 Autumn Budget and led by Sir Oliver Letwin (a former MP) who reported in October 2018 (Donnelly, 2018a, 2018b). The Review, which was informed by a panel of experts, investigated the accusation of 'land banking' by focusing on a number of large sites and found that average build out from start to complete was 15.5 years (Letwin, 2018a, p. 9, 2018b, p. 8).

Greater Manchester Spatial Framework (GMSF): A Framework produced on behalf of the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA), led by the Labour Mayor Andy Burnham (Haughton, 2017; Bradley, 2019a, 2019b). The first draft was published in 2016 but its proposals to release land from the Green Belt for residential and commercial development were highly controversial (Haughton *et al.*, 2016; Young, 2016; Hodson *et al.*, 2020). A revised version was released in 2019 but it was still controversial so, despite cutting Green Belt releases by 60% in the latest draft (2020), Stockport recently voted to leave the GMSF (Donnelly, 2020a; McEwan, 2020).

The London Plan: A strategic plan produced by the Greater London Authority (GLA) – the first Plan was published in 2004 (Townsend, 2019; Kochan, 2020a). The current Plan was in a complicated stalemate with the GLA Mayor, Sajid Khan, opposed to any Green Belt review but the Planning Inspectorate's Examiners (Barrett *et al*, 2019), in their Report, stated that the Plan needed to commit

to a Review. Jenrick, the Housing Secretary, wrote to Khan instructing him to adopt the Inspectors recommendations although Jenrick subsequently withheld the requirement for a Green Belt Review before the Plan is adopted (Riddell, 2020a; Wright, 2020).

Planning White Paper/*Planning For The Future*: Published in August 2020, the White Paper proposes the largest overhaul of the planning system since 1947 (MHCLG, 2020a, p. 6). It centres on digitalising and modernising the system through frontloading consultation and streamlining local plans (For critical debate, see: Ellis, 2020; Goode, 2020; Lynn *et al.*, 2020; Simons, 2020; Young, 2020).

Permitted Development Rights (PDRs): PDRs permit the change of use, alteration/demolition and reconstruction of a building without planning permission if basic conditions are met (Bakers and Parker, 2018; Holman *et al*, 2018). They apply to converting office buildings into residential, an upward extension of two storeys in residential properties, agricultural buildings and allow shops to convert to other uses (Class E) (Madeddu and Clifford, 2020). At the time of writing, there is a consultation on allowing buildings used for 'Commercial, Business and Service' to be converted into residential (MHCLG, 2020b, p. 3; Ricketts, 2020, p. 2). There have always been PDRs in planning but their extension since 2013 marks an unprecedented period of deregulation and they been widely criticised for allowing poor living conditions regarding natural daylight, indoor/outdoor space and for not contributing to planning gain although minimum space standards have been recently introduced (Clifford *et al.*, 2018, 2019, 2020).

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1.   Background

The Green Belt is probably England's most well-known, iconic and longstanding planning policy, associated with planning 'heroes', such as Ebenezer Howard, Raymond Unwin and Sir Patrick Abercrombie and implemented in the 1947 Planning Act (Amati and Yokohari, 2007, p. 311). It has been very successful in its overall aim of shaping development patterns through restricting urban 'sprawl' and commands enduring and widespread political and popular support[1] (Elson, 1986, p. 251; MHCLG, 2019b, p. 40).

However, with England's deepening housing crisis, it is increasingly 'under attack' as a policy (Amati and Taylor, 2010, p. 143). Although the policy is criticised by housebuilders and some planners (i.e. Griffiths, 2017; Baker, 2018), academic critiques stretch back to Hall's (1973) seminal work, *The Containment of Urban England* (*Containment*), with attacks recently spearheaded and most critical by economists, especially Paul Cheshire (for example: Cheshire and Buyuklieva, 2019). The principal argument of the 'economic' or 'land supply' school of reasoning is that the Green Belt restricts the land supply for residential development when and where demand for housing is highest at the rural-urban fringe and, therefore, it should be abolished or significantly reformed (Cheshire, 2013; Hilber, 2015). However, the Green Belt still enjoys widespread support and is often defended as sacrosanct with vigorous campaigns by groups nationally and locally, especially the Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE) (Amati, 2008; CPRE, 2018). Their defence centres on its environmental and sustainability value through restricting urban 'sprawl' whilst, it is argued, that the housing crisis is

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[1] The study focuses principally throughout on the Green Belt in England as those in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland function slightly differently due to political devolution (Warren and Clifford, 2005; Lloyd and Peel, 2007).

caused mainly by wider factors and can largely be solved through brownfield development (the 'conservationist argument') (Bramley, 2019; Bradley, 2020b).

Notwithstanding the Green Belt's prominence as a policy and inherently geographical nature (in terms of its spatial *purpose* and widespread geographical *extent*), it remains under-researched and under-theorised in the academic literature (Elson, 1986; Sturzaker and Mell, 2016; Mace, 2018). Whilst some literature, especially Marxian, has focused largely on city-centres and inner-cities and other literature on the rural, there has been a lack of focus upon the rural-urban fringe (Gallent *et al*, 2006a; Scott *et al.*, 2013). This is the research 'gap' that this thesis aims to meet, especially as the Green Belt provides rich theoretical insights for conceptualising space and how it is governed. The study also aims to move forwards the broader, public Green Belt debate, which is often polarised, particularly with England's severe and deepening housing 'crisis'.

1.2.   Shape and Scope

The researcher's interest in the policy began and grew with the question - If the Green Belt is the principal cause of the housing crisis (the 'economic school' argument), why does it still command widespread popular and political support and has not been abolished or significantly reformed[2]? This led into an interest in community opposition to housebuilding and the political nature of planning to find potential answers (Sturzaker, 2010). In this thesis, the researcher was particularly interested in the views of planners on the policy because they play a key role in formulating and implementing planning policy yet are often 'caught in the middle' in the popular Green Belt debate between 'economic' and 'conservationist' arguments with their voices arguably not heard enough (Mace, 2018; Goode, 2019a). The study is therefore a confluence of these academic, policy and practitioner interests with the Green Belt being a very relevant topic with crucial implications for policy and practice *and* an inherently spatial object of study so is ripe for theorising space. Indeed, the study

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[2] The researcher studied Economics at A-Level and then Economic Geography modules at undergraduate.

aims to update Hall's work through being case study and geographically based but also more theoretically focused.

Firstly, the study's golden thread is the importance of space and, as the Green Belt debate has often centred upon London and the South East (which arguably has a distinctive housing market and transport infrastructure (Edwards, 2016; RTPI, 2016c)), this thesis evaluates the effectiveness of *regional* Green Belts. The West Midlands is used as an 'exemplifying case' of the challenges of managing a strategic policy under the 'localism agenda' (Allmendinger and Haughton, 2011, p. 317; Bryman, 2012, p. 51). Secondly, although the Green Belt debate is often ideological, even economic models struggle to disentangle its specific effects on house prices and the increasing recognition of the socially constructed nature of housing justifies this project's more qualitative approach to housing and (planning) policy analysis (Bramley, 1993; Munro, 2018). Consequently, its empirical backbone is the views of planners and planning stakeholders as experts to evaluate the (complex) relationship between the Green Belt and housing crisis and to help move the debate constructively forward. Thirdly, many of the economic studies arguably do not take sufficient account of planning's political nature as recommending politically unfeasible proposals, like abolishing or significantly reforming the policy (Hilber and Vermeulen, 2014), so this study aims to develop policies which are cognisant of the politics of planning (Cherry, 1982; Breheny, 1997). Fourthly, in contrast to practitioner studies, the research draws upon *theoretical insights* in analysing the policy whilst simultaneously seeking to refine broader planning and geographical theory based upon the study's empirical data (Yeung, 1997; Parker *et al*, 2015, p. 520). It uses a critical realist and qualitatively led approach within an overall mixed-methods framework as recognising the spatial interconnectedness of the national, regional and local, especially in the centralised English planning system, alongside the need to triangulate because of the multi-faceted nature of the Green Belt and the housing crisis (Modell, 2009; Pike *et al.*, 2018).

1.3.   Research Propositions and Questions

The study developed evaluable theoretical propositions but these propositions were grounded in the policy analysis literature as well as planning/geographical theory (see Chapter 4)[3] (Marsh and McConnell, 2010; Palfrey *et al*, 2012). Firstly, working on the proposition that the Green Belt is the principal cause of the housing crisis (the economic school argument (Cheshire, 2019)), it was hypothesised that it is primarily supported by homeowners to maintain their property values. This drew upon a neo-Marxian framework whereby the Green Belt can be conceptualised as the ultimate arena of contestation in the 'intra-capitalist' conflict between homeowners, seeking to maximise their capital (house prices) through protecting the policy, and housebuilders desiring a more flexible Green Belt to maximise their capital accumulation through (more) housebuilding (Foglesong, 1986, p. 22; Lake, 1993, p. 88). Moving theoretically 'upstream' (Soja, 2010), if this was the case then planning outcomes would be *significantly* skewed in favour of homeowners and there are uneven power relations in the planning system perpetuated by the Green Belt (Short *et al*, 1987; Rydin and Pennington, 2000). Moving theoretically downstream, the project analysed *how* power is exercised by campaigners drawing principally on Lukes' (2005, p. 14) *three dimensions of power* to elucidate the often more subtle ways that power is exercised at different spatial scales through discourse and imagination.

However, this overarching theoretical generalisation about power in planning depends upon the central research question about the extent to which the Green Belt is the principal cause of the housing crisis and how far it needs reforming. This question follows Hall's (1973, 1974) approach in *Containment* and other academic and practitioner work on social and spatial justice which analyses policy in terms of who 'gains' and 'loses' (Kiernan, 1983, p. 84; Sandercock and Dovey, 2002, p. 152).

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[3] The word 'proposition' is used throughout rather than 'hypothesis' because 'hypothesis' is usually used in the physical/natural sciences as a statement which can be empirically 'proved/disproved' whereas this project examines more general 'propositions' (Mason, 2018).

Moving from theory to practice, if the proposition was 'proved' regarding the Green Belt being the main cause of the housing crisis, developing recommendations on how it could be *significantly* reformed would be imperative, based on what is politically feasible and a recognition of the uneven power and social/spatial relations (Crook and Whitehead, 2019). The thesis therefore empirically explored and tested these crucial theoretical and policy propositions.

1.4. Significance of the Research: The Housing Crisis

The focus of this research upon housing is particularly poignant and policy relevant because the housing crisis is a longstanding but increasingly pressing 'wicked problem' with housing being the most significant driver of inter- and intragenerational inequality in England and top of the domestic political agenda with the Government's 'target' of 300,000 new homes annually (Neuman, 2011, p. 154; Lund, 2019, p. 36). As highlighted in Chapters 3 and 6, it is a multi-faceted problem thus meriting the term *'housing crisis'* rather than just *'affordability crisis*' although it is centred on affordability with this thesis focusing particularly on house prices (Gallent, 2019b). It is argued that the high level and rising nature of prices is increasingly pricing people, especially younger people, out of homeownership and forcing them into rented accommodation (Lund, 2019). For example, in 2017, 30 year olds were only half as likely to own their homes as baby boomers at the same age, four times more likely to rent whilst homeowners, during the 1960s/70s, spent around 5% of their income on mortgages whereas private renters today spent 36% (Taylor, 2015, p. 38; Corlett and Judge, 2017, pp. 4–5). The term 'housing crisis' is therefore used throughout the thesis as describing a serious problem which it is very important to resolve. Consequently, research that seeks to solve the housing crisis is very important but a central pillar of this thesis is that recommendations need to be politically and socially feasible alongside being theoretically derived and evidence-based due to planning's political nature (Crook and Whitehead, 2019). This is especially important with the Green Belt debate being so polarised (Mace, 2018).

1.5. Structure

After this introduction, there are two Chapters (2 and 3) of literature review on the Green Belt before a 'bridge' Chapter (4) on theorising the Green Belt which draws upon the preceding literature review Chapters and then informs the methodology (5). Chapter 2 is on the Green Belt's history and traces how it gained primacy as England's most longstanding and popular planning policy despite regular waves of deregulation and neo-liberalism (Prior and Raemaekers, 2007; Mace, 2018). Chapter 3 is analytical as exploring the economic literature on the relationship between the Green Belt and housing crisis alongside examining the Green Belt's purpose/objectives, spatial extent, and alternative policies internationally. Given the paucity of theoretical research on the Green Belt, the theoretical frame Chapter (4) critically explores the different ways Green Belt can be theorised with a focus on the neo-Marxian literature and power and politics in planning. The methodological Chapter (5) develops the analytical frame by translating the working theoretical propositions into a research strategy revolving around a mixed methods approach which is qualitatively led. It is anchored around spatial scales, national and regional, and is informed by the ontological and epistemological commitments of critical realism alongside the aforementioned pragmatic considerations (Yeung, 1997; Brannen, 2005; Bryman, 2006b).

The second, empirical 'half' of the thesis is divided into four broad themes: Green Belt and the Housing Crisis (6); Community Opposition (7); Protestors and Politics (8) and Governance (9). The housing Chapter (6) critically evaluates the extent to which the Green Belt is responsible for the housing crisis and explores its reform (covering practical, environmental, and economic feasibility). The community Chapter (7) examines why campaigners and the public support the Green Belt and oppose housebuilding generally thereby developing recommendations on how these concerns can be addressed (social feasibility). The politics Chapter (8) interrogates the crucial issue of power in planning, including how campaigners attempt to exercise power and the power of discourse and

imagination in planning (political feasibility). These empirical Chapters culminate in the governance Chapter (9) which develops recommendations on the need for strategic planning to address many of the issues raised in the thesis. These themed Chapters draw out theoretical and policy/practitioner implications, based upon the data, and reflect Breheny's (1997, p. 209) argument on the importance of social and political feasibility in planning so the thesis's recommendations has relevance for the broader planning system and housing generally. The conclusion (10) draws together the empirical Chapters and develops wider implications for theory and practice (Table 1).

Table 1 - PhD Structure		
PhD Section	Chapters	Themes
Introduction	1. Introduction	1. Background 2. Shape and Scope 3. Research Propositions and Questions 4. Significance 5. Structure
Literature Review	2. History	1. Pre-1945: Context, Ideas and Legislation 2. Post-1945: The Containment of Urban England
	3. Form, Function and Evaluation	1. Form 2. Function 3. Evaluation 4. International Comparisons/Alternatives to the Green Belt
	4. Theoretical Themes	1. Theoretical Frames of Interest Groups in Planning 2. Analytical Framework 3. Power and Politics
Methodology	5. Methodology	1. Research Aim(s)/Questions/Propositions 2. Research Objectives/Philosophy/Strategy 3. Methods and Techniques 4. Case Study Approach 5. Other Qualitative Data Techniques 6. Quantitative Data Techniques 7. Ethical Values and Implications 8. Positionality and Power 9. Limitations and Problems
Empirical Chapters: Results, Analysis and Discussion	6. Housing Crisis & Policy Reform	1. Responsibility of the Green Belt for the housing crisis. 2. Green Belt Reform and Principal Policy Recommendations.
	7. Conceptualising Community Opposition	1. Conceptualising why Communities Oppose Development (Views of Planners and Campaigners). 2. Interactions Between Planners and Campaigners. 3. Rebuilding Trust in Planning: Further Steps.
	8. Power, Politics and Planning	1. Tactics: Protests and Politics of the Green Belt. 2. The 'Politics' and 'politics' of Planning 3. Lukes' Three Dimensions of Power 4. Discourse, Vision and Evidence

	9. Conceptualising Governance and Green Belts	1. Conceptualising Governance and Green Belt 2. Historical Challenges 3. Current Issues 4. Green Belts and Governance: Future Steps
Conclusion	10. Conclusion	1. Planning and Geographical Theory 2. Planning Policy 3. Planning Practice 4. Final Remarks and Further Research

Chapter 2: The History of the Green Belt

2.1. Introduction

The Green Belt's history is vitally important for understanding both its temporal longevity and current widespread spatial coverage. This chapter takes a historical institutionalist approach with Mace (2018, p. 5) helpfully arguing that the Green Belt can be characterised as an 'institution' having 'staying power' as a policy spanning over 70 years, a lobby group in its favour (CPRE) while it is inextricably tied to, and popularly perceived as the guardian of the English countryside. 'Path dependency' has been highlighted by Martin (2010, p. 1) as vitally important in explaining present structures whilst Valler and Phelps (2018, p. 1) and Sorensen (2015, p. 15) have applied 'historical institutionalism' in planning through exploring how the past 'frames' and constrains future trajectories. Conceptualising the Green Belt policy as an institution and exploring its history through the lens of historical institutionalism not only gives an important historical perspective and context but helpfully highlights possibilities for future policy reform. The history until World War II is explored in three interrelated sections - a contextual history of urban growth, planning legislation and ideas on urban containment. The Green Belt can be located conceptually in the Industrial Revolution (Hall, 1973b) whilst the speed and extent of suburban growth in the inter-war period helped convert to ideas around Green Belts into legislation. The next section explores its history since WWII by weaving together contextual and planning history whilst the history of ideas surrounding its effectiveness since WWII is discussed in the Chapter 3. This chapter's central theme is to briefly chart the growth of British cities and the response to this in the Green Belt to try to manage this growth.

2.2. Historical Context Pre WWII – Urban Growth, Planning Legislation, and Ideas Surrounding Containment

A History of Urban 'Sprawl'

A key trend in the history of humanity has been the increasing concentration of population in urban areas (Harvey, 1989a, p. 3; Davis, 2015, p. 20). However, until the nineteenth century, the size of settlements was *generally* restricted largely by how far people could walk with towns/cities largely growing incrementally and slowly in an 'organic', unplanned way (Whitehand, 2001) (Figure 1):
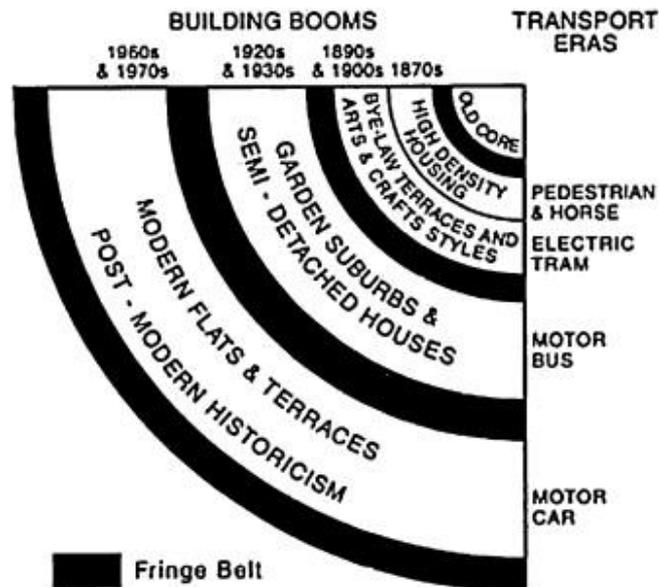
Figure 1 – The relationship between transport and urban from (From: Whitehand, 2001, p. 105)

The Industrial Revolution rapidly changed the form and function of cities ad transforming Britain from a 'prosperous agrarian society' to an 'immensely rich and powerful urban-industrial nation' with its population rapidly increasing from 9 million (m) (1801) to 32.5m (1901) (Hall *et al.*, 1973b, p. 93). As Table 2 demonstrates, the Revolution was particularly dramatic in Birmingham and the Black Country, this project's case study, with its rapid relative population increase and the 'heavy' nature of its industries (Goode, 2019a; O'Farrell, 2020). However, until WWI, London and other conurbation's housing growth was generally 'tentacular' or 'ribbon' following key transport routes (Hall *et al.*, 1973b, pp. 21, 83; Hall, 2002, pp. 23, 24).

Table 2 - Urban Population Change	1801	1851	1881	1911	% Growth: 1801-1911
Liverpool	82,000	376,000	611,000	746,000	810%
Manchester	75,000	303,000	393,585	714,000	852%
Birmingham	71,000	233,000	400,774	840,000	1084%
London	1,000,000	2,685,000	4,000,000	6,500,000	550%
From: Gracey, 1973, p. 78; Hall, 1998, 2002, p. 15.					

In the inter-war era, settlements spread 'outwards' at an unprecedented rate, especially in London and the West Midlands, with 'new' industries developing, like the motor-industry and General Electric (Amati and Taylor, 2010, p. 143). Electric trams, trolleybuses, the Underground and the halt system of railway stations spurred rapid suburban growth and created London's 'circular' urban form through 'filling in' the gaps between key arterial routes (between 1919 and 1939, London's population increased 0.33 times, from 6 to 8m, yet its urban area increased 5 times) (Hall *et al.*, 1973b, p. 83; Amati and Yokohari, 2007, p. 315). By the 1930s, 148,000ha of farmland nationally was being used annually for housing, over 100 properties were built each week just in Birmingham and 900,000 new homes constructed overall from 1921-1939 around London (Hall, 2002, p. 27; Manns, 2014, p. 10). This inter-war growth of suburbia alongside the Industrial Revolution generated ideas around the need for a green belt (Whitehand, 2001).

A History of Planning Legislation
Laissez-faire planning until World War I

Although there were largely unsuccessful attempts to restrict urban growth during in the Elizabethan, Stuart and Commonwealth eras, until the 1909 Planning Act there was little state management of land use with the Victorian Housing Acts largely focusing on housing conditions (Gracey, 1973, p. 391; Amati and Taylor, 2010, p. 143). Even the 1909 Act focused more on improving and regulating new development through garden suburbs and development plans rather than banning it outright (Oliveira, 2014, p. 359).

'Loose' planning in the inter-war period

Public Housing

The wartime Prime Minister, Lloyd-George, is widely believed to have promised 'homes fit for heroes' for soldiers returning from WWI so low-density council housing was often built in cottage estate style on public transport routes (Hall, 2014, pp. 76, 117). These estates often accommodated 'overspill' population from conurbations, such as Downham, St. Helier and Becontree (London) and Wythenshawe (Manchester) (Miller, 1992, pp. 183–184). Overall, 763,000 council houses were constructed between 1919-1934 – 69% of Manchester's total new homes and 47% of Birmingham's with 90% of Birmingham's council housing built being on greenfield land (West Midland Group, 1948, p. 166; Table 3). Assuming similar rates of greenfield development by the private sector, this had a tremendous impact on the countryside surrounding Birmingham.

Table 3 - Local Authority Construction of Housing in the Interwar Period			
Local Authority	Number of council houses constructed (1919- 1939)	Number of private houses constructed (1919- 1939)	Total Houses Built (1919- 1939)
Birmingham	50,268	54,536	104, 804
Manchester	21,979	35,762	57,741
From: West Midlands Group, 1948, p. 166; Hall *et al.*, 1973b, p. 84; Hall, 2002, p. 20			

Private Housing

This was also England's largest housebuilding boom with 1,810,000 homes privately constructed nationally between 1931-1939 with the proportion of urbanised land (in England and Wales) increasing from 6.7% to 8% from 1918-1939 (Thomas, 1963, p. 17). This was due to the availability and low price of land and there being multiple, family run housebuilders. Although there were some high-quality interwar developments, like Ealing Garden Suburb and Manor Pool (Harborne), the lack of planning, speed of construction and general poor quality architecture deepened popular fears about the countryside being 'swallowed up' leading to a growing conservation movement (Hall, 2014, p. 58).

Attempts to restrict urban growth in the inter-war period

Interwar Governments, which were mostly Conservative, were reluctant to interfere in property rights so the only way that a green belt could be established was through councils purchasing land to prevent development (Amati and Yokohari, 2003, 2006, p. 126). It was an expensive process and, after the Great Depression, there was neither the public money nor political will initially to implement it (Munton, 1983). Nevertheless, Surrey was becoming rapidly urbanised so that, in 1931, Parliament passed the Surrey Local Act giving the Council the power to purchase land. In 1932, this power was extended through the Town and Country Planning Act to Middlesex and Essex although little progress was made with only 4000 acres of land purchased between 1930 and 1934 (Amati and Yokohari, 2003, 2004, p. 436, 2007, p. 323).

In 1934, Herbert Morrison, a vocal advocate of green belts, was elected as the Labour Chairman of London County Council (LCC), so that, in 1935, the LCC Green Belt Scheme began whereby the Treasury, LCC and councils jointly funded land purchase where was a demonstrable need, i.e. for recreation (Amati and Yokohari, 2003, p. 436, 2004, p. 437, 2007, pp. 317–329). With LCC funding contributing £2 million towards the scheme, 68,000 acres of land around London were purchased by 1939, 19% of Unwin's proposed 'green girdle', despite huge development pressures (Amati and Yokohari, 2003, p. 6, 2004, p. 434; Figure 2).
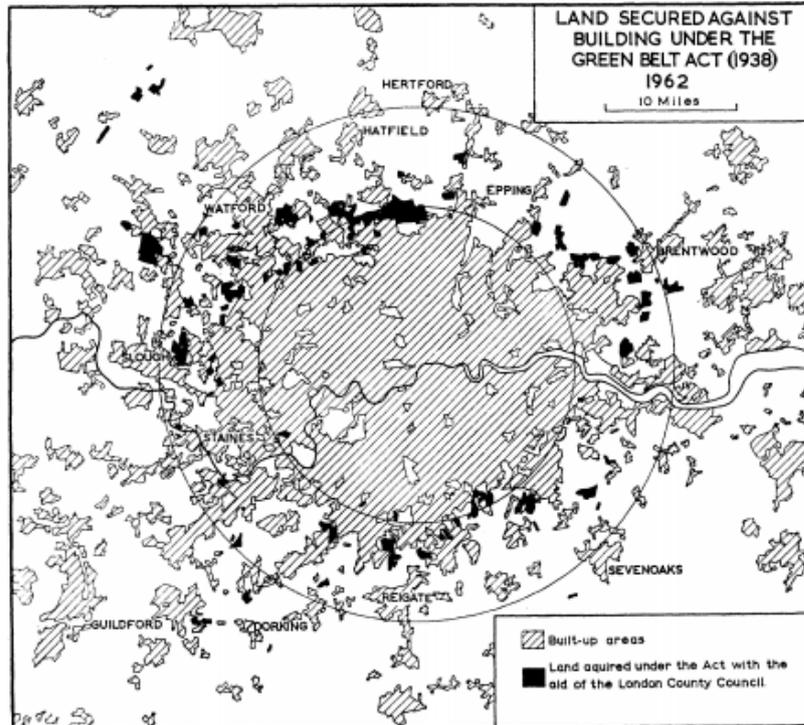
Figure 2 - Land purchased under the 1935 Act (Thomas, 1963, p. 18)

Amati and Yokohari (2004, p. 435, 2007, pp. 315–326) have explored the complex, non-linear process by which land was purchased including civil servants, landowners, campaign groups, 'gifts' of land and secret negotiations to reduce the land price. For example, Ockham Common, Surrey was suitable land for development but was 'gifted' to the Council for only £24,000 by its owner, Lady Lovelace (Amati and Yokohari, 2007, pp. 336–337). The 337 acre, Lambourne Hall, Essex, was too expensive for the Council to purchase at £105/acre so it was sterilised from development for £54/acre (Amati and Yokohari, 2007, p. 322). In Birmingham, the Council purchased the land owned by the Cadbury family in the Lickey Hills (West Midlands Group, 1948, p. 211).

In 1938, the Green Belt Act was passed which protected the land purchased since 1935 (Lloyd and Peel, 2007, p. 645; Shaw, 2007, p. 576). Although much smaller than the current Metropolitan Green Belt (MGB) and not forming a continuous 'ring', London for the first time had a Green Belt and, together with the Ribbon Development Act (1935), urban growth was more effectively restricted (Hall, 1973a, p. 386; Hall *et al.*, 1973b, p. 106). Moreover, council ownership of the land meant that it

could be used more effectively for recreation than the largely privately owned land of the post-war

Green Belt[4] (Sturzaker and Mell, 2016, p. 35).

2.3.   A History of Ideas: Key thinkers and ideas surrounding urban containment

Although Amati and Yokohari (2007, p. 311) have warned that the policy's history has been too

focused on 'planning heroes', the development of ideas is still invariably associated with key thinkers

(Hall, 2014). This section looks mainly at Howard, Unwin, and Abercrombie although the Green Belt's

current context and form/function is different to what they all envisaged.

Garden Cities of Tomorrow

The Green Belt can be located conceptually in the Industrial Revolution when thinkers started to give

serious consideration to restraining urban growth with the countryside being romantised by poets,

such as Hardy and the Arts and Crafts Movement alongside popular concern at urbanisation and the

poor quality of urban life (Miller, 1992, p. 189; Hall, 2014, p. 190). In 1905, Henrietta Barnett

complained that London was extending its 'long and generally unlovely arms' into the countryside

(Hall *et al.*, 1973b, p. 82). Birmingham was described, in 1902, as 'continuous roads and houses from

Aston on the east to Wolverhampton in the west…quite as much entitled to a single name as is

Greater London' although it was generally viewed as better planned than London (Hall, 2014, p. 96).

These factors influenced Howard who, in his famous *Garden Cities of Tomorrow* (1902) (1946, pp.

44), advocated for Garden Cities:

> '*To restore the people to…that beautiful land of ours…the very embodiment of Divine love to man…on its bosom we rest*'.

Hall (2014, p. 98) argued that Howard's genius was exemplified in the *Three Magnets Diagram* which

conceptually brought the rural and urban *together* (Figure 3):

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[4] By 1961, 27% of this purchased land was open space - much higher than the 3% of the current Metropolitan Green Belt which is publicly accessible (Thomas, 1963, p. 18; CPRE and Natural England, 2010, p. 2).
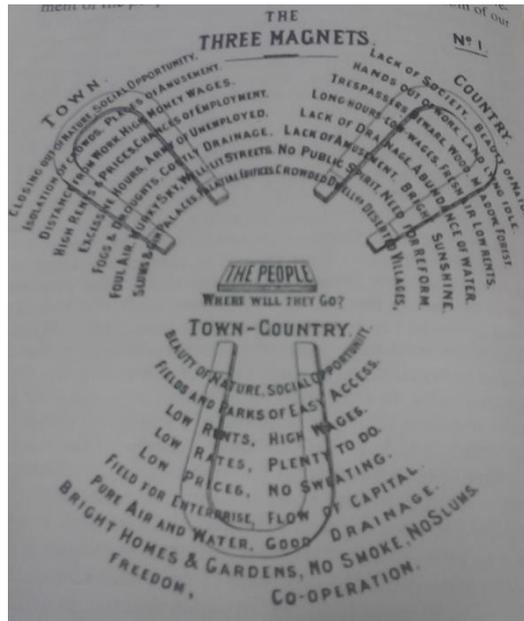
Figure 3 - Three Magnets Diagram (from Howard, 1946, p. 46, 48).

Howard (1946, pp. 47, 49) was troubled by the 'unholy separation of society and nature...Town and country must be married' but he differed from contemporaries in recognising the benefits of cities including 'high wages...tempting prospects of advancement...places of amusement'. Consequently, Howard did not advocate preventing urban growth *per se* but that it should be planned in a 'cellular' way through self-sufficient garden cities (Howard, 2003, pp. 8, 191). The settlement would be surrounded by a green belt or 'outer ring', country/agricultural 'belt' owned by the Garden City Corporation for 'large farms, small holdings, cow pasture' and people's recreational use (Howard, 1946, p. 55).

Howard's *Social Cities* diagram (Figure 4) in *Tomorrow: A Peaceful Path to Real Reform* (1898), which advocated the development of multiple garden cities to accommodate population growth, was not printed in *Garden Cities of Tomorrow* (1902) so, in a 'subtle yet profound transmogrification', Howard was misinterpreted by Abercrombie as advocating Garden Cities and green belts as an ideal '*end-state*' or 'fixed blueprint for the future' rather than a *dynamic, evolving process* (Keeble, 1971, p. 70; Hall, 1974, p. 42, 2014, p. 98). Consequently, Howard's ideas regarding green belts 'froze' and have proven 'incredibly resistant to change' as still revered as the 'first article of the planning creed',

despite being developed in a different era to even the Abercrombie Plan, with low land prices, fears

of rural depopulation and rapid future urban economic and population growth being excepted (Hall,

1973b, pp. 46, 107; Gant *et al*, 2011, p. 266). Nonetheless, Hall *et al.* (1973a, p. 71) contended, that it

is 'misleading to call it a green belt at all' because Howard proposed 'cluster development' rather

than Unwin's/Abercrombie's *continuous* Green Belt around *existing* conurbations.
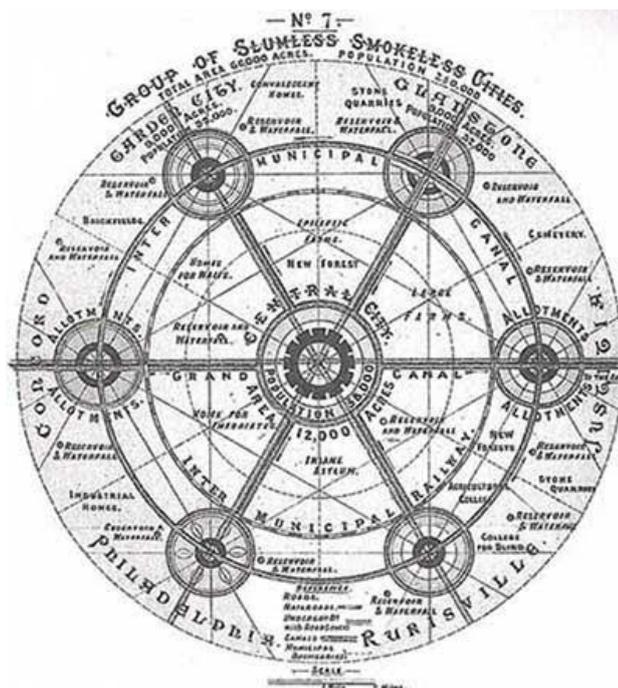
Figure 4 - Diagram 7 (https://bit.ly/3pRqPGU; from: Howard, 2003, p. 131).

Other Key Thinkers: Ashbee, Pepler and Aston Webb

There were other influential individuals, contemporary to Howard, involved in the London Society

which was a ferment of intellectual planning ideas (Table 4) (Hall, 2014, p. 190).

Table 4 - Other Key Thinkers/Documents	
C. Ashbee (Architect)	In 1894, London Survey Committee was established taking inspiration for green belts from the parkways of the City Beautiful Movement and Vienna's Ringstrasse. Influential on Howard and Unwin (1909, p. 242) who wrote 'in America and on the Continent…trams run along a belt of grass'.
Lord Meath, Head of the LCC; Sir George Pepler	Meath was inspired by the avenues of Boston/Chicago and Pepler called for a ¼ mile wide 'green girdle' around London.
William Bull, Head of LCC's *Parks and Open Spaces Committee*	Called for a 'circle of green sward and trees' ½ mile wide around London for transport, as in Europe, but Bull still proposed development beyond this green belt.
David Niven, Architect	In 1910, he called in the *Architectural Review* for an 'continuous garden city around London that would be a healthful zone'.

Aston Webb, Architect	Addressing the London Society in 1914, he claimed to have dreamt that there would be a 'belt of green all-round London' of 'open spaces' in 2014.
Development Plan of Greater London (1919)	Called for 'belts of green parkways' around London.
From: Whitehand, 2001, p. 49; Gilbert, 2004, pp. 97–102; Breiling and Ruland, 2008; Manns, 2014, pp. 6–10; Oliveira, 2014, pp. 360–362; Derbyshire, 2015, p. 2.	

Unwin and 'green girdles'

A key London Society figure and follower of Howard was Unwin who was the main advocate for

green belts in the inter-war period (Miller, 1992, p. 200). He argued in a book with Niven, *London of*

the Future (Webb, 1921), for a:

> *'Continuous Green Belt completely encircling London proper…To protect its inhabitants from disease, by providing fresh air, fresh fruit and vegetables, space for recreation and contact with…nature…such areas should be as quickly as possible reserved, and to a generous extent, to form a green belt.'* (Cited in Derbyshire, 2015, p. 7)

The interwar growth of London spurred further popular resistance, exemplified in Clough Williams-

Ellis's *England and the Octopus* (1928), with Unwin continuing to make his case for green belts. In

1929, the London Planning Committee was established to examine Unwin's recommendation for an

'agricultural belt' of 6 miles wide (Thomas, 1963, p. 16). Unwin argued for:

> *'A green belt or girdle…a background of open country…as near to the completely urbanised area of London as practical…[to]…provide a reserve supply of playing fields and other recreation areas and of public open spaces.'* (Cited in Manns, 2014, p. 12)

Nevertheless, despite the Second Report of the Committee being published (1933), its findings were

largely unheeded although a (form of) Green Belt had been established before Unwin's death in 1942

(Amati and Yokohari, 2007, p. 316). Indeed, Abercrombie (1944, p. 11), in the *Greater London Plan*,

wrote that it 'unhesitatingly adopted' Unwin's arguments for a 'continuous green background of

open country'.

Green Belts and New Towns Triumphant

Abercrombie translated Howard's and Unwin's ideas on green belts into a concrete plan. In 1941, he

was commissioned to plan for the post-war reconstruction of London and stipulated that he would

also plan for the Greater South East (Wannop and Cherry, 1994, pp. 35, 38; Whitehand, 2001, p. 49).

There was consensus, especially after the Blitz, that the decentralisation of the cities was required alongside new towns and green belts. Hall (*et al.*, 1973a, pp. 55–56) located Abercrombie in the genteel, Oxbridge educated circle governing post-war Britain who saw change as slow and adopted the paternalistic ethos of the 'experts' knowing best. Consequently, Abercrombie's Plans and the 1947 Act largely did not foresee the population/economic growth and mass car ownership of the post-war era with change viewed as controllable and manageable through planning and green belts (Hall, 2002, p. 108). Abercrombie (1944, p. 30) argued for 'decentralisation not growth' and that 'it is better to err on the side of being too restrictive' with Table 5 setting out the ideas in his plans:

Table 5 - Abercrombie Plans		
Plan	**Scope**	**Main ideas regarding the Green Belt**
County of London Plan 1943	Transport focused and proposed a series of orbital railways and roads.	'*To preserve a broad area of unspoilt country within easy access for London's inhabitants…primarily for agriculture with no further building other than that ancillary for farming…the Green Belt Ring, with its open lands and running streams used for recreative purposes, and acting as a barrier to the continuous expansion of London… A stretch of open country at the immediate edge of the unwieldy mass of building is imperative'.* [Towns in the Green Belt] '*will be greatly enhanced by their permanent setting in open surroundings, free from the menace of coalescence with one another in a drab sea of building*' (Forshaw and Abercrombie, 1943, p. 24).
Greater London Plan 1944	Focused on urban form. Proposed four key areas: **Inner Urban** (inner-city London) **Suburban** (inter-war London) **Green Belt** (no building) **Outer Country** (location of new towns) (Figure 5)	'*A gigantic Green Belt round built-up London…primarily for the recreation* [and]…*fresh food, and to prevent further continuous suburban outward growth…a careful line has been drawn round the largely built up sections…The most important need is the linking up of open spaces…there should be a pedestrian system of communications as efficient as that for the motor…the* [Green Belt] *should be controlled in such a way that landscaping, afforestation…full public access use maybe harmonised*' (Abercrombie, 1944, pp. 11–35, 109–111).
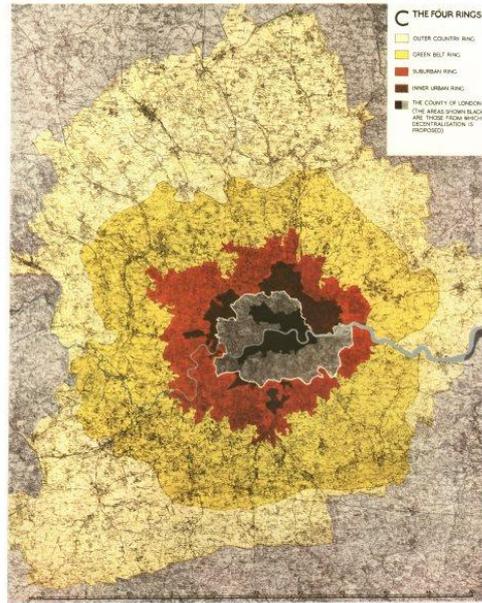
Figure 5 - London's Green Belt (the darker shade of yellow). From: https://bit.ly/38dmJTw, (Abercrombie, 1944, pp. 23, 30)

The key thread running through Abercrombie's plans was containing London's growth through a 5-7 mile wide Green Belt (Figure 5/6) (Hall *et al.*, 1973b, p. 51)). It would have a 'dual use' for agriculture *and* recreation whilst the *Greater London Plan* made provision for 125,000 people to be decentralised to peripheral, satellite LCC estates, like Harold Hill, alongside 'very limited expansion of those towns already in it' (Abercrombie, 1944, pp. 34–35, 111).

Legend
- Abercrombie's green belt boundary
- MGB
- GLA BOUNDARY
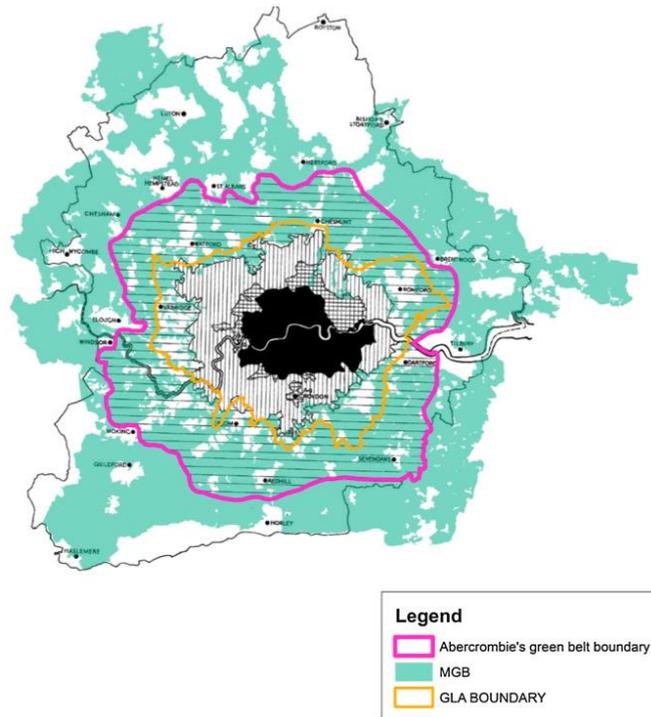
Figure 6 - Abercrombie's Green Belt compared to today's Green Belt (from Mace, 2018, p. 8)

The centrepiece of Abercrombie's Plans (1944, p. 78) was for 1-1.25 million people to be decentralised from London to a 'necklace' of 8 new towns (Figure 7) (Wannop and Cherry, 1994, p. 38; Hall, 2014, p. 216).
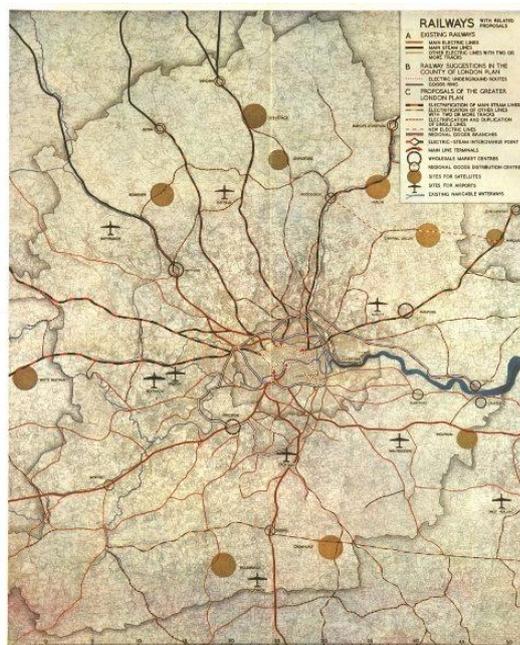
Figure 7 – The Location of New Towns (From: https://bit.ly/2Ln9maA, (Abercrombie, 1944, p. 78)).

Abercrombie's Plans were so influential that they remains the basis for the current London Plan, with its Green Belt protection, albeit that now, due to rising population, there is greater focus on urban densification (Lainton, 2014; Manns, 2014; Mace, 2018).

2.4.   The Green Belt's Establishment and Ascendancy

Background to 1947 Planning Act

These key Reports had an important impact on the Green Belt and 1947 Act so are summarised in Table 6:

Table 6 - The Barlow Commission, Scott Report, and the Uthwatt Committee		
Report	**Findings/Recommendations**	**Impact upon Green Belt**
Barlow (Royal) Commission (O*n the Distribution of Industrial Population*) (1940)	Regional disparities and the 'gap' between London and 'distressed' regions, needed addressing through controlling industry/ housebuilding.	Took a negative attitude towards growth despite urban quality of life improving with Abercrombie, as a Committee member, arguing for controls. Growth had: '*despoiled the countryside and largely diminished* [its] *health-giving elements…the most insidious menace*' (HMSO, 1940, p. 226).
Scott Report on Land Utilisation in Rural Areas (1942)	Following the threat of starvation in WWII, the best *and* medium quality agricultural land and rural way of life should be preserved.	Agricultural land should be preserved so the Green Belt should be primarily for agriculture not recreation (Abercrombie used an Agricultural Classification system in his Plans). Professor Dennison highlighted that agriculture had become more productive but the Report was influenced by the Geographer Dudley Stamp who referred to land's '*chief characteristic*' being its '*attractive patchwork appearance*' so 'openness' was included in the Green Belt policy (MWP, 1942, p. 3). The Report proposed a '*tract of ordinary country, of varying width, round a town*' forming the key inspiration for Abercrombie's Green Belt (MWP, 1942, p. 72).
Uthwatt Committee on Betterment (1942)	Government should purchase/nationalise development rights on undeveloped land.	The state was expected to undertake most development. However, the Green Belt remained in private ownership and land value capture continues to be a thorny issue (Catney and Henneberry, 2019).
From: HMSO, 1940; Ministry of Works and Planning (MWP), 1942; Robinson, 1943; Thomas, 1963, p. 79; Hall, 1973b, p. 49, 2002, pp. 105–106; Armstrong and Taylor, 2000; Amati and Freestone, 2015.		

1947 Town and Country Planning Act

The 1947 Act created the modern planning system with development rights being nationalised and a statutory requirement for districts to prepare plans allocating land for development and to update them every 5 years (Hall and Gracey, 1973, p. 99; Cherry, 1996, p. 148).

Short *et al* (1987, p. 31) argued that the system was established to resist urban growth and to protect the countryside and rural way of life through the Green Belt whilst Hall *et al.* (1973b, p. 40) argued that an 'unholy alliance' formed between urban authorities, wanting to protect their tax base and support urban redevelopment, and rural shires wishing to maintain their rural exclusivity. The failure to also reform the county system of governance and local government boundaries intensified subsequent political struggles over the Green Belt with Green Belt boundaries often being drawn tightly around Labour cities surrounded by Conservative counties (Dockerill and Sturzaker, 2019).

The Philosophical and Political Context of the Green Belt

Much of the longstanding, popular antipathy to urban growth in England arguably stems from the dominance of the gentry in British society leading to the countryside being idealised and this percolating down to fashion a society in which homeownership, especially in semi-rural locations, is idealised as owning one's own 'castle' or 'estate' (Bunce, 1994; Matless, 1998; Hall, 2014, p. 365). Moreover, Britain being an island with a relative and perceived shortage of land and the world's first industrial national explains the rural shires subsequent resistance to housing growth, such as Cheshire, Worcestershire and Warwickshire, with fears of being 'threatened' and 'spoiled' by the encroaching industrial cities, like Birmingham and Manchester (Elson, 1986, pp. xiii, 40; Goode, 2019a).

Prior and Raemakers (2007, p. 580) conceptualised the Green Belt as a product of the post-war, Fordist economic system in which the state played a large part in managing and planning the economy as evident in the amount of state intervention in the 1947 Act and Green Belt policy compared with the 'loose' interwar planning system (Dorling, 2010; Martin, 2015). The Green Belt was also one of the 'triptych' of post-war planning policies alongside New Towns and regional policy (Mace, 2018, p. 10). However, the fact that the Green Belt has remained a constant and popular policy, despite successive waves of neoliberalism rolling up other parts of the 'triptych', is evidence

of the enduring strength of the conservation movement in England (Scott, 2015; Sturzaker and Mell, 2016).

Green Belts Codified and Implemented - 1955 Circular 42/55
The Green Belt was codified and its purpose outlined by the Housing Minister, Duncan Sandys, in 1955 (Elson *et al*, 1994, p. 154). Sandys, as a genteel Conservative, was enthusiastic about encouraging councils to establish them although, rather than being primarily for agricultural or recreational purposes, the Circular stated their purpose as preventing urban sprawl (Hall *et al.*, 1973a, pp. 52–57; Amati and Yokohari, 2007, p. 315):

- '[To] check the further growth of a large built-up area;
- Prevent neighbouring towns from merging into one another; or
- Preserve the special character of a town'.

(Ministry of Housing and Local Government (MHLG), 1955, p. 1).

Circular (42/55) was only substantially altered in 1984 when urban regeneration was added as a purpose whilst preventing urban sprawl still forms the policy's central justification (Sturzaker and Mell, 2016, p. 31). Circular (42/55) was reinforced by Sandys' successor as Housing Minister, Henry Brooke, who argued in 1961 that:

'The very essence of a Green Belt is that it is a stopper. It may not be very beautiful…but without it the town would never stop.' (Cited in Hall *et al.*, 1973a, p. 58)

In 1946, the Government accepted Abercrombie's Plan and, in 1950, produced a Green Belt map based on it (Munton, 1983; Cherry, 1996, p. 147). This was implemented between 1954 and 1958 as the Home Counties incorporated this Green Belt into their plans (Whitehand, 2001, p. 50). However, Circular (42/55) encouraged the Home Counties to designate *further* Green Belt and regions to introduce Green Belts to protect the countryside with another Circular (50/57) permitting this (MHLG, 1957, p. 1; Longley *et al.*, 1992, p. 438). The Green Belt quickly became so popular that they gained a 'life of their own' in terms of expansion although Sandys himself believed they should be only 5-10 miles wide (Courtenay-Evans, 2012; Manns, 2014, p. 14). Elson (1986, p. 19) examined 69

proposed Green Belt sketches in local plans submitted between 1955 and 1960 and found that the

Green Belt's primary objective was to be a 'stopper'. Consequently, from 1968-1984, the amount of

land in the Green Belt increased from 693,000 to 1,581,500ha or 12% of England's land surface

(Sturzaker and Mell, 2016, p. 36)[5].

The urgency for post-war Green Belt expansion by councils arose from fears that the Government

would establish new towns in their areas and the large increase in housebuilding in the 1960/70s

(*Ibid*, p. 35). The Labour Government (1964-1970), while still defending the Green Belt, was reluctant

to add more land to it with its Housing Minister, Richard Crossman (1964-66), concerned about

projected population growth so he would not approve development plans until regional studies on

land availability were completed (Hall *et al.*, 1973a, p. 57). Consequently, the Green Belt only

expanded 184,000ha between 1964 and 1970 (Elson, 1986, p. 39). A turning point was Edward

Heath's Conservative Government (1970-74) when Peter Walker was Environment Secretary (1970-

1972) (Elson, 1986, p. 44). No more New Towns were designated, apart from Stonehouse, with

development pressure on the Green Belt reduced as population forecasts were lowered and the

focus shifted towards inner-city problems (Cherry, 1996, p. 148). Furthermore, Walker revived the

policy of designating new areas as Green Belt so Green Belt maps were 'tightened up' and

settlements 'washed over' to prevent further development with the Government largely maintaining

the county system of governance in the 1972 Local Government Act (Sturzaker and Mell, 2016, p.

34). In 1971, the Government approved large Green Belt extensions covering most of Surrey,

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[5] There was a gap between councils creating a *de facto* Green Belt, through submitting an indicative Green Belt map to the Minister in the 1950s, and the Minister approving the proposals due to post-war 'bureaucratic overload' (Cherry, 1996, p. 147; Sturzaker and Mell, 2016, p. 35). For example, the Nottinghamshire Green Belt Map was first drawn in 1956 but not formally approved by the Government until 1989 following the 1980 Nottinghamshire Structure Plan (Hughes and Buffery, 2006, pp. 8–9). Although Manchester had an indicative Green Belt, it was not formally specified until the 1978 Greater Manchester Structure Plan and approved in 1981 (Young, 2016, p. 26). Green Belt approvals in other areas, like South Hampshire, did not take effect despite having their plan approved by the Minister in 1965 (Elson, 1986, p. 38).

increasing the overall, original Green Belt by 20%, and in Kent and Buckinghamshire, increasing it by 15%, in what Elson (1986, p. 40) characterised as a 'victory for the Homes Counties'.

Green Belts in Practice (1950s-70s) - Tension between town and country
However, although the *general* trend was to uphold the Green Belt policy, in the 1960s/70s there was also often a pragmatic attitude towards it and notable compromises (Robinson, 1994; Gant *et al*, 2011, p. 266). The Government has allowed significant transport development in the Green Belt including Britain's motorway network, like the M25 and M42, whilst airports, like Manchester, Birmingham and Heathrow, have expanded with growth occurring around them such as the World Logistics Park (Manchester) and National Exhibition Centre alongside adjacent business parks, like Blyth Valley and Birmingham Business Park (Law, 2000, p. 64; Kells *et al.*, 2007, p. 7).

A significant area of contention was where the overspill population from the large cities should be located with new towns and towns expanded under the 1952 Town Development Act being insufficient to meet housing need (Smart, 1965; Sturzaker and Mell, 2016, p. 28). Crossman therefore approved developments in the Green Belt, like Chelmsley Wood (Birmingham) (1964) (see Chapter 5), and private sector new towns, such as New Ash Green (Kent) (1966) (Ward, 2005, p. 346).

Thatcher's Government (1979-1990) - Attempts at Reform and Retreat
Despite the Thatcher Government's rhetoric around 'rolling back the frontiers of the State' and *Lifting the Burden* of planning (the title of a White Paper (1985)), the amount of Green Belt land increased 45% in Thatcher's first term, more than doubled from 7000km^2 (1974) to 16,000 km^2 (1984) whilst the total amount of land involved in the Green Belt's expansion in the 1980s/90s was seven times more than that used for new housebuilding (Figure 8) (Ward, 2005, p. 336; Abbott, 2013, p. 18).
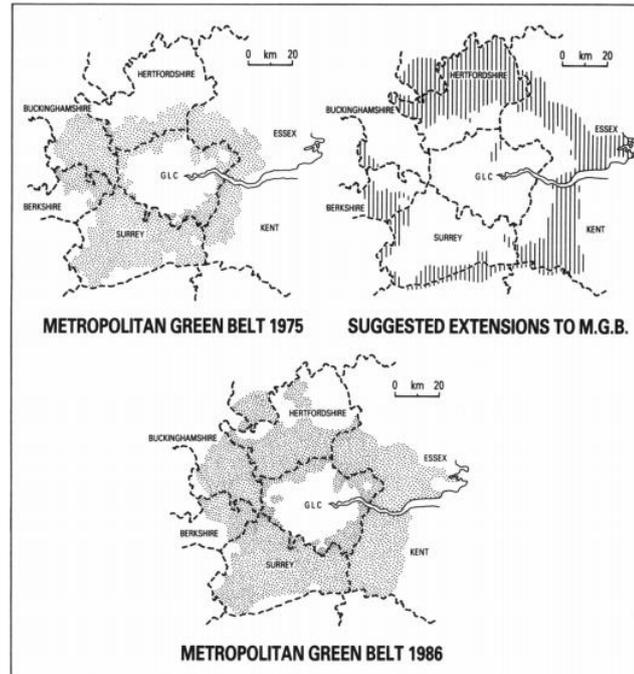
Figure 8 - Extensions to the Green Belt under Thatcher (from: Munton, 1986, p. 210).

Ward (2004, p. 226) called the Green Belt the 'exception to Thatcherism' although there was

constant tension within the Conservative Party, which endures to this day, between the neoliberal,

pro-development lobby and the conservationist, rural lobby (Ward, 2005, p. 329; Tait and Inch, 2016,

p. 187). For example, in 1983, the Environment Secretary, Patrick Jenkin, produced a Departmental

Circular on the Green Belt and land for housing which suggested modest reforms for more flexibility

regarding Green Belt 'swaps' (Munton, 1986, p. 211). However, such was the political opposition

from the environmental, countryside lobby, especially CPRE, and backbench Conservative MPs, that

Jenkins retreated and issued a White Paper in 1984 (Circular 14/84) which stressed Green Belt's

primacy (Gant *et al*, 2011, p. 267). Even though the completion of the M25 in 1986 opened up huge

development opportunities, planning inquires upheld the Green Belt's primacy (Munton *et al*, 1988,

p. 327; Gallent and Shaw, 2007, p. 620).

In 1983, a group of housebuilders formed Consortium Developments Ltd. which hoped to build 15

private sector new towns, each having around 5,000 dwellings, having been emboldened by the

Thatcher Government's anti-planning rhetoric[6] (Ward, 2005, p. 342). One of these, Tillingham Hall,

Essex, was proposed in 1985 in the MGB (Munton, 1986, p. 212). Nicholas Ridley, the Environment

Secretary, was one of Thatcher's most free-market thinking Cabinet Ministers so it was widely

expected to be approved[7] (Cherry, 1996, p. 201). However, there was widespread opposition at the

Public Inquiry which Hall (2014, p. 442) argued became one of the '*causes célèbres'* of planning

history. In 1986, Ridley promised that the Green Belt is 'safe in our hands' and 'sacrosanct' so

Tillingham Hall was rejected demonstrating the political nature of the policy (Blake and Golland,

2003, p. 143).

Ward (2005, p. 394) helpfully highlighted that opposition to Consortium Developments was

particularly fierce because of the aggressive way it acted as seeking to override LPAs. Although still

contentious, where large developments proposed in Green Belts had LPA support, such as Bradley

Stoke (8500 homes, South Gloucestershire), Chafford Hundred (5000 homes, Essex) and Church

Langley (3500 homes, Harlow), these were approved by Ridley in 1986/7 (Munton, 1986, p. 212;

Ward, 2005, p. 352). Nevertheless, Consortium Developments expected the Thatcher Government to

override community and LPA opposition as it used central power to overrule trade unions, Labour

councils and inner-city areas but the Government did not have the 'heart' to do this to its 'own side' -

Conservative constituencies, councils and communities (Ward, 2005, p. 354; Hall, 2014, p. 442).

Major's Government (1990-1997) - Green Belts Triumphant
The fierce planning battles and urgency of housebuilders to build on Green Belt (and greenfield) sites

somewhat receded in the 1990s due to the recession, lack of house price growth and the (relatively)

abundant supply of 'easy' brownfield sites for housing near town/city centres (Breheny, 1996; Law,

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[6] Private sector estates built in the 1970s at Lower Earley, Berkshire, just outside the MGB, and South
Woodham Ferrers, Essex, in the MGB, also inspired them (Ward, 2005, p. 332).
[7] A retired, longstanding West Midlands Conservative MP interviewed by the researcher gave this fascinating
insight: 'Mrs Thatcher herself was a very staunch advocate of the Green Belt…I knew Nicholas Ridley well and,
you see, a person's personal background can often influence them - he came from a landed family up in the
north but he was a very sensitive, you wouldn't think it, but…really quite a brilliant water colour painter'.

2000, p. 60). In 1995, the Government set a target of 50% of development on brownfield land which was raised to 60% before the 1997 Election (Breheny, 1997, p. 209). This stemmed from compact cities and sustainable (brownfield) development becoming the dominant policy rhetoric and objective (PPG13), especially with the increasing importance of environmental issues following the Rio Earth Summit (1992) and the White Paper, *This Common Inheritance* (1990) (Warren and Clifford, 2005, p. 355). Ward (2005, p. 354) argued that it gave people who wished to see rural development restricted a legitimacy whilst Pennington (2000, p. 73) described the increasingly plan-led and protectionist nature of planning during the 1990s as a 'victory' for the increasingly influential environmental movement. Moreover, development in the Green Belt was further restricted through PPG2 (1995, p. 5) which stressed 'safeguarding the countryside from (further) encroachment' as a key aim (Gant *et al*, 2011, p. 267). Consequently, between 1989 and 1997, the Green Belt expanded another 1038km^2 (Sturzaker and Mell, 2016, p. 40).

2.5.   The Green Belt and the Housing Crisis (1997-2020)

This period has been characterised by an increasing awareness of worsening housing crisis leading to numerous attempts at 'solving' this crisis, largely through planning reform. Some of these have affected the Green Belt but there has been no direct, fundamental 'attack' to the policy by national Government yet (Amati, 2007, 2008; Sturzaker and Mell, 2016, p. 42).

New Labour Government (1997-2010)
Part of Labour's electoral success was based on promising to protect the Green Belt and appealing to middle-class, Home County voters (Allmendinger and Tewdwr-Jones, 2000). It also wanted to appeal to urban voters so the Urban Task Force was established in 1999 calling for an 'urban renaissance' through the revival of cities to house 4 million more people and a 60% brownfield land housebuilding target (Allmendinger, 2003; Nathan, 2007, p. 5; Sturzaker and Shucksmith, 2011, p. 176). Nevertheless, with growing awareness of the housing crisis and the Government's focus shifting

towards social equity and sustainable development, it committed to building more homes in the Greater South-East, including the Thames Gateway, and beyond the Green Belt in places such as Ashford, Milton Keynes and Northampton (the 'South Midlands') (Gunn, 2007, p. 607; Shaw, 2007, p. 576; Amati, 2008, p. 9).

The Treasury commissioned Barker Review (2004, p. 121) highlighted the need for 200-250,000 new homes annually to keep prices stable. Barker (2004, p. 44) argued that greater flexibility was needed regarding the Green Belt, including the need to review boundaries regularly and explore the possibility for 'swaps' although she did not call for its abolition or significant reform. Barker (2006, pp. 9, 10) also highlighted that the Green Belt was often 'low value agricultural land/landscape quality [with] limited public access' so a 'more positive approach' was required to enhance it. The Government was reported to have seriously considered relaxing the designation after the Barker Review and, although significant relaxation was deemed too controversial, a more flexible approach was adopted with plans de-designating Green Belt land in exchange for adding land being approved in the Homes Counties, like Bedfordshire, in 2008 (Gallent and Shaw, 2007, p. 618; Gunn, 2007). The Green Belt Direction (Circular 11/05) granted powers to John Prescott, the Deputy Prime Minister, to call in Green Belt developments thereby giving central government greater scope to override local opposition (Gant *et al*, 2011, p. 261). However, the RSSs generally upheld the Green Belt in post-industrial regions, like the West Midlands, although, in the South-East Plan, there were controversial proposals, like a 4,000 home extension to Oxford (Government Office for the South East, 2009, pp. 27–30; Gant *et al*, 2011, p. 267).

The Coalition and Conservative Government - 2010-2021

The Conservatives' electoral success in 2010 partly rested on their campaign against RSSs, housebuilding generally and Labour's supposed 'attack' on the Green Belt (Sturzaker, 2011, 2017; Lowndes and Pratchett, 2012, p. 26). Subsequent, Conservative-led Governments have arguably sent mixed messages about housing reflecting the key, competing strands in Conservative thinking - anti-

development, one-nation localism and pro-development (neo)liberalism (Allmendinger and

Haughton, 2011, p. 317; Tait and Inch, 2016, p. 187). The *rhetoric* of localism, Neighbourhood

Planning, abolishing housing 'targets' and regional planning (RSSs in 2010/11), has fostered a more

anxious, active and protectionist culture, especially regarding Green Belt protection, with a large

'void' existing in strategic planning (see Chapter 9) (Sturzaker, 2011, p. 555; Fox, 2015; Howick,

2017). This has been encouraged by political promises to protect the Green Belt, such as the former

Prime Minister David Cameron constantly promising that the Green Belt was 'safe in our hands', and

the more frequent refusals of appeals by Secretaries of State in the run-up to elections, like the

Communities Secretary, Eric Pickles, refusing notable applications in the Green Belt, such as Coventry

Gateway (2015) (Edgar, 2015, p. 1; Nowak, 2015). Likewise, in 2019, the Prime Minister Boris Johnson

backed the Wolverhampton Green Belt campaign whilst protecting the Green Belt was one of the

few areas where Conservative and Labour Manifestos agreed[8] (Brassington, 2019).

However, with the deepening housing crisis, the Government has recently pursued a more 'muscular

localist' approach as focusing increasingly on housebuilding with the (then) Chancellor, Philip

Hammond, setting an annual 'target' of 300,000 new homes in 2017 which remained in the 2019

Manifesto (Tait and Inch, 2016, p. 187; Shipman, 2017; Conservative Party, 2019, p. 31)**.** Although the

rate of housebuilding increased to 222,000 (net) in 2019, this was from a historically low figure of

122,000 competitions in 2012 with the industry slowly recovering from the financial crisis and output

hit in 2020/21 by Coronavirus and the lockdowns (Edgar, 2017, p. 1; Ministry of Housing, 2019, p. 1).

Indeed, the Government's efforts to solve the crisis have largely revolved around increasing housing

demand, through policies such as 'Help to Buy' and First Homes, planning reform with around 200

reforms since 2010 and the pro-growth NPPF (DCLG, 2012; Littlewood, 2017; The Economist, 2017, p.

1; Halligan, 2018). It has also dismissed key reports or campaigns on reforming the Green Belt,

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[8] The Conservative Manifesto read 'we will protect and enhance the Green Belt' (Conservative Party, 2019, p. 31) and the Labour Manifesto was almost identical: 'we will protect the Green Belt' (Labour Party, 2019, p. 78).

including Urbed's (2014) Wolfson Prize winning scheme for garden villages[9], the Labour MP, Siobhain

McDonagh's campaign to allow development in the Green Belt around railway stations (Ministry of

Housing (MHCLG), 2018) and a Report on reclassifying and reviewing the Green Belt (2019), *Raising

the Roof*, by the influential Conservative MP Jacob Rees-Mogg[10] (CPRE, 2018; Wilding, 2018a; Airey

and Blakeway, 2019). The Government recently published a Planning White Paper, *Planning for the

Future*, which proposes moving to a more rules-based, less discretionary system although the

Government still proposes maintaining existing Green Belt protections (Airey and Doughty, 2020;

Simons, 2020a, 2020b).

Indeed, significant Green Belt reform is unlikely because the Conservatives have generally been

supportive of the Green Belt and widespread popular and political opposition has historically

hindered previous attempts at reform (Sturzaker and Mell, 2016; Inch *et al*, 2020)[11]. For example, the

political backlash against the proposed changes to the Standard Method, which would potentially

have put more development pressure on largely Conservative voting constituencies in the South

East, led the Government to significantly increase housing targets in largely Labour cities (See key

terms; Young, 2020). This demonstrates that, whilst there is growing recognition in Government that

a housing crisis exists, its preferred 'solution' is planning deregulation whilst upholding the Green

Belt (Mace, 2017; Sturzaker, 2017).

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[9] This proposed urban extensions in the Green Belt in places like Oxford and York (Manns, 2014; Mace, 2018).
[10] Rees-Mogg has previously called for a national Green Belt review (Elliott, 2017; Halligan, 2018).
[11] For example, when the Planning Minister, Greg Clark, was drafting the NPPF (2011), he and others, like the Chancellor George Osborne, were reported as contemplating relaxing the Green Belt (Manns, 2014, p. 16; Scott, 2015, p. 139). A fierce campaign by the Daily Telegraph, entitled 'Hands off our land', attacked the liberalisation of planning so the NPPF strongly upheld the status quo regarding Green Belt policy with the NPPF's 5 Green Belt purposes copied verbatim from PPG2 (Toft, 1995; Bloxham, 2011; Vincent, 2014; Mace, 2018, p. 3; DoE, 1995). The media reported that Savid Javid, Communities Secretary, proposed loosening Green Belt restrictions, especially on brownfield land, in the 2017 Housing White Paper and that the Chancellor Philip Hammond proposed the same before the 2017 Budget (Lainton, 2017). The opposition of the Prime Minister, Theresa May, saw off any proposed reform (Becket, 2017; Fraser, 2017; Hope and Hughes, 2017; Moore, 2017).

2.6.   Conclusions from the History of the Green Belt

This chapter has explored the widespread, popular and idyllic image of the English countryside, of which the Green Belt is seen as guarantor and bastion, and a particularly English antipathy towards urban 'sprawl', probably deriving from the magnitude and rapidity of the Industrial Revolution (Bishop, 1998; Matless, 1998; Lloyd and Peel, 2007, p. 641; Easton, 2018). Amati and Yokohari (2007, p. 312) highlighted how the Green Belt has used 'myths about the past to justify the present'. Arguably, the Green Belt has been very successful against its own objective of preventing urban 'sprawl' historically, as despite successive waves of deregulation and growing political recognition of the housing crisis, it has remained essentially untouched and impregnable as a policy (Amati, 2007, p. 581; Dockerill and Sturzaker, 2019). The ideological debates within the Conservative Party, which has governed for the most of the Green Belt's existence, between pro-development neoliberalism and anti-development localism is probably reflected in the wider country (Inch, 2012; Tait and Inch, 2016). Nevertheless, there has been an overwhelming popular and political desire to maintain England's 'green and pleasant' land, exemplified in the policy, despite Britain's liberal, capitalist economy. This enduring, unresolved pro- and anti-development contradiction is often worked out in the planning system, explaining why planning is often such a contested, conflictual space (Barry *et al.*, 2018; Inch and Shepherd, 2019).

The chapter yields important insights informing other parts of the thesis. Firstly, historical institutionalism and how the past 'frames' the future, especially popular visions of history, shapes and forms the attitudes of planners, protestors and the public towards Green Belts (see Chapter 8) (Sorensen, 2015; Valler and Phelps, 2018, p. 1). Secondly, the Green Belt historically protecting the residential 'rural exclusivity' of the rural-urban fringe emerges strongly in literature but Chapter 6 will empirically examine the viewpoint that the Green Belt has been subject to 'regulatory capture' and 'rent-seeking' by homeowners (Cherry, 1996, p. 202; Sturzaker, 2010, p. 1014; Sturzaker and

Shucksmith, 2011, p. 175). Moreover, whilst this chapter has explored the Green Belt's longstanding political nature (Monk and Whitehead, 1999; Sims and Bossetti, 2016), the *motivations* of campaigners and the public for supporting them is critically examined in Chapter 7 whilst Chapter 8 elucidates campaigners tactics. Chapter 9 draws these strands by exploring ways that strategic planning could be rebuilt having charted its historic challenges and demise in this chapter. The Green Belt's history and longevity highlights how challenging reform of the policy is but also illuminates potential reforms (Hall *et al.*, 1973a). The next Chapter (3) therefore explores Green Belt's form/function and compares the Green Belt with urban containment policies internationally. This historical chapter is therefore anchored around the Green Belt's temporality whilst the next one focuses on its spatiality.

Chapter 3: The Form and Function of the Green Belt and an Evaluation of its Effectiveness

3.1.   Introduction

Chapter 2 aimed to understand *how* the Green Belt became such a popular, well-established and geographically widespread policy notwithstanding the economic and demographic growth pressures of post-war Britain (Rydin, 1985; Sturzaker and Mell, 2016). This chapter turns to *contemporary* discussions surrounding the policy by exploring its form *and* function with its fundamental *function* as an 'urban shaping device' explicitly aiming to shape urban *form* (Elson *et al*, 1994, p. 154; Gunn, 2007, p. 595). This contextualises the next section which evaluates the numerous academic and think-tank critiques of the policy alongside exploring the counterarguments and defences of it. In contrast to popular narratives about the Green Belt's success, this chapter evaluates literature which highlights its negative societal impacts, especially exacerbating the housing crisis (Hilber and Vermeulen, 2014). Finally, alternative policies and green belts internationally are evaluated to explore other examples of accommodating urban growth whilst protecting the countryside and environment (although these would be very challenging to 'retrofit' in England (Oliveira, 2017)).

3.2.   The Form and Function of the Green Belt

The Function of the Green Belt
The policy's overarching aim is 'to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open' and this containment objective is similar to 42/55 Circular and PPG2 (DoE, 1995, p. 5). Current national planning policy states its purposes as (Table 7) (MHCLG, 2019b, p. 40):

Table 7 - The Purposes of Green Belt
• 'To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;
• To prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;
• To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment
• To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and
• To assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land'.
From: PPG2 (DoE, 1995, p. 5), NPPFI (DCLG, 2012, p. 19); NPPFII (MHCLG, 2018b, p. 40, 2018a, p. 39, 2019b, p. 40) and the Government's *Green Future Plan* (HM Government, 2018, p. 35).

It is therefore a regional *urban growth management* policy and *means* by which compact urban form can be achieved and sprawl prevented, rather than a blanket *countryside* policy or an end *in itself* as is popularly believed with surveys showing that of 60% people think the Green Belt protects biodiversity and 46% that it protects areas of landscape quality (Lloyd and Peel, 2007; Nathan, 2007, p. 4). Moreover, while areas of biodiversity or environmental value *maybe* in the Green Belt, it is not an *environmental* designation, such as AONBs (Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty) or SSSIs (Sites of Scientific Special Interest), and its function is not determined by environmental characteristics (Barker, 2006; Healey, 2007; Mace *et al.*, 2016). Likewise, although policy has attempted to improve its management to provide (more) open space and recreational opportunities (for example: DoE, 1995)[12], recreational/public accessibility is not its *primary purpose* (Mace, 2018). These clear aims and criteria can be seen in the proposed 'new' Green Belts/Green Belt extensions that were not approved in the 1970s/1980s because they were deemed unnecessary (Table 8).

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[12] NPPFII explained: 'local authorities should plan positively to enhance their beneficial use, such as looking for opportunities to provide access; to provide opportunities for outdoor sport and recreation; to retain and enhance landscapes, visual amenity and biodiversity; or to improve damaged and derelict land' (MHCLG, 2019b, p. 42). The 2019 Conservative Party Manifesto (p. 31) included the aim of enhancing the Green Belt.

Table 8 - Proposed Green Belts		
Proposed Green Belt	**Justification**	**Reason for Refusal**
Around Northallerton (North Yorkshire), between Worcester/ Malvern and Yeovil/Sherborne.	Prevent coalescence between historic settlements/protect areas of landscape quality.	Unnecessary as the normal development management system was sufficient to restrict growth.
Tendring Peninsula (Essex) and around Scarborough/Swindon.	Help control and restrict urban growth.	Unnecessary as low levels of housing demand and a concern not to 'devalue' the concept.
Extension of the MGB in Berkshire along to Reading.	Help control and restrict urban growth.	Refused so economic growth along the M4 'Corridor'/housing growth in Central Berkshire could take place.
Oxfordshire/Buckinghamshire County Councils sought to extend the MGB over the Chilterns to join the Oxford Green Belt in 1960.	Help control and restrict urban growth.	The Government said it would 'devalue' the Green Belt concept.
Information from: Elson, 1986, pp. 19–21, 56–62; Short *et al*, 1987, p. 32.		

Nonetheless, the word 'green' in the name 'Green Belt' has captured the popular imagination, led the public to confuse greenfield with Green Belt and fuelled the belief that it is about protecting beautiful, scenic environments (House of Lords, 2016; Mace, 2018). Likewise, the policy has the underpinning concept of 'openness', which is fundamentally subjective, making assessment of the Green Belt challenging (DCLG, 2012; Mace, 2018; Gardiner, 2020). The other key characteristic, 'permanence', means that Green Belt boundaries can only be changed in 'exceptional' or 'very special' circumstances through passing a 'high bar' in local plans and appeal so it is a 'blunt tool' and a strict, 'marginally flexible' land use designation (Lloyd and Peel, 2007, p. 643; Abbott, 2013, p. 20; MHCLG, 2019b, p. 40). The policy has retained clear aims over time and its strict application is remarkably geographically consistent across England. This is arguably symptomatic of Britain's centralised state with no other western capitalist country having such a direct and firm *national* constraint policy with international green belts reflecting city-wide concerns, for example Seoul and Bangkok, or wider regional, state concerns, like Oregon or Florida (Boyle and Mohamed, 2007; Chu *et al*, 2017).

However, in practice, national infrastructure projects, like HS1/HS2; uses essential to a city's functioning and typically associated with the urban 'fringe', like timber yards, sewage works,

reservoirs and gravel extraction; certain employment types, like Nissan's Factory (Sunderland), Peddimore (Birmingham) and Cambridge's Science Park and ancillary agricultural buildings not fundamentally affecting the policy's 'openness' have all been approved in the Green Belt (Gallent *et al*, 2006a, p. 457; Gant *et al*, 2011, p. 270).

The Form of Green Belts

Nationally, 1,621,150ha of land is in the Green Belt, which at 12-13% of England's land surface, is similar to 1997 (DCLG, 2017b, p. 1; MHCLG, 2019a, p. 1). By comparison, only 9-11% of England is urbanised falling to 5-6% when excluding gardens and parks (House of Lords, 2016, p. 29; DCLG, 2017a, p. 9). Their initial reason for establishment and urban form varies geographically according to local and regional circumstances (Table 8; Elson, 1986; Sturzaker and Mell, 2016). Scottish Planning Policy states that:

> *'For most settlements, a green belt is not necessary…***the spatial form of the green belt should be appropriate to the location***. It may encircle a settlement or take the shape of a buffer, corridor, strip or wedge'* (Cited in Manns and Falk, 2016, p. 15).

Green Belts can be characterised in form by their primary function although these often overlap (Table 9):

Table 9 - Form and Function of the Green Belt		
Function of Green Belt	**Form of Green Belt**	**Examples**
To check the unrestricted sprawl of large, built-up areas	These large Green Belts tend to be circular to prevent large urban areas growing outwards.	Metropolitan, Avon, West Midlands, Nottingham, North Staffordshire.
To prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another	Can be a variety of shapes from a 'buffer' between two settlements to a relatively 'blanket' Green Belt over a large area with lots of nearby settlements.	'Buffer' Green Belts: Worcester - Droitwich, Cheltenham-Gloucester, Burton-upon-Trent – Swadlincote. 'Blanket' Green Belts: North West, West Riding (Yorkshire).
To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns	Smaller but circular shaped to prevent outward expansion.	York, Oxford, Cambridge, Bath.
From: Elson, 1986, pp. 39, 59–62, 176; Munton, 1986, pp. 207–208; Amati and Yokohari, 2007, p. 125		

Safeguarding the countryside from encroachment is a general objective applying to all Green Belts (Lloyd and Peel, 2007, p. 639). Likewise, assisting in urban regeneration is a general aim but more

pertinent in areas with significant amounts of brownfield land like Tyne and Wear and North

Staffordshire (Gunn, 2007, p. 612; Foresight Report, 2010, p. 68). Some Green Belts are unusual in

form as they shaped by the sea, such as Avon (Longley *et al.*, 1992, p. 447). A Green Belt's size

depends upon the area it is containing as having a 'proportionately' sized Green Belt was a key

determinant in its implementation (Elson, 1986, p. 33). Naturally, the largest Green Belts are

'blanket' ones encircling large cities whilst 'buffer' Green Belts are much smaller[13] (Munton, 1986, p.

208).

3.3.   Evaluating the Green Belt

Debate on the Green Belt's effectiveness has been relatively continuous since its inception although

the first major critique was Hall *et al's* (1973a, p. 433) work, *Containment*, which argued that its

effects, alongside that of the broader planning system, were 'perverse' and 'regressive' as creating a

'civilised version of apartheid' and an 'elitist ... system distorted' which left 'the great mass of people

betrayed' as 'those with the most…gained the most' (Hall, 1974, p. 386, 2002, p. 333). However, the

debate has become increasingly intense recently with practitioner, academic and think tank reports,

like Policy Exchange and the Adam Smith Institute, calling for significant Green Belt reform (Table 13)

(Sturzaker and Mell, 2016, p. 42; Gilligan, 2017; Airey and Doughty, 2020, pp. 39–42).

Critiques of the Green Belt - Free Market Economic Perspectives
Critiques along economic lines can be broadly divided into wider philosophical arguments and more

direct, empirical studies (Keeble, 1971).

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[13] The largest Green Belt is the Metropolitan one (MGB) at 516,000ha - three times the size of London's urban area and 3.8% of England's land surface (Munton, Whatmore and Marsden, 1988, p. 3; Mace *et al.*, 2016, p. 4). Other blanket ones are about half the size of the MGB but a similar size to each other with the West Riding (248,241ha), North West (247,650ha) and West Midlands (225,000ha) (Munton, 1986, p. 212; CPRE and Natural England, 2010, pp. 20–25). 'Buffer' Green Belts are smaller with the Burton upon Trent/Swadlincote one 714ha and Cheltenham/Gloucester one 6,694ha (CPRE and Natural England, 2010, p. 14).

Philosophical Arguments

The most general arguments against the policy relate to broader arguments against planning and state intervention in the economy (Cheshire *et al*, 2014; Hilber, 2015). It is argued that settlements have always expanded or contracted in a 'natural', 'organic' way as a 'living organism' in response to market forces, agglomeration economics and people's individual preferences (see Chapter 2) (Neuman, 2005, p. 14; Lloyd and Peel, 2007, p. 640). Some academics, most notably O'Toole (2007b) and Cox (2002, p. 3), argue that planners/planning should not interfere with this 'natural' process of decentralisation and that, where they do through growth management policies, like Green Belts or urban growth boundaries (UGB), the results are harmful to society (The Economist, 2014b, 2014a, 2016)[14]. Cox (2002, p. 3) highlighted that even 'compact' European cities have 'sprawled' since WWII with Amsterdam's urban area growing by 65% and Paris's suburbs gaining 3 million people (Wolsink, 2003; Zonneveld, 2007). Others, like Layzer (2012, p. 152) and Bruegmann (2005) argued that 'sprawl' reflects the desires of individuals and families for (more) domestic space, especially in the US. The essence of these arguments is therefore, if people desire to be homeowners, there are no sufficiently strong moral arguments to justify preventing people's freedom through planning restrictions and Green Belts (Breheny and Rookwood, 1993; Hall and Breheny, 1996)[15].

Many of these libertarian arguments come from a North American perspective where public attitudes towards countryside conservation, land scarcity and car-dependency in the US with its 'frontier mentality' being very different to Britain (Bunce, 1994, p. 25). Hall (2002, p. 332, 2012, p. 332) argued that the American planning system was 'fairer' than the British one in the sense that, in

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[14] O'Toole (2007b, pp. 1, 93) attacked planning as 'coercive' arguing that it 'harms your quality of life and… future' while Cox (2002, p. 3) defended urban 'sprawl' as the 'world's oldest land use trend' and argued 'I favour freedom, and no compelling justification has been demonstrated which justifies the abridgement of freedom necessary to outlaw urban sprawl'.

[15] There are equally strong moral arguments in favour of the planning system and Green Belt, especially to the societal disbenefits of urban sprawl (Litman, 2015; Davoudi and Sturzaker, 2017, p. 55). For example, Crook (2015; House of Lords, 2016, p. 1232) argued that a managed release of Green Belt land is better than unplanned release as then planners can use their place-making skills and planning gain to coordinate the facilities/infrastructure needed alongside housebuilding (Holman *et al.*, 2015, p. 9).

the absence of green belts, mass market housing was more affordable to lower income families and had more domestic space. He (1974, p. 405) also underlined that rising land costs in 1960s Britain led housebuilders to raise the density of housing development, thus reducing its quality, and permanently shifted their focus to more profitable, executive housing although he conceded that the British system was more sustainable at protecting the countryside and promoting the efficient use of land than the American one.

Empirical Economic Arguments
Overview

Many academics, think tanks and practitioners whilst not advocating abolition of the planning system or Green Belt, critique it *as a policy* and argue for its *reform* (Elson, 2002; Sturzaker and Mell, 2016).

The economic supply argument is essentially that, by restricting the land supply when and where housing demand is highest on the edge of cities, the Green Belt raises land and house prices (Evans, 1989; Monk and Whitehead, 1999; Dawkins and Nelson, 2002). As Mace (2018, p. 1) argued, it often 'represents everything that is wrong with the English planning system…it is big state and woefully/wilfully ignorant of basic economics' while Hilber and Vermeulen (2014, p. 359) argued that England's planning system has 'ignored market signals and failed to cope adequately with changing socio-economic conditions'. The result, it is argued, is higher house prices, more cramped living conditions *within* cities and a dispersal/deflection of housing growth to *beyond* the Green Belt ('leapfrogging') (Gallent and Shaw, 2007, p. 619). The policy is highlighted as a key reason why British property prices have grown rapidly compared to other OECD countries and these countries have experienced higher levels of economic growth (Figure 9) (Hilber and Vermeulen, 2014, p. 359).

Source: International House Price Database, Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas

Figure 9 - House price growth across OCED countries, 1975-2013 (from: Coelho *et al*, 2014, pp. 3, 21)

Empirical Data

Although the policy has been successful in its historic *direct* aim of containing cities (see Chapter 2;

Longley *et al.*, 1992), it is now widely accepted by academics that it is *a* cause of Britain's housing

crisis although the *extent* of that responsibility is complicated and fiercely disputed (Evans, 1996;

Barker, 2004, 2006; Cheshire, 2009, 2014a; Lyons, 2014, p. 14). For example, Hilber and Vermeulen

(2014, pp. 366-378) highlighted that, on average, new build homes in Britain are 40% smaller than in

the Netherlands whilst their empirical study found that planning restrictions, like the Green Belt,

raise house prices by around 30% in England and that they would have risen 90% rather than 190%

between 1974 and 2008 without these restrictions. Likewise, Ball *et al* (2014, p. 3010) found, in

Melbourne (Australia), that house prices rose 56% (until 2008) after its UGB was implemented in

2002. Finally, Hall (1974, p. 404) highlighted that the land price rose 20 times between the (late)

1930s and 1960s in Britain, showing the impact of the Green Belt on land values as, between 1892-

1931, there was no increase in house prices, despite household numbers increasing 61% and incomes

31% (Figure 10).

Source: Cheshire *et al.* (2014)

Figure 10 - House price and land price increase between 1892 and 2007 (adopted from Coelho *et al*, 2014, p. 23)

The land market is key to the housing crisis because 70% of housebuilding costs result from the land price, an increase from only 4-12% in 1960, whilst residential land prices rose 1230% and house prices 500% between 1955-2008 although the UK's population only rose 21% (Cheshire, 2009, p. 11, 2014c, p. 1; Manns, 2014, p. 9). It is argued therefore that price signals demonstrate that the policy is causing an 'artificial scarcity' of land for residential development[16] (Ball *et al.*, 2014, p. 3010; Wolf, 2015b, 2015a; Elliott, 2018; Sylvester *et al.*, 2018). This land shortage is compounded by other planning restrictions across Britain where 31% of land is protected by AONBs and other designations, rising to 40% in the South East where housing demand is greatest (Figure 11) (Nathan, 2007, p. 4; Saunders, 2016, p. 51). However, economic theory suggests that, whereas housing supply would normally rise in response to price/market signals to meet demand, like in the 1930s, the Green Belt prevents the market from 'clearing' (Dawkins and Nelson, 2002; Cheshire, 2014c; Gilmore, 2016, p.

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[16] For example, agricultural land in Oxfordshire has a value of £10-25,000 per ha whilst land with planning permission for residential development is worth around £5.6 million per ha (Bradley, 2020b, p. 10).

8). Nonetheless, whilst it is widely acknowledged that the housing crisis and land market *are* serious problems, establishing *direct* causal links between the Green Belt and high house prices is problematic due to the complexity of the crisis and difficulties in disentangling the *degree* to which the Green Belt is responsible compared to other factors, as even Hilber and Vermeulen (2014) acknowledge.
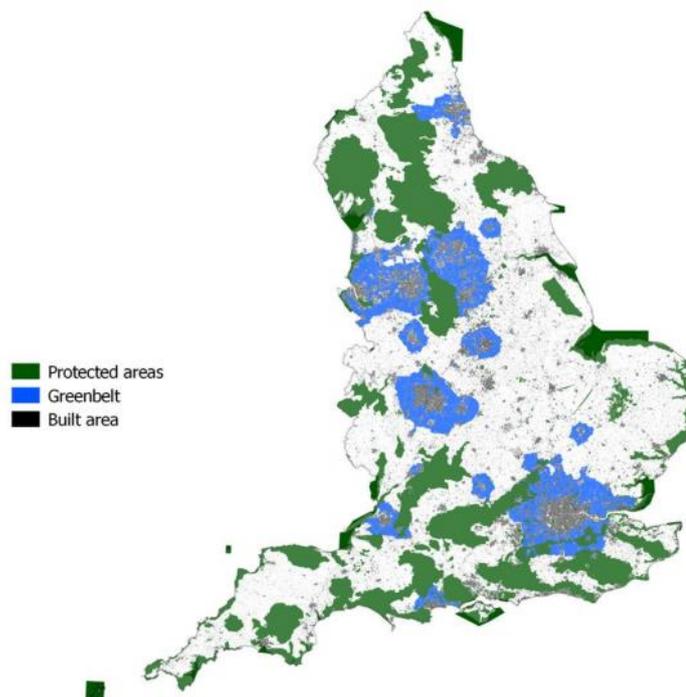
Figure 11 - Areas protected by planning restrictions (Coelho, Ratnoo and Dellepiane, 2014, p. 30)

Defences of Green Belt - Critiquing the Free Market Perspectives and the Land Supply Arguments
Firstly, Bramley (1993, pp. 1022–1024), based on empirical economic modelling of housing in 90 (English) districts, argued that house prices are largely determined by the 'second-hand' market so that, even if a large programme of private housebuilding was initiated through widespread Green Belt release, the total housing stock would not increase by more than 1% annually and only have a 'very marginal/not very large' effect on prices[17]. However, Bramley's model has been critiqued by Evans (1996) who contended that land release *does* reduce house prices and Bramley (1993, p. 1037)

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[17] Bramley's (1993, p. 1022) also found that even a large release of Green Belt land would only increase housing output by 2% and reduce prices by 1.2%. He argued that state intervention in the land market to purchase land for housebuilding and providing social housing would be a more effective way to solve the crisis.

conceded that Green Belt sites are 'disproportionately attractive' to housebuilders so may result in more housebuilding *ceteris paribus* compared to releasing other land. Secondly, Mulheirn (2019, p. 4) argued that housing supply has been keeping pace with population growth and therefore low interest rates, smaller household size, the 'financialisation' of housing and speculative mortgage lending have been driving high house prices recently (Ellis and Henderson, 2014; Saunders, 2016, pp. 56, 150). Indeed, the 'porosity' of local housing markets to international/national demand and investment has been highlighted alongside the spatially variegated nature of the crisis (Meen, 2018; Gallent, 2019a, p. 489).

Bringing Perspectives Together – The Green Belt and Land Market
This goes to the heart of a complicated, multi-layered and contentious debate about whether house prices are *primarily* determined by supply or demand (the diagnosis), and if, after a significant land release in the Green Belt, housebuilders would build enough new homes to stabilise house prices (the prescription) (Evans, 1996; Ball *et al.*, 2014; Hilber and Vermeulen, 2014; Saunders, 2016, p. 58)[18]. Meen and Whitehead (2020) argued that house prices are not perfectly elastic to supply because they are often determined by 'place' factors or locational characteristics, such as schools, amenities and environment, rather than *just* the quantity or quality of housing itself (this is known as 'imperfect substitutability' in economics (Hilber and Vermeulen, 2014, p. 362)). Consequently, Pendlebury (2015) argues that releasing (more) land for housing in desirable places to live, does not significantly reduce house prices because people still desire to live there and it has been hypothesised that, if the Green Belt was abolished, housebuilders would choose the most attractive sites to build executive housing rather than stabilising house prices (Monk and Whitehead, 1999; RTPI, 2015, 2016; Saunders, 2016). Indeed, Whitehead (*et al.*, 2015, p. 13), in a study of 8 housing developments, and Bramley *et al.* (2017) in research on housing developments in the South West (of England), both found limited impacts on local house prices, especially if more and improved

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[18] These questions are directly explored in the empirical Chapter 6 but an overview is given here.

amenities resulted from development. The counter-argument is that a significant land release would dampen landowners expectations of 'hope' (land) value, send a clear signal to the market that 'artificial scarcity' is ended and stabilise house prices (Hilber and Vermeulen, 2014, p. 16; Mace, 2018). However, as the Economics Editor of the *Financial Times*, Martin Wolf (House of Lords, 2016, p. 35) argued, until a large scale housebuilding programme takes place, it is difficult to accurately judge its effects upon house prices.

There *is* broad agreement about the oligopoly structure of the housebuilding industry but disagreement on whether releasing land from the Green Belt would create a more 'contestable' market to SME housebuilders (Adams and Leishman, 2008, p. 9; Barlow and King, 1992, p. 380; Bentley, 2017). The land market is characterised by huge competition between housebuilders, speculation by landowners and land promoters/traders and, consequently, an 'oligopoly' of large housebuilders whereby 50% of new houses built annually are by just the largest 10 housebuilders (Archer and Cole, 2014; Jefferys *et al.*, 2015; House of Lords, 2016, p. 8; Bradley, 2020b). Although beyond this project's scope, the fierce, wider debate about 'land banking', whereby housebuilders are accused of deliberately 'hoarding' or controlling land to 'drip feed' supply to keep prices high and maximise profitability, is clearly at the heart of this Green Belt debate (Rydin, 2011, p. 120, 2013, pp. 120–121; Aubrey, 2015, p. 24; Kilroy, 2017, p. 9)[19]. This was investigated extensively by the Letwin Review (2018, p. 8) which found that limited housing output was caused by the local 'market absorption rate' whilst developers and consultants, such as Lichfields (2016, p. 20), highlight the long 'lead-in' times for sites to install utilities and infrastructure etc.[20]. Consequently, as argued in Chapter 6, more SME builders and integrated planning is required with research showing that delivery rates

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[19] A 30-40% gap nationally between annual permissions and build-out rates is pointed to. There were 850,000-1 million unbuilt permissions in 2018 (Mace, 2018, p. 12; LGA, 2019; Bradley, 2020b, p. 9).
[20] Letwin's findings echo consultants reports on urban extensions with Peter Brett Associates (2014, p. 14) finding that housebuilders are limited to building around 106 units annually and Lichfields (2016, p. 6) 161 units. 'Land banking' is argued to not be in the business model of housebuilders with shortages of construction workers/materials and traditional, time-consuming methods underlined (Gilmore, 2014, 2016; Lichfields, 2018).

are higher on sites prepared by public infrastructure investment, like Cranbrook (Devon) and Eastern

Expansion Area (Milton Keynes) (Lichfields, 2016, p. 6; Letwin, 2018b, 2018a). There is also the

longstanding, contentious issue of land value capture and landownership with the most radical Green

Belt reform proposals calling for it to be nationalised then sold onto developers (McCrum, 2014),

similar to the Netherlands, although less radical proposals call for a Green Belt 'tax' (Cheshire, 2009,

p. 15; Wolf, 2015b, p. 2; Redfern, 2016; Catney and Henneberry, 2019). This section demonstrates

that private sector development *alone* on the Green Belt is not the 'magic bullet' solution to the

multi-faceted housing crisis and that landownership and 'options' on land, taxation and the

housebuilding industry's structure, including the wider difficulties which SME builders encounter

(re)entering the housing market, all need to be considered (see Chapter 6) (Lyons, 2014, p. 21; House

of Lords, 2016, p. 96; Lichfields, 2017, p. 16).

Defences of Green Belt - The Great Compaction Debate: Green Belt and Brownfield Land
Additionally, there is a fierce, fundamental debate over whether sufficient brownfield land exists in

British cities to meet housing needs (Shelter and Quod, 2016; Mace, 2017). For example, CPRE (2017,

p. 10) regularly challenge the need to build on the Green Belt because they argue that there is

enough brownfield land in cities to supply over 1 million new houses (excluding

playfields/greenspace and including sites deliverable within 5 years). It is often argued, and popularly

assumed, that building on brownfield land is inherently more sustainable than greenfield as reducing

the amount of land needed for development and benefiting from, and supporting, existing shops and

services (Morrison, 1998; Jenks *et al*, 2000; Jabareen, 2006). However, as Mace *et al.* (2016, p. 5)

highlighted, these are often 'tricky', small sites unsuitable for large housebuilders, especially as many

'easier' brownfield sites have already been utilised, whilst several studies have questioned the

amount of homes that brownfield land can accommodate, how long it can be sustained and the

speed of delivery. The House of Lords Report (2016, p. 1398) calculated that less than 33% of the

UK's housing needs until 2031 can be met through brownfield land while Abbott (2013, p. 13) and

Elledge (2018, p. 2) found that, although 100,000-150,000 acres of brownfield land is suitable for housebuilding, it is often in the 'wrong place' due to huge remediation costs (which limits the amount of affordable housing which can be provided (see Young, 2019b, 2019a, 2019c, 2019d)). Moreover, housing delivery tends to be 50% slower on brownfield compared to greenfield sites (Lichfields, 2016, p. 18; Shelter and Quod, 2016).

Another problem with relying largely on brownfield sites is that, because they are generally in town centres and the inner-city, housing tends to be 1-2 bedroom apartments (Breheny, 1997, p. 207; Ball *et al*, 2009; Cheshire, 2014b, p. 1). For example, 50% of dwellings constructed nationally were flats in 2007 whilst in Birmingham, 78% of dwellings built were apartments in 2018 (Cheshire, 2014a, p. 1; Best, 2019, p. 4). While these apartments may cater well for young professionals and the elderly, most people (64% nationally), especially families with children, prefer having a house with a garden and living in quieter, semi-rural suburbs with this trend reinforced by Coronavirus and the lockdowns (Breheny, 1996, p. 16, 1997, p. 214; Hall and Breheny, 1996; Nathan, 2007, p. 5; Goode, 2020e). Consequently, in a capitalist society where people (or at least those with resources) can choose where they live, people tend to 'vote with their feet' to the semi-rural suburbs (Adams *et al.*, 2000; Mace, 2018). Abbott (2013, p. 20) argued that the Green Belt has resulted in 'exoduses of (family) households' from the cities to more rural locations because of costs and the lack of housing choice (which was why some LPAs have allowed and justified executive housing developments in the Green Belt, such as Newcastle Great Park and Langley Urban Extension (Birmingham) (Gunn, 2007, p. 612; Birmingham City Council (BCC), 2017, p. 48)). The Green Belt has therefore been charged with causing 'town cramming' and partly responsible for new built homes in England having the least domestic space in western Europe (Hall, 1974, p. 403; Smith, 1984; Gunn, 2007, p. 598; Gallent *et al*, 2010).

Another key defence of the policy is that, as the NPPF (MHCLG, 2019b, p. 40) stresses, it 'prevents urban sprawl' and 'assists in urban regeneration'. A large body of literature, especially from North America, has critiqued sprawl for creating car-dependency, congestion and more CO_2 emissions, increasing the inefficiencies of service provision and encouraging investors to abandon the inner-city (Gallent *et al*, 2006a, p. 457; Layzer, 2012, p. 489; Davoudi and Sturzaker, 2017, p. 55). For example, Litman's (2015, pp. 4-40) survey of sprawl argued that it causes over $1 trillion in economic inefficiency thereby highlighting a key benefit of England's Green Belt (See also: Wiewel *et al*, 1999; Berube *et al.*, 2006; Nathan, 2007, p. 4; Miner, 2014). Power and Haughton (2007, p. 164) called greenfield development 'land gobbling, congestion generating and environmentally damaging' so call for a 'fixed UGB' (or green belt) to create compact, sustainable cities. In turn, this feeds into the argument that the policy creates 'compact', walkable and sustainable cities which have been idealised by the concept of dense European medieval city cores (Breheny, 1996, 1997, p. 209; Jenks *et al*, 2000, p. 39; Neuman, 2005, p. 12). These arguments are used to support the Green Belt around historic cities, like Oxford, York and Cambridge (Morrison, 1998, p. 160, 2010, p. 166; Healey, 2007; Kells *et al.*, 2007, p. 5). Although the North American emphasis is more on *managing* rather than *constraining* development, these arguments surrounding urban compaction are also similar to New Urbanist and 'smart growth' agenda arguments (Williams, 2014; Davoudi and Sturzaker, 2017, p. 59). Moreover, defenders of the policy argue that it makes housebuilders focus on 'harder' inner-city, brownfield sites rather than on 'easier' greenfield ones where they can maximise profit, especially in post-industrial cities with lots of brownfield land, like the Potteries, Tyne and Wear and Liverpool (Monk and Whitehead, 1999; Gallent *et al*, 2006b; Aubrey, 2015).

In response, Neuman (2005, p. 15) has critiqued the underlying, 'fallacious' logic of the 'compact city', especially when society has changed so comprehensively since medieval times with modern transport. Secondly, as argued in Chapter 2, comparisons between urban growth and popular attitudes towards the countryside in Britain and the US, are largely unreasonable. Thirdly, many of

those advocating Green Belt reform (i.e. Manns, 2014; Mace, 2018, p. 12), still argue for a 'brownfield' first policy. Furthermore, many academics argue that the link between containment at the urban edge and inner city brownfield development, enshrined and assumed in national policy, is highly contentious and unproven (Gallent and Shaw, 2007; Mace, 2017, 2018). For example, Gunn (2007, p. 612) and Monk and Whitehead (1999) argued that the resources devoted to urban regeneration are more important than the Green Belt in determining the amount of brownfield land developed. Indeed, arguably the tremendous popular fear of 'what if' regarding the Green Belt and campaigners/CPRE using the 'politics of affect' with the simple but powerful binary and 'dualism' of American-style sprawl *or* Britain's Green Belt, the countryside being 'concreted over' and already congested places becoming 'gridlocked' by development, shows the power of ideas regarding the policy (Thrift, 2004, p. 57; Warren and Clifford, 2005, p. 361; Sturzaker, 2010).

Critiques of the Green Belt - Environmental Perspectives
The policy is also critiqued because it is often not particularly 'green' or environmentally 'valuable' as largely used for intensive agriculture, which has net environmental disbenefits, whilst ecologically valuable land in it is usually protected by other environmental designations, like SSSIs, AONBs etc. (Randolph, 2004; Gallent and Shaw, 2007; Prior and Raemaekers, 2007, p. 581)[21]. The Green Belt is frequently degraded near the rural-urban fringe as it is largely privately owned and often without public access or recreational opportunities so has a relatively low societal value (£889ha) compared to urban parks and greenspaces (£54,000ha) (Foresight Report, 2010, pp. 98, 291). Indeed, the current 'brownfield first' policy has exerted pressure on existing urban greenspace with Cheshire (2014b, p. 18) arguing that brownfield land often has rich biodiversity, like the Hoo Peninsula[22].

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[21] 60% of the total Green Belt, 74% of it around Cambridge, 71% around Birmingham and 60% around London is intensively farmed (Correll *et al*, 1978; Amati and Taylor, 2010, p. 144; Cheshire, 2014c).
[22] Between 1992-2005, 50% of London's and 600 acres of England's playing fields were used for housing and the equivalent of 22 Hyde Parks were developed from front gardens for driveways (McCrum, 2014, p. 2).

Moreover, housing growth is often deflected, dispersed and redirected beyond the Green Belt with many studies, like the Regional Studies Association's Report, *Beyond Green Belts*, (Herington, 1990, p. 164), arguing that it has caused the unsustainable development pattern of 'leapfrogging' (Town and Country Planning Association (TCPA), 2002; Barker, 2006, p. 67). Firstly, this means that housebuilding sometimes takes place in the 'deeper' countryside, which often has higher ecological and environmental value than the Green Belt itself (Harrison, 1981, p. 114; Nathan, 2007, p. 5). Secondly, as areas beyond it often lack amenities and public transport links, they can become 'dormitories' and encourage car-dependency, especially work, leisure and shopping trips *crossing* the Green Belt[23] (Morrison, 2010, p. 159). This not only increases pollution but also journey-to-work times reducing leisure and family time (Natural England, 2007, p. 2; Davoudi and Sturzaker, 2017, p. 62). Hall (*et al.*, 1973b, pp. 49-55) argued that the policy was partly responsible in causing the 'suburbanisation' of the countryside and highlighted that CPRE's (then) position to the Barlow Commission was that 'controlled, peripheral development was better than leapfrogging and green belts'. Nathan (2007, p. 5) and the Foresight Report (2010, p. 241) also argued that it is 'better to allow managed expansion than unplanned leapfrogging'.

Counter Environmental Arguments in Defence of the Green Belt
Firstly, groups, like CPRE, acknowledge that leapfrogging *has* occurred but usually argue that *planned* leapfrogging, especially new towns centred around public transport nodes and aiming to be self-contained, such as Bicester, Stevenage or Milton Keynes, are better than peripheral urban extensions poorly served by public transport[24] (CPRE, 2015b).

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[23] The A40 carries up to 32,000 vehicles per day between Oxford and Witney whilst the A14, between Huntingdon and Cambridge, carries 85,000 (Self, 1962, p. xv; Highways England, 2018, p. 1; Courts, 2019, p. 1).
[24] For example, a planner at an environmental campaigner interviewed argued that: '*These new towns were generally well planned…*[as] *put next to railway lines…and, because there were homes and jobs in all those areas, they were reasonably well self-contained*.'

Secondly, defences of the policy usually revolve around its recreational and environmental benefits whilst Bradley (2019b) argued that it is well-used and patronised as local greenspace (Table 10).

Table 10 - Recreational value of the Green Belt
30,000km of public footpaths
Visited by 1.3 million people annually
Close to 30 million people living in cities
89,0000ha of Green Belt land which is protected by SSSI
Covers 33% of the UK's nature reserves
Covers 20% of England's woodlands
From: Thomas, 1963, p. 23; Elson, 1986; Longley *et al.*, 1992, p. 449; Kells *et al.*, 2007, pp. 3; CPRE, 2015c, p. 2.

As the policy is *not* a landscape designation, its recreational, environmental or landscape benefits are 'incidental' (Mace, 2018, p. 25). Harrison (1981, p. 109) found that, apart from a few well-known sites, it does not effectively serve the recreational needs of cities in the same way that local parks and urban greenspaces do as seen in the lockdowns (For example: Boone *et al.*, 2009, p. 76; Gidlow and Ellis, 2011, p. 990; Mensah *et al.*, 2016, p. 150; Roberts, 2017, p. 13; Manns, 2020).

The Green Belt is also argued to have general, less quantifiable benefits, such as offering 'ecosystem services', providing 'lungs' and a carbon sink for cities, enhancing biodiversity/green infrastructure and reducing 'light pollution' (Kells *et al.*, 2007, p. 3; Amati and Taylor, 2010, pp. 144, 152; CPRE, 2015b, p. 4). Again, these benefits are not incorporated into the Green Belt's purpose whilst Mace (2018, p. 25) argues that it is disingenuous to link these wider benefits to inner-city and city centre areas with it mainly being *local* greenspaces which determines factors, such as air pollution.

Critiques of Green Belt - The 'Orphaning' of the Policy
Currently, there is not an alternative, 'counterbalancing' policy to provide for Britain's housing needs with the Green Belt having been 'orphaned' as originally one of the post-war 'triptych' alongside regional policy and new towns although the effectiveness of these arrangements was similarly critiqued (Hall, 1973a; Papworth, 2015, p. 5; Mace, 2018, p. 10). Indeed, when Circular 42/55 was issued, the architect of the 1947 Act, Lord Silkin, reflected:

> *'If the Government and local authorities are not able and willing to stand up to the pressures of agricultural interests, will not the result of the Green Belt policy be to induce local authorities to increase substantially the density of development…? The result* [would] *be that congestion and overcrowding will be as bad as…before and a new and greatly accentuated problem will be created for future generations…If that were to be the result of Green Belts, it might have been better not to have encouraged them after all'* (cited in Hall *et al.*, 1973a, p. 57).

Likewise, in 1965, Hampshire County Council's Chief Planning Officer, Gerald Smart, argued that the policy is:

> *'Out of date. It is in danger of forcing the preservation of an archaic settlement pattern'* (Cited in: Hall *et al.*, 1973a, p. 58)*.*

Finally, Circular 42/55 was issued against the advice of civil servants, especially Sandy's Permanent Secretary, Dame Evelyn Sharp, who always maintained Green Belts were 'too big for comfort' and 'too rigid' (Cited in: Sturzaker and Mell, 2016, p. 35).

Defences of the Green Belt - Emotional and Institutional Arguments

As the Green Belt policy represents the *status quo* and enjoys widespread popular and political support, there has not been a pressing need to defend it until recently resulting in limited academic or practitioner literature in favour of it (Amati, 2007; Parham and Boyfield, 2016). However, CPRE has consistently supported it and, with over 40,000 members, often employs deeply emotional and defensive arguments demonstrating the 'intensity of feeling' associated with the 'politics of affect' (Thrift, 2004, p. 57; Lloyd and Peel, 2007, p. 640; Amati, 2008, p. 2). Moreover, it is argued that the policy's benefits cannot be exactly quantified by monetary value as being more intangible whilst some things are inherently worth protecting because of their intrinsic value and should not be spoiled by profit-making, capitalist activity, such as the countryside or heritage (Matless, 1998, p. 32; Parker, 2006; Amati, 2008, p. 4; Rydin, 2011, p. 7). Indeed, as outlined in Chapter 2, the policy's historical institutionalism and iconic status means that it appears self-evidently a 'right' or 'natural' policy (Munton, 1986; Mace, 2018) (see Table 11).

Table 11 - Quotes about the importance of the Green Belt
An 'iconic and popular planning policy' capturing the countryside's 'popular image' (Amati, 2007, p. 580).
The Green Belt is a 'sacrosanct', 'immovable shibboleth' which has 'iconic status', a 'baggage' of values and longevity (Prior and Raemaekers, 2007, p. 596)
'Widely supported' as the 'first article of the planning creed' (Gant *et al*, 2011, p. 267).
'Hallowed by popular support and fears of what would happen if they are weakened' (Cullingworth *et al.*, 2015, p. 183).
The 'cornerstone' of planning (Amati and Yokohari, 2007, p. 311; Amati and Taylor, 2010, p. 152)
The 'very *raison d'être* of planning' - Desmond Heap, TPI President (1955) (Cited in: Amati and Yokohari, 2007, p. 315; Mace, 2018, p. 25).
The 'magic weapon'/'mighty sword in planning's armoury (Law, 2000, p. 37; Kells *et al.*, 2007, p. 1).
'One of the few planning concepts which has some meaning for the man in the street…much loved…as a means whereby 'they' (the authorities) will protect the open country around the city where they live'. A 'statutory shibboleth respected by planners, politicians and the public' (Law, 2000, p. 57; Lloyd and Peel, 2007, p. 645).
'One of the most internationally famous attempts to control urban growth', part of a 'universal planning cannon' and a 'central plank of national planning policy' (Amati, 2008, p. 1, 2).
The 'iconic pillar of post-war planning' (Parham and Boyfield, 2016, p. 10)

Chapters 7 and 8 chart the extent of popular support for, and misunderstanding of the policy but the statistics in Table 12 demonstrate why it is politically 'toxic' and 'untouchable' to reform as often likened to a political 'sacred cow', like the NHS (Munton, 1986, p. 211).

Table 12 - Statistics on Green Belt's Popularity		
Key Area	**Statistics**	
Popularity	66% of people surveyed by CPRE (2015) want the Green Belt to be protected.	Foresight Report (2010, p. 60) recorded 85% of people supporting it.
Misunderstanding	71% of CPRE's (2015) respondents said that they knew 'little to nothing' about its purpose.	Foresight Report (2010, p. 60) found that most people think GB protects wildlife (only 25% that it contained cities).
Temporality	Support for the GB has fallen in CPRE's survey from 80% (2005) to 60% (2015).	
General Views	66% of people think that 25% of England is urbanised when only 9-11% is.	
Information from: Amati, 2008, p. 20; Foresight Report, 2010, p. 60; Brown, 2015, p. 1; CPRE, 2015a, p. 1; Papworth, 2015, p. 65; Whall, 2015; House of Lords, 2016, p. 29; Easton, 2018; Grady, 2018; Mace, 2018.		

Alternatives to Green Belt Policy
Planning without the Green Belt
Hall *et al* (1973, pp. 379–385) hypothesised that, without the post-war Green Belt, London's

peripheral growth would have only continued 2-3 miles further than its current boundary as confined

by the Underground's reach (12-13 miles) although freestanding towns with good transport links in

the Green Belt, like Redhill and St Albans, would have expanded (See also: Warren and Clifford, 2005,

p. 356; Sturzaker, 2011, p. 556). Moreover, councils, especially in London and Birmingham, would have continued to purchase land for the Green Belt, like Robert Moses's parks in New York, and North American style sprawl would not exist (Hall, 1974, p. 417, 2014, p. 198).

The Garden City Alternative

With managed but continuous 'cellular' growth, Hall *et al.* (1973a, pp. 387–389) predicted that the close proximity but separate nature of Welwyn, Letchworth and Stevenage to each other is what the Home Counties would have looked like, which he likened to Los Angeles.

Other Alternatives: Historic and Modern
Development in a Planned Way: Transit Oriented Development (TOD)

Most proposals for reforming the MGB revolve around TOD (Table 13) (Haywood, 2005; Manns, 2014). TOD is essentially developing housing and services around transport hubs as a more sustainable alternative to car-dependent development (Calthorpe, 1993; Curtis, 1996; Dittmar and Ohland, 2004; Carlton, 2007, 2009). It is broadly tied to the New Urbanist agenda of more traditional, high-quality design and walkable neighbourhoods facilitating social interactions (Menotti, 2005, p. 111; Podobnik, 2011, p. 10). The most famous historic TOD-led plan is the 1947 'Finger Plan' of Copenhagen (Hickman and Hall, 2008, p. 325; Papa and Bertolini, 2015, p. 70).

Nevertheless, TOD around railway stations in Britain has been limited (Haywood, 2005, p. 89; Mace *et al.*, 2016, pp. 6, 32). For example, Warwick Parkway Station and stations, like Iver and Taplow on the Elizabeth (Crossrail) Line, have excellent transport connections yet do not have housing developed around them due to the Green Belt (Bristol Parkway is one exception) (Haywood, 2005, p. 88; Cheshire, 2014c, p. 2). Indeed, an RTPI (2016c, p. 6) study, *The Location of Development*, found that just 13% of new housing developments were within 800m of train stations between 2012-15 and 20% between 2015-17 - 17% on average. Most proposals for Green Belt TOD therefore propose 'ped-shed' developments within 800m of train stations and exclude land of high environmental, agricultural or recreational quality (Cheshire, 2014c, p. 2; Mace, 2018, p. 15; Figure 12). The main

Underground network, which extends into the Green Belt, is also being studied with places such as

Theydon Bois and Chesham suggested as sustainable development locations (Mace, 2018). The aim is

to uphold the Green Belt's *general* purpose and protect valuable land while meeting London's

pressing housing needs in a (more) sustainable way. As London has an excellent public transport

network, it has been the most studied in terms of TOD proposals (Kilroy, 2017; Table 13).

Nevertheless, a Peter Brett Associates Study (2015, p. 40) found that Birmingham's housing shortfall

of 38,000 could be accommodated in a 1200m radius of just *four* stations in the West Midlands

Green Belt (Whitlock's End, Blakedown, Blake Street and Shenstone).
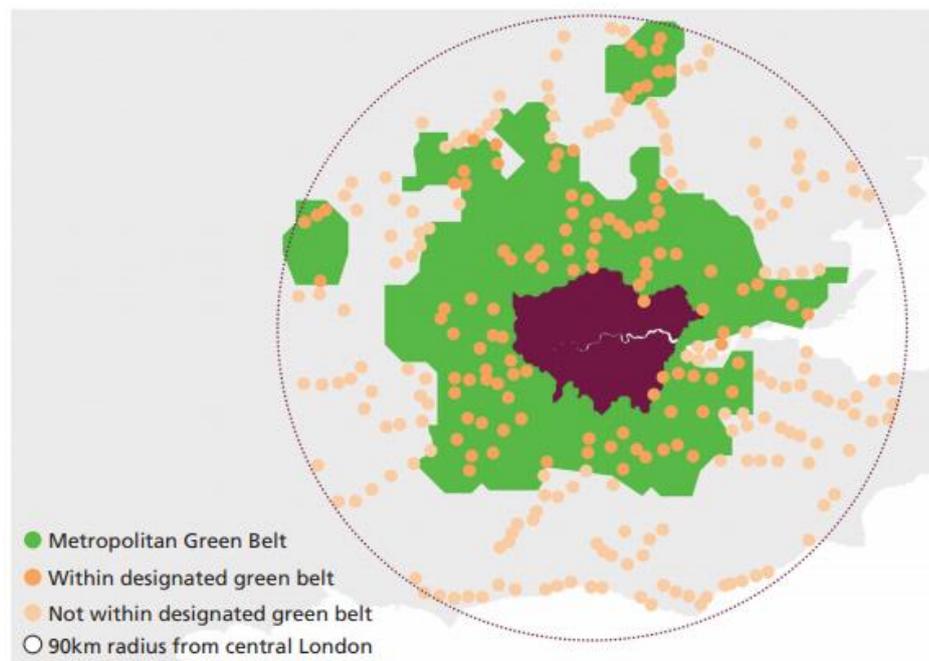
Figure 12 - TOD potential in the Green Belt. From Mace *et al.* (2016, p. 38)

Table 13 - Proposals for Development on the Metropolitan Green Belt (MGB)	
Study	**Proposal**
Cheshire (2014b, p. 2)	Build on less valuable Green Belt (GB) land within 800m radius (or 10 minute walk) of railway stations totalling 1 million homes and taking up 1% of total GB land.
Papworth (2015, p. 3)	3 million homes within a 2.5km of stations taking up 0.5% of total GB land.
London First/Quod (2015, p. 20)	3 million homes within a 2.5km of stations taking up 3% of total Green Belt land.
Clarke *et al* (2014, p. 3)	2.5 million homes within a 2km radius of stations taking up 5% of GB land.
Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) (2015, p. 2)	Cheshire's (2014b, p. 2) proposals would result in 4-7.5m more car journeys as only 7.4% of commuters in the sample of 5 MGB towns, Bracknell, Maidenhead, High Wycombe, Watford and Hemel Hampstead, commuted by train to London.
Stringer (2014, p. 1)	20,000ha of non-environmentally protected land in the MGB within 800m of stations.
Cheshire and Buyuklieva (2019, p. 1)	Build within 800m of stations with a 45 minutes journey into London. Introduce a Land Development Charge at 20% and Green Development Corporations through granting development rights to the railway industry.
See also: Holman *et al.*, 2015, p. 18; Landscape Institute, 2016, pp. 2, 5–6; Mace *et al.*, 2016, p. 39.	

However, TOD generally, alongside TOD in the Green Belt, has been heavily critiqued (O'Toole, 2007a). Firstly, even in the MGB, most trips are not commuting into central London but either locally or to other towns/cities, mainly by car (RTPI, 2015, p. 7). Moreover, other trips are taken alongside the work commute for increasingly complicated patterns of recreation and shopping (Dixon, 2006; Banister, 2008; Budnitz *et al*, 2020). Consequently, an RTPI Report (2015, p. 12) found that Cheshire's TOD plans would result in 4-7.5 million more car trips (see Table 13). This trend would be magnified in regional Green Belts where much less capacity exists on public transport (Chance, 2019).

Moreover, Mace (2018, p. 17) argues that TOD would be politically challenging because planning battles and protests would be likely over each TOD proposal in the Green Belt whilst this selective release of land would not send a clear enough signal to land markets to significantly reduce prices. Finally, TOD would potentially undermine the Green Belt's strategic integrity leading to a 'beads on a string' form of development (Mace, 2018, p. 15).

Green Wedges, Webs and Corridors

The main land use policy alternatives of green wedges, webs and corridors are now explored (Elson

and Nichol, 2001; Oliveira, 2017)[25].

Green Wedges

History

Green wedges or 'ducts of greenspace from the countryside into the centre of a city' have long been

advocated by planners and are sometimes proposed as alternatives to green belts (Oliveira, 2014, p.

357, 2015, 2017). Mace (2018, p. 5) highlighted how in 1829 John Claudius Loudon proposed a

London Plan including green wedges whilst Oliveira (2014, p. 362) explored how green wedges were

supported at the 1910 RIBA Town Planning Conference, most prominently by the architect Vaughan

Lanchester who contended that:

> The *'prevalent view is that parks and recreation grounds should form a ring round the city; it is,*
> *however, **difficult to see on what basis this view rests…the parks themselves should be place***
> ***radially.'*** (from: Oliveira, 2014, p. 360).

In 1908, Lanchester produced a diagram showing his plans for London (Figure 13):
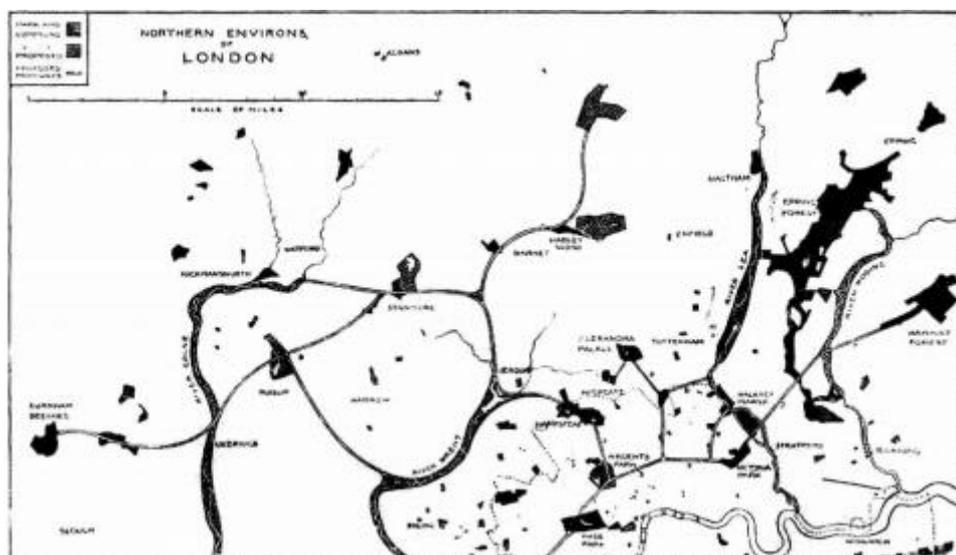
Figure 13 - Lanchester Plans (from: Oliveira, 2014, p. 361)

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[25] Green gaps are not explored here because they are a more local rather than a city-wide or regional growth management policy (Elson, 2002; Natural England, 2007, p. 2; Scott *et al.*, 2013, p. 13).

At the same Conference, the famous engineer Rudolf Eberstadt argued about green belts that:

'It is injurious and hurtful to town expansion…we must break down the ring. The pattern for modern town expansion is the radial pattern.' (From: Oliveira, 2014, p. 362).

Eberstadt produced a very clear diagram to illustrate his point (Figure 14):
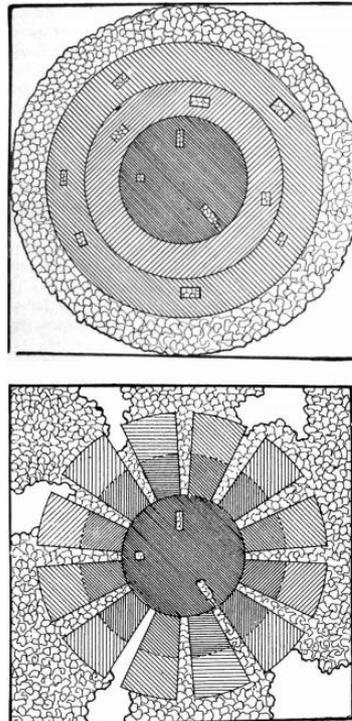
Figure 14 - Eberstadt's diagram on the difference between green belts and green wedges (From: Oliveira, 2014, p. 363)

Abercrombie (1933, 1945, p. 103) was influenced by these ideas and sought to combine green wedges *and* green belts in the *Greater London Plan*. However, due to complications in land use and ownership with green wedges, they were not implemented apart from the Lee Valley unlike Birmingham with its long history of green wedges (Oliveira, 2014, 2015; Sturzaker and Mell, 2016). Indeed, whereas the concept of green wedges largely receded in the popular imagination, the Green Belt has become incredibly popular demonstrating the 'leitmotif of the power of planning ideas' (Morrison, 2010, p. 166; Oliveira, 2014, p. 369).

Benefits and Disadvantages

Herington (1990) recommended green wedges over green belts as a better way to manage urban growth. Firstly, they provide greenspace directly to more people in urban areas and successfully

connect city centres to the countryside literally and psychologically (Lloyd and Peel, 2007, p. 642; Amati, 2008, p. 11)**.** Moreover, wedges have become more popular recently with the rise of ideas, like 'green' infrastructure/grids, which underline the benefits of *integrating* rural and urban (Gallent and Shaw, 2007, p. 617; Prior and Raemaekers, 2007, p. 594). Wedges can follow linear routes, such as canals and rivers, so are better at facilitating recreation (Amati, 2008, p. 13). Secondly, they are flexible and 'more sophisticated' as able to expand with urban growth and be adjusted and altered in response to changing economic and social forces more easily than 'rigid' Green Belts (Scott *et al.*, 2013, pp. 13, 40; House of Lords, 2016, p. 86). For example, the green wedges of Copenhagen's 1947 'Finger Plan' have grown with its outward expansion and, although in response to increased housing demands the 'fingers' of development have become 'fatter', they have not joined up (Oliveira, 2014, p. 369; Davoudi and Sturzaker, 2017, p. 69). The (then) Chair of Natural England, Sir Martin Doughty, argued in 2007 that:

> *'The time has come for a greener green belt. We need a 21st century solution to England's housing needs which puts in place a network of green wedges, gaps and corridors, linking the natural environment and people'* (Cited in Scott et al., 2013, p. 14).

However, the Green Belt's primary purpose is not recreation but to *prevent urban sprawl* which green wedges fail to do (CPRE, 2005). Moreover, due to existing settlement and land ownership issues, green wedges are often difficult to implement retrospectively (Oliveira, 2017).

Green Web
The Green Belt's principal aim, in common with modernist planning ideas, was to separate town and country whereas the green web concept is premised on the benefits of *integrating* them (Manns and Falk, 2016, p. 18; Bragg *et al.*, 2017). As the 'web' analogy suggests, it proposes a more complicated, imaginative and flexible mix of housing, transport and greenspace than the Green Belt's traditional, neat separation (Yokohari *et al.*, 2000). Given West London's severe housing and development

pressures, Manns and Falk (2016, p. 6) recommended a 'green web' there[26]. Moreover, Yokohari *et al.* (2008, p. 165) explained the failure of green belts in South East Asia as directly 'copying' Britain's Green Belt whereas Asian vernacular development has traditionally integrated agriculture and paddy fields into cities.

Green Corridor

This concept weaves the green wedge and web ideas together although it has been largely developed with the existing Green Belt in mind (Mace, 2018). Essentially, it involves designating a large corridor where housing and industrial development is allowed to take place, often around TOD, but where access to, and facilities in, undeveloped Green Belt is improved through planning gain (Amati and Yokohari, 2007; Mace, 2018). The corridors are planned strategically and aim, through signalling to the market that a large amount of land is going to be released, to dampen land prices (Scott *et al.*, 2013). This has been recently advocated by Mace (2018, p. 18) based upon the *London Plan's* coordination corridors (Figure 15):

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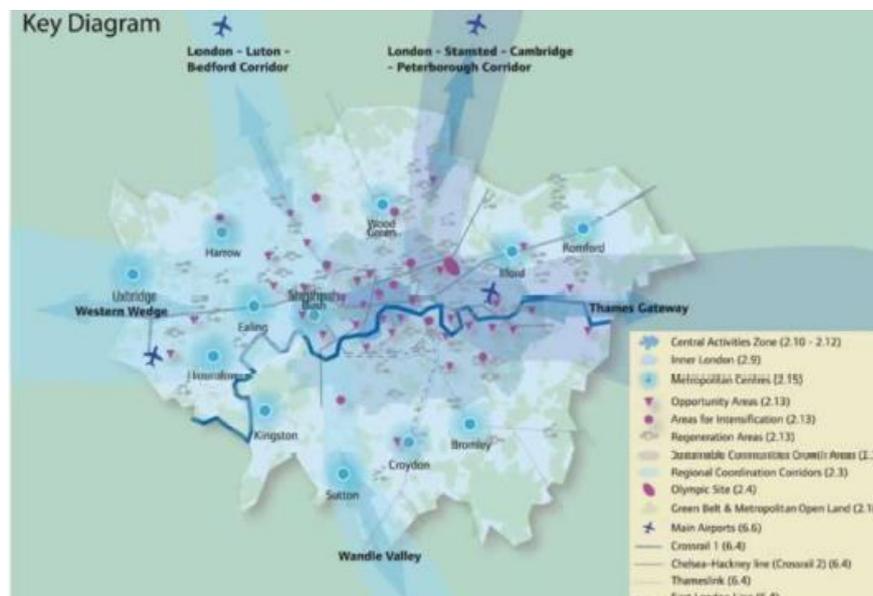
[26] In the All Party Parliamentary Group for London's Planning Report, the Chair Rupa Huq MP endorsed the green web plan and called the Green Belt 'King Canute' as 'resisting the tide' (Manns and Falk, 2016, pp. 36-46). The Plan involved 200,000 new jobs and homes in the 'Western Wedge', a 'garden city' in the Green Belt at Northolt, a West London orbital railway, a 'green web' centred on the Colne Valley and a 'Blue Corridor' on the Grand Union Canal (Manns and Falk, 2016, p. 2-6).

Figure 15 - The London Plan's Coordination Corridors (Mace, 2018, p. 18)

However, Mace *et al.* (2016, p. 7) argued that, initially, a 'pioneer corridor' should be trialled on the

existing London-Cambridge Corridor to build public confidence about Green Belt reform (Figure 16):

Figure 16 - Mace's proposed 'pioneer corridor' (Mace et al., 2016; Mace, 2018)

Finally, Mace's ideas have been extended by Manns (2014, p. 14) who proposed much larger and

longer corridors in the Greater South East[27].

Other Green Belts Around the World

There are not many examples internationally of green belts or UGBs and, where they do exist,

generally aim to *shape and manage* urban growth rather than *prevent* it with more autonomy for

regions and cities (see Table 14) (Daniels, 2010, pp. 259–261; Coelho *et al*, 2014, pp. 35–39).

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[27] From Hammersmith through Reading to Newbury (west), Romford through Chelmsford then Colchester (east), Greenwich to Ashford (south east) and Barnet to Milton Keynes (north west) (Manns, 2014, p. 14).

Table 14 - Green Belts around the world

City	Urban Policy Description
Tokyo	Green Belt: introduced 1956; abolished 1969 due to pressure from landowners.
Christchurch	Green Belt: Introduced 1950s; abolished by the Resource Management Act (1991)
Seoul	Green Belt: Introduced 1970 Urban Planning Act - flexibly applied as land is frequently released for housing.
Bangkok	Green Belt: approved in 1971 - not continuous and away from the urban edge to allow urban expansion. Consists of 700km^2 of paddy fields to prevent flooding.
Sydney	Green Belt: Introduced 1945; abolished in 1960 due to landowner opposition.
Melbourne	Urban Growth Boundary: Introduced 2003; relaxed 2008.
Portland	Urban Growth Boundary (UGB): Introduced 1979 - partially repealed by Measure 37 (2004) and then partially reinstated by Measure 37 (2007). UGB still in place.
Durban	Informal Green Belt introduced.
Medellin	Green Belt: Introduced 2012 to protect its hill slopes from mudslides.
Information from: Yokohari *et al.*, 2000, pp. 161–163; Freestone, 2003; Amati and Yokohari, 2007, p. 315; Boyle and Mohamed, 2007, pp. 681–692; Amati, 2008, pp. 11–13; Amati and Taylor, 2010, p. 152; Daniels, 2010, pp. 259–261; Gant *et al*, 2011; Layzer, 2012, pp. 500–505; Ball *et al.*, 2014; Coelho *et al*, 2014, pp. 35–39; Chu *et al*, 2017, pp. 383–384; Sik, 2018**.**	

3.4. Key Findings from the Form, Function, Evaluation and Alternatives Chapter

This chapter's aim has been to examine the Green Belt's current form and function whilst evaluating its effectiveness and exploring alternative policies. It has shown how inextricably linked the Green Belt's form and function are thus underscoring the importance of space in researching the policy. That the Green Belt still commands such widespread popular political support and emotional appeal when England is experiencing a serious housing crisis and it is widely attacked as a policy, is remarkable and builds on Chapter 2 which charted how the Green Belt acquired such a prescient place in the popular imagination (Mace *et al.*, 2016). Additionally, the literature suggests that certain groups, especially homeowners, are particularly powerful in the planning system, especially in support of the Green Belt (Sturzaker and Mell, 2016), so the next theoretical Chapter (4) critically explores power and interest groups in planning.

Chapter 4: Power and Interest Groups in Planning: A Theoretical Frame

4.1.   Introduction

This chapter develops the thesis's broader theoretical framework through exploring wider planning and geographical theories and critically evaluating the extent to which they can be applied to the Green Belt (Allmendinger, 2009; Prior and Raemaekers, 2007). Firstly, it explores the Green Belt's popularity and permanence through 'theoretically informed critique' and analysis of *which* groups have the most power in planning and *how* this power is exercised (Parker *et al*, 2015, p. 520). Secondly, it uses the policy as a lens or medium to develop a deeper understanding of power and interest groups in planning and wider society. Rydin (1985, p. 7) argued that this is the ultimate aim of planning research. Thirdly, it contributes to, and refines aspects of planning theory by critically assessing to what extent they apply to the Green Belt.

The chapter examines what Healey *et al.* (1988, p. 152) highlighted as the three main conceptual frameworks for viewing interest groups in planning: positivist, Marxist and (briefly) post-structuralist. Firstly, it finds that the positivist approach is useful for identifying interest groups but fails to account for the uneven power relations in planning (Flyvbjerg, 1998; Fox-Rogers and Murphy, 2014). Secondly, while aspects of Marxian theory are useful, through focusing largely on city centres and the inner-city it fails to take sufficient account of, and explain, power relations at the (under-researched) 'rural-urban fringe' - this project's spatial focus (Scott *et al,* 2013, p. 1; Gallent and Shaw, 2007, p. 620). The Green Belt is a prescient example of the state *restricting* capital accumulation by volume housebuilders and, rather than a conflict between labour and capital, can be better conceptualised as the arena where the fierce 'intra-capitalist' conflict between homeowners and housebuilders is played out (Foglesong, 1986, p. 22; Lake, 1993, p. 89). The thesis utilises this concept of an 'intra-capitalist' conflict as the main theoretical framework (Kiernan, 1983, p. 72). Finally, a post-structuralist view of planning and, the academy's response in theories, like collaborative and agonist

planning, also fails to account for certain groups, such as homeowners and housebuilders, having *more* power than others (Tewdwr-Jones, 1998; Tewdwr-Jones and Allmendinger, 1998).

This conceptual framework is operationalised through the social justice or just city approach as an analytical framework to evaluate the Green Belt (Fainstein, 2000, 2010, 2014b). This approach, essentially evaluating 'who benefits and loses' from planning (Kiernan, 1983, p. 83; Sandercock and Dovey, 2002, p. 152), goes back to Hall *et al.'s* (1973b, 1973a) work but has been associated more recently with Fainstein (2010); Soja (2010) and Flyvbjerg's (2004) work. The chapter highlights that any proposal for Green Belt reform needs to be evaluated by *political and social acceptability* alongside economic and practical viability (see Chapters 2/3; Breheny, 1997, p. 209). The chapter then explores planning's political nature by examining *how* powerful groups, especially homeowners, attempt to exercise power (Altshuler, 1966; Blowers, 1980; Cherry, 1982). It employs Luke's (2004, p. 14-59) *Three Dimensions of Power* to elucidate how the workings of power are not always overt but are often more subtle. It looks at *processes* and *outcomes* which traditionally have been explored separately in planning research (Rydin, 1985; Fainstein, 2014b).

The chapter aims not only to gain a deeper understanding of planning but, in line with calls in Geography for 'policy relevant' research, to help inform solutions to the housing crisis and ensure that planning outcomes are more just (Martin, 2001; Dorling *et al.*, 2002; Ward, 2005, p. 310, 2007). Nevertheless, understanding power is still vital to shape policy (Flyvbjerg, 1998) so the chapter feeds into the methodological approach by shaping the analytical framework and research methods used.

4.2. Theoretical Frames of Interest Groups and Power in Planning: Towards a Conceptual Framework of the Green Belt

Healey *et al.* (1988, p. 152) helpfully identified three main conceptual frameworks for viewing interests in planning: positivist, Marxist and post-structuralist. However, arguably none of these

theoretical approaches are sufficient at explaining the system's complexity or accounting for the Green Belt's popularity and longevity.

Positivist or rationalist

This viewpoint essentially casts planners as apolitical, 'technical, disinterested and even-handed' and assumes that people have access to perfect planning information and make 'rational' decisions (Kiernan, 1983, p. 72). Indeed, local people are viewed as dispassionately and objectively weighing up the costs and benefits of particular developments whilst, in public consultation, the views and concerns of communities are well-represented and, if people have not expressed a view, this represents their 'tacit support' (Rydin, 1985, pp. 9–11; Healey *et al.*, 1988, p. 154). Likewise, councillors have a good knowledge of their communities and generally represent their 'best' interests (Yarwood, 2002, p. 277). Consequently, planners and councillors are said to make decisions in the public interest as weighing up and understanding public opinion (Witt and Fleming, 1984; Sturzaker and Shucksmith, 2011, p. 189).

This approach has rightly been criticised as neglecting the key issue of power in planning (McLoughlin, 1985; Flyvbjerg, 1998). As early as the 1960s, Altshuler's (1966) work highlighted that planners were restricted in what they could achieve by political constraints and realities and he characterised planning as more *managing* competing and conflicting interests (see also: Hartman, 1966; Warren, 1967). More recently, Rydin and Pennington (2000, pp. 154, 156) argued that planning is liable to 'special interest capture' because of 'selective participation by vocal and well-organised interest groups', such as homeowners, leading to policies which benefit particular groups while the '*costs of policy failure spread across non-mobilised sections of the community*'.

Indeed, a large body of research has explored planning's political nature and found that consultation tends to be dominated by the 'usual suspects' of 'seasoned campaigners' - older, middle-class homeowners with plenty of time who are 'ferocious and articulate' but not necessarily representative of their communities (Grant, 2005; Sturzaker, 2011, p. 566; Table 15). Simmie (1981),

in his study of Oxford found that, in planning, 'unorganised groups…come off badly, bearing

regressive cost' (cited in Cherry, 1982, p. 115). This underlines the importance of social capital in

planning and community engagement with Wills (2016, pp. 43-62), in case studies of Neighbourhood

Plans in St James (Exeter), Highgate (London) and Holbeck (Leeds), highlighting that those involved

tended to be 'older, wealthier, better educated, long-term residents' living in areas with higher levels

of 'civil infrastructure, core and capacity' (Figure 17).

The distribution of the 'civic core' in relation to the deprivation of their home location
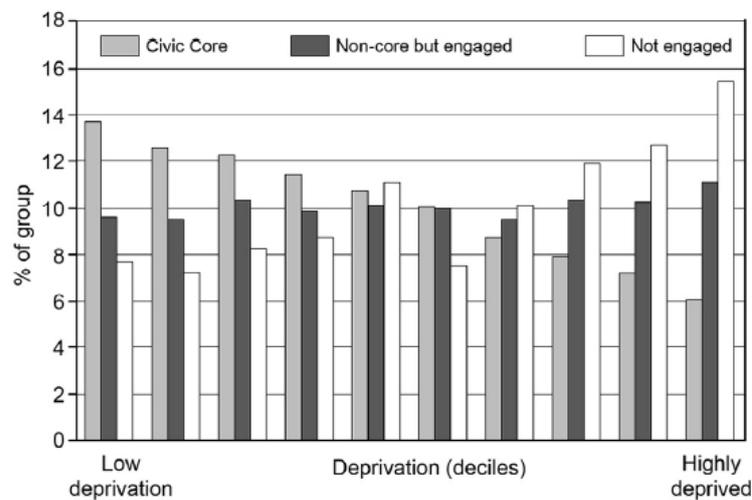
Source: Mohan (2011, 10)

Figure 17 - Social Capital and deprivation (From: Wills, 2016, p. 45)

The positivist model underestimates the challenges of involving the majority of people in planning

including time, intimidation by planning's official, technical nature or wider disengagement with local

democracy (Lowndes and Pratchett, 2012, p. 453).

Table 15 - Studies on 'objector' groups in Planning		
Study	**Location**	**Findings**
Hubbard (2005, pp. 3, 12)	Asylum centres in Oxfordshire/ Nottinghamshire	Often refused because of local campaigns and the countryside being 'a repository of white (middle class) values, ideologies and lifestyles'.
Sturzaker (2010, p. 1014, 2011, p. 566)	Long Compton (Warwickshire), Rainton (North Yorkshire) and Baselow/Thorpe, Derbyshire	Lack of rural affordable housing due to snobbery and the 'exclusionary preferences of the powerful'. A local council representative labelled objectors 'retired, professional, middle class' while a housing provider called them 'a very articulate group of people'.
Sims and Bossetti (2016, pp. 20, 27)	Outer Boroughs of London	One Borough Director of Planning is cited as saying that there a 'handful of articulate, well-resourced residents who will oppose anything'.
Short *et al* (1987, p. 37)	Central Berkshire	88% of people forming anti-development, 'stopper campaign groups', were homeowners.
Ball's (2004, pp. 121, 132)	Urban regeneration projects in London	Survey of housebuilders and councils found that 47% said the consultation process was 'unrepresentative', 'dominated by a small group' and 'undemocratic'.
See also Clifford and Warren's (2005, p. 370, 378) study on St Andrews		

The positivist concept of perfect information and dispassionate rationality is also problematic because new housing development regularly represents an immediate, clear and direct locational 'threat' to local residents which often unites them strongly together (Gant *et al*, 2011, p. 268; Sims and Bossetti, 2016, pp. 20–27). This 'threat' includes the prospect of lower house prices, harm to local amenity, fear of change/outsiders and the 'negative externalities' of development, such as extra congestion and strain on services (Harvey and Jowsey, 2004; Nathan, 2007, p. 4). Rather than being an objective system as premised by the positivist planning model, Coelho *et al* (2014, pp. 3-7) argue there are 'asymmetries of power' and 'disproportionate opportunities for small groups to block development' meaning the system is 'distorted in favour of homeowners'. However, the benefits of more affordable housing are long(er) term, less tangible or direct and those likely to benefit, like renters and adults living at home, may not be aware of a development or its benefits, due to the lack of perfect information, and form a more disparate, geographically dispersed group (Whitehead *et al.*, 2015, p. 2)[28]. Finally, instead of rationality and sober consideration of costs and benefits assumed by

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[28] It is acknowledged that 'development', especially the current volume housebuilder dominated model, does not invariably benefit non-homeowners due to the cost of new homes but this does not negate the power of campaigners.

the positivist model, local reaction to development is often characterised by *emotional* responses of anger and fierce resistance (Lloyd and Peel, 2007, p. 640; Sturzaker, 2011, p. 557).

The positivist model therefore has benefits in enabling the identification of different *actors* in planning although its *underlying assumptions* are too simplistic as not accounting for the uneven power that groups have (Rydin, 1985; Pennington, 2000).

Marxian
Orthodox Marxian Approaches
Marxian approaches view capital accumulation as the underlying driving force of history and the way that space is configured so that 'the (planning) process is guided, fundamentally, by the anticipated rate of return to capital' (Ball, 1983; Short *et al*, 1987, p. 29). History is viewed as a dialectical process between the bourgeoisie and proletariat, capital and labour while the configuration of space reflects the imperatives of capital (Castells, 1977, 1983; Soja, 1980, 2010; Harvey, 2009, 2013).

Marxian theory views the state as upholding, regulating and reproducing capitalism (Peck and Tickell, 2003, 2012; Fox-Rogers and Murphy, 2014, 2016). Indeed, through the planning system controlling the land supply, Marxists argue that planners/planning create conditions in which capital accumulation can flourish whilst preventing over-accumulation to reduce the number of crises which capitalism experiences (Prior and Raemaekers, 2007, p. 580; Castree, 2008). Nevertheless, planners are generally conceptualised as having limited autonomy as 'deferential pawns', 'handmaidens' or 'agents of power' as accommodating the 'structural imperatives of capitalism' (Castells, 1977, 1983; Kiernan, 1983; Underdown, 1985, p. 277; Fox-Rogers and Murphy, 2014). Consequently, Harvey (1989, p. 3, 2003, p. 88, 2013, p. 115) described the 'geographical landscape' of cities as the 'crowning glory of capitalist development', one which capital fashions in 'its own image' and shapes 'according to a distinctively capitalist criteria'. Nevertheless, this fashioning is a constant and changing process as Harvey (1982, p. 253, 1989b, p. 182) also wrote about the 'roving calculus of profit' and need for it to find a 'spatial fix'. Consequently, during the 1960s/70s, when there were

few investment opportunities for capital accumulation in the inner-city or former industrial locations, the market was viewed as 'abandoning' it resulting in 'capital flight' (Lake, 1993, p. 90; Jessop, 2004, pp. 3–4, 2016). Flagship, city-centre developments, like Canary Wharf and Baltimore Harbour, are therefore interpreted as sites of capital accumulation which have been remade and transformed from places of production, dereliction and despair to 'safe' sites of fun, consumption and tourism (the politics of 'bread and circuses') (Harvey, 1989a, pp. 7–14). Harvey (1989a, p. 8) and Peck and Tickell (1996, pp. 595–604) argued that entrepreneurial forms of governance or the shift from 'government' to 'governance', exemplified in unelected, commercially dominated quangos in Britain (like Development Corporations), represent attempts by planners to accommodate and attract capital back into cities. Likewise, Smith's 'rent-gap' model (1996, p. 46, 51-74) and arguments surrounding the 'revanchist city', interpret gentrification as an attempt by the market to reassert to middle-class control over the inner-city and restore it as an 'attractive' place.

Moving Beyond Orthodox Marxist Approaches: The Clash of Community and Capital

However, the 'rural-urban' fringe has been largely overlooked in the Marxian literature where the Green Belt stands as *the* prime example that the desires and imperatives of capital, in this case (volume) housebuilders, *do not* always dominate space notwithstanding huge development pressure (McNamara, 1984; Gallent and Shaw, 2007, p. 617; Prior and Raemaekers, 2007). Indeed, the Green Belt directly *restricts* capital accumulation by housebuilders for whom building there would be very profitable as a highly desirable place to live. This shows the inadequacy of the totalising nature of Marxian theory because the Green Belt restricts capital accumulation in England whereas, in the US, capital flight and the 'circuits of capital' have created 'edge cities' and sprawl (Gallent *et al*, 2006b, p. 457; Scott *et al.*, 2013, p. 9). This highlights the critical importance of geographical heterogeneity.

Of course, in Marxian terms, the Green Belt could be read an example of the state regulating capitalism to maintain capital accumulation. In one sense, housebuilders benefit from the policy because they contribute towards high house prices and maintain profitability whilst preventing the

damaging oversupply of housing which often results in dramatic price reductions and volatility, like in Spain and Ireland during the Financial Crisis (Rydin, 1985, p. 37; Amati, 2007, p. 591; Kilroy, 2017, p. 6). Dear and Scott (1981, p. 13) argued that the policy is a 'historically-specific and socially-necessary response to the self-disorganising tendencies of privatised capitalist social and property relations…in space'. However, many developers are critical of and frustrated with the Green Belt and affordable housing is essential for homeownership and the continued reproduction of capitalism (Foglesong, 1986; Ball *et al.*, 2014; Halligan, 2018).

Drawing on the literature, the role of opposition to development from homeowners is key to the Green Belt's success and longevity (Mace, 2018). Lake (1993, pp. 88–90) described NIMBYism as 'the role of place in the mobilisation and empowerment of community interests against the interests of capital'. He helpfully characterised clashes over housing developments as a conflict between 'capital' and the 'community' (although 'communities' are not homogeneous as divided, in particular, between homeowners and non-homeowners)[29] (Short *et al*, 1987, p. 37; Alexander, 2002, 2010).

The rise of mass homeownership has been vital in capitalism's success and longevity as bringing many people *into* the capital accumulation process with property being the most valuable asset that most people own with 85% of British household wealth stored in housing (Sturzaker and Shucksmith, 2011, p. 174; Edwards, 2015, 2016). Although largely unforeseen by Marx, mass homeownership means that society is more complicated than Marx's dialectic of labour and capital creating conflicts, tension and fragmentation *within* capital or 'intra-capitalist conflict' (Cherry, 1982; Foglesong, 1986, p. 22). Drawing on this neo-Marxian theory, homeowners can be conceptualised as often directly conflicting with another group of capital, (volume) housebuilders, with homeowners strongly desiring to protect property value while housebuilders make a profit out of building new houses (Short *et al*, 1986, 1987, p. 31). This conflict is played out in the broader arena of planning but the Green Belt, as

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[29] Those benefitting from affordable housing, like renters, children and future generations, often do not get involved in this conflict as a geographically and socially dispersed group (Whitehead *et al.*, 2015, p. 4).

the strongest planning protection against development, is especially fiercely protected by homeowners and equally contested by housebuilders as restricting their capital accumulation.

More broadly, there is the 'homevoter' hypothesis in the American literature, where homeowners can vote for restrictive zonal ordinances, but people opposing development due to house prices as the primary motive, especially in England with its popular privileging of homeownership, is prominent in the broader literature (labelled the 'house price hypothesis' in this study) (Fischel, 2001b, 2001a; Dehring *et al*, 2008, p. 155). For example, Coelho *et al* (2014, p. 12), in their quantitative study of England's 349 LPAs, found that a 10% higher homeownership level correlated with a 1.2% fall in the growth of housing stock between 2001-11 (figures 18/19). Short *et al*. (1987, pp. 36–37), in a case study of housebuilding in Central Berkshire and using a neo-Marxian perspective, argued that there was 'a hardcore of material interest underneath the environmental concerns, relating to the impact of new development upon house prices'. Moreover, in a study of the Metropolitan Green Belt in Essex, Rydin (1985, pp. 64–65) argued it served the 'interests of certain sectional groups, particularly already powerful economic interests' who desired to preserve their 'elite situation' and 'high amenity, high-value housing' (see also Simmie's (1981) study of the MGB in Croydon). This makes the Green Belt a vitally important object of study as potentially a clear lens through which to view broader struggles in planning and an 'arena' for wider societal conflicts, particularly why communities often oppose housing development (Short *et al*, 1987, p. 36).

Whereas Harvey (1989a, p. 6) stressed the importance of 'coalitions' of capital, the struggle over new housing development could be better characterised as an intensive 'intra-capital *conflict*' between homeowners and housebuilders so this neo-Marxian framework still takes a largely conflictual view of society (Kiernan, 1983, p. 72; Foglesong, 1986, p. 22). Lake's (1993, pp. 89, 90) 'capital' and 'community' framework or, adapting and refining it to the contemporary realities of the rural-urban

fringe - the 'homeowners' and 'housebuilders' conflict - is a useful characterisation and this study's overarching theoretical framework to be explored in the empirical Chapters.

The Green Belt has not been explored in major academic studies through a neo-Marxian lens. Moreover, apart from Rydin's (1985) cursory acknowledgement, the specific link between the Green Belt and house price hypothesis, which is central to the overarching research question about the housing crisis, has not been empirically explored notwithstanding the common assumption that the Green Belt maintains high property prices.

Finally, notwithstanding arguments surrounding Marxian theory not sufficiently accounting for the normative and cultural, arguably 'normative' and 'rationalistic' support for the Green Belt is *intertwined* and difficult to disentangle (Mace, 2018, p. 19)[30] with Matthews, Bramley and Hastings (2015, p. 68) arguing that 'economic capital invested in housing is converted into symbolic capital'.
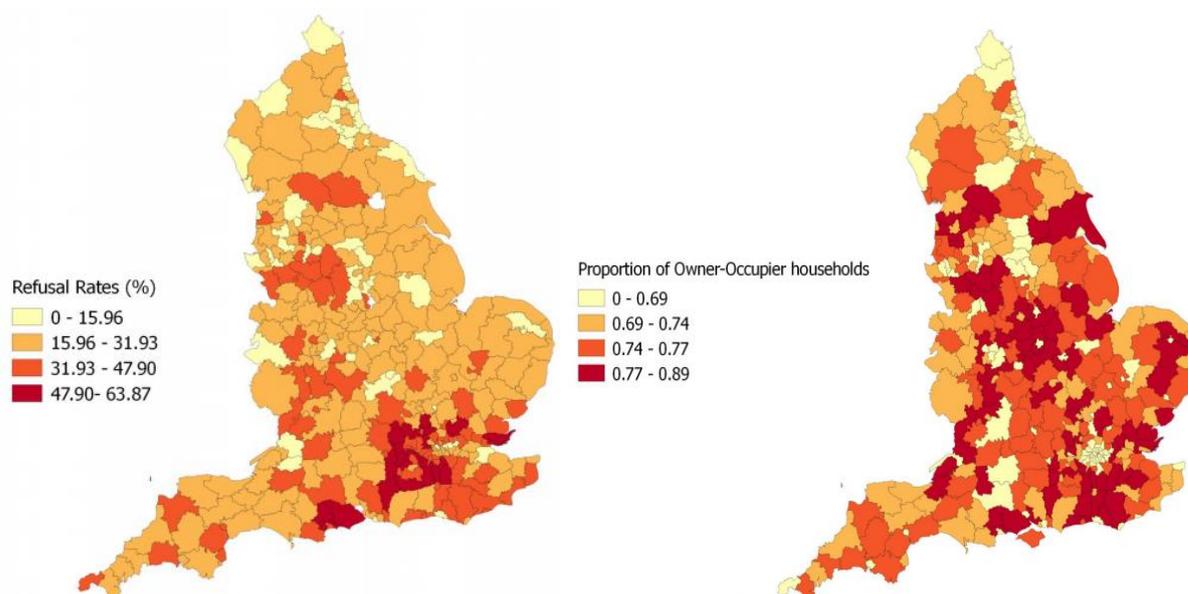
Figure 18, 19 - Refusal rates and proportion of homeownership (from: Coelho *et al*, 2014, pp. 26, 32).

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[30] As explored in Chapter 7, 'rationalistic' support of the policy relates to house prices and the material impacts of development for individuals where 'normative' relates to more principled support (Mace, 2018, p. 4).

Other Marxian Approaches and their application to the Green Belt
The Capitalist-democracy Contradiction

There are other studies which give more autonomy and agency to planners as 'market actors' and acknowledge the complexity of society (Castells, 1977, 1983; Saunders, 1979; Heurkens *et al*, 2015, p. 625). For example, Foglesong (1986, pp. 21–24), in writing about city planning in the American Progressive Era (1890s-1920s), argued that planners are the great organisers and mediators of compromises in the 'capitalist-democracy' and 'property' contradictions. The capitalist democracy contradiction is essentially the need for planners to balance and reconcile the imperatives of capital accumulation with guaranteeing that capitalism has (apparent) 'democratic legitimacy' through democratising and socialising space (Foglesong, 1986, p. 23). How far the market determines planning outcomes as opposed to the desires of local communities has been a perennial, fundamental tension in planning (Sturzaker, 2017). The Green Belt places a huge amount of power in the hands of planners to restrict capital accumulation and, although it has limited public access, arguably the policy being popularly viewed as the countryside and 'commons' means that it has been successfully 'socialised' as space (Harrison, 1983; Evans, and Hartwick, 2006; Bradley, 2019b, p. 695). The property contradiction is basically the aforementioned 'intra-capitalist conflict' with Foglesong (1986, p. 22) arguing that, for example, businesses and manufacturers often desire affordable housing for their workforce which regularly conflicts with the desire of landlords to rent their houses at the highest rate or housebuilders to build the most profitable homes. The theoretical framework of housebuilders and homeowners utilises this helpful concept of an 'intra-capitalist conflict'.

Regulation Theory

Another fruitful way that the Green Belt has been interpreted is Prior and Raemaeker's (2007, p. 581) application of regulation theory. Marxian theory posits that the governance of cities is flexible and adjustable, especially in a neoliberal economic context (see Peck and Tickell, 1994a, 1994b, 1995, 1996; Cochrane *et al*, 1996 on Manchester's regeneration). Regulation theory is broader and concerns the governance of whole economic systems as viewed in distinct historical phases or

'regimes of accumulation' in which governance arrangements and the economy are structured to facilitate capital accumulation (Castells, 1983; Barlow and King, 1992; Lake, 1993, p. 88). For example, Fordism, which emerged from the Great Depression and WWII, essentially involved mass manufacturing and consumption, trade unions, the welfare state and a large degree of state control over the economy (Prior, 2005; Webster *et al.*, 2005, p. 455; Jessop *et al*, 2008). Prior and Raemaekers (2007, p. 596) argue that the Green Belt was implemented in this context, alongside new towns and regional policy, as premised on the view that national Government could control and manage economic growth and population change whilst developing most new housing itself. However, while the economy and society have changed vastly with the Fordist system swept away by globalisation/neoliberalism, the Green Belt remains as an 'immovable shibboleth' in the face of the 'irresistible force of the spatial requirements of a post-Fordist economy' and 'shackled to an obsolete Fordist world view' (Prior and Raemaekers, 2007, p. 596)**.** This historical reading makes the context in which the policy was introduced intelligible although it fails to explain *why* it has remained. The rational and normative aspects of its popular support are therefore key in explaining its longevity (Mace, 2018, p. 15).

Marxian Language

Objectors to development often use the language and tone of Marxian language despite not being Marxists themselves as Warren and Clifford (2005, p. 366) found regarding the St Andrews Green Belt (see Chapter 7). Firstly, there is the 'rational' side of seeking to prevent development by trying to discredit (volume) housebuilders as the 'other', 'greedy' and wanting to 'just to make a profit' at the expense of the local area compared to CPRE's 'pure' image (Sturzaker, 2011, pp. 556, 564; Sturzaker and Shucksmith, 2011, p. 175). In this way, objectors seek to generate moral outrage in order to mobilise local opposition even though, morally, a developer making profit from housebuilding is no different to supermarkets making a profit on the most basic necessity - food. Secondly, there are 'normative' arguments that there should be things, like the 'countryside' and 'environment', which

are more important than profit and should be protected by planning which is an interesting simplification of the Marxian argument about society becoming increasingly commodified (Harvey, 2003, p. 941).

Poststructuralist Analysis and Collaborative Planning
Marxian theory has been challenged by poststructuralist approaches which generally argue that the dualism of labour and capital is too simplistic to explain the complexities of contemporary society which is marked by difference and wider divisions based on gender, ethnicity and age etc. (Allmendinger, 2009, pp. 156–157, 226). Poststructuralism often relates to the concept of pluralism about the multiplicity of interest groups in society and the complexity of planning (Sandercock, 1998; Fox-Rogers and Murphy, 2016, p. 75). The salience of the cultural and emotional in campaigner opposition to development has been underlined, especially the importance of place attachment, as highlighted in Davison *et al's* work (2013, 2016) on affordable housing in Australian cities and the broader environmental psychology literature (Anton and Lawrence, 2014) (See also: Leyshon and Thrift, 1997; Cameron and Gibson-Graham, 2003). The poignancy of these arguments can been seen in the Green Belt's emotional importance (see Chapter 2) and the limited effectiveness of compensation in increasing homeowner support for housebuilding (MHCLG, 2018c; Inch *et al.*, 2020) and windfarms due to the importance of people's principled opposition (see Devine-Wright's (2005, 2009) and others work (for example: Gross, 2007; Cowell, Bristow and Munday, 2011)).

A response to the diversity and difference in contemporary society is collaborative planning on which there is a vast literature (for example: Forester, 1999; Innes and Booher, 2002, 2015; Brand and Gaffikin, 2007, p. 284). Collaborative planning emerged from the concept of 'deliberative' democracy and 'communicative rationality' as it is argued that the role of planners is to listen to people's views and then seek to arrive at consensus among competing groups (Healey, 1997, p. 16, 2003, p. 104, 2006).

However, poststructuralism is arguably limited in how far it accounts for the 'embedded' and uneven power relations in planning (Healey, 1997, p. 59; Tewdwr-Jones and Allmendinger, 1998). Consequently, this project's theoretical frame accepts the poststructuralist view that there are a multiplicity of interests in planning but largely focuses on housebuilders and homeowners who the literature identifies as having the *most* power (Rydin, 1985, p. 64).

Agonist Planning

Agonist planning theory is a popular theory beginning with a similar starting point to collaborative planning, the plurality and multiplicity of groups in society, but advocates a more conflictual or adversarial response of groups working to gain concessions from the 'system' (Bond, 2011; Chettiparamb, 2016, p. 1286; Lennon, 2017, p. 154). The theory is usually associated with Mouffe (2000a, p. 427, 2000b) and was introduced into planning theory by authors such as Hillier (2002, 2003) and Pløger (2004). Although premised on adversarial engagement, it aims to secure positive gains for groups involved so is different to 'antagonism' (Bäcklund and Mäntysalo, 2010; McClymont, 2011; Roskamm, 2015; Vigar *et al*, 2017, p. 426). Agonist theory has been applied helpfully to Neighbourhood Planning, especially the desires of some neighbourhood groups to pursue more radical and innovative policies (like banning second homeownership of new homes built in St Ives and Mevagissey) (Bradley and Sparling, 2017, p. 112; Wargent and Parker, 2018, p. 384). Studies have also shown how debates have often been 'closed down', 'modulated' or circumscribed by Neighbourhood Planning groups, in order to forge consensus and complete Plans, or by 'absent others', typically civil servants and the Planning Inspectorate, placing tight limits and restrictions on what they can achieve (Parker and Street, 2015, p. 794; Parker *et al*, 2015, p. 519).

Nevertheless, its utility when applied to the Green Belt is more limited. As argued in the Chapter 8, Green Belt campaigners regularly adopt an agonist approach in the way that they fiercely oppose attempts by LPAs to change Green Belt boundaries through protests, leaflet drops and social media campaigns (Sims and Bossetti, 2016). However, alongside 'working against' councils and developers

in an agonist way, they also regularly try to 'work with' the system by adopting more consensual, formal approaches, like lobbying MPs, the Secretary of State and councillors and employing 'planning language' (Amati, 2007, pp. 285, 291). Indeed, this highlights how campaigners often play a 'mixed game' of consensus and confrontation (Wargent and Parker, 2018, p. 393). However, groups benefiting from more affordable housing often form a too geographically dispersed group to mount effective agonist engagement alongside lacking the necessary time, money and resources (Myers, 2017). This illustrates Inch (2015, p. 418) and Barry *et al's* (2018, p. 420) critique of agonist planning being limited in its effectiveness because of the 'inequality of arms' in resources between different groups.

4.3.   Towards an Analytical Framework: The Spatial Justice and Just City Approach

This section empirically operationalises and explores this study's *theoretical* framework through developing an *analytical* framework, based on the concept of social justice and the just city, which helps to develop policy recommendations and shape the methodology (Chapter 5) (Fainstein, 2000, 2010). Again, this is vitally important in the current context of the deepening housing crisis and the Green Belt being widely charged as a significant cause of it (Sturzaker, 2017).

The main advocate of the just city approach, Fainstein (2000), began with a similar starting point to this project of being disillusioned with the limited utility of Marxian *and* collaborative planning approaches in explaining contemporary realities and offering a workable way forward in policy terms[31]. Fainstein (2000, p. 452, 2010, p. 5, 2014b, p. 7) contended that just, collaborative processes, important as they are, are insufficient *in themselves* to guarantee just *outcomes*. Consequently, she (2010, p. 5, 2014b, p. 7) developed the *just city* concept with diversity, democracy and equity as its key criteria and used these to evaluate Amsterdam, New York and London. The just city is therefore a

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[31] Fainstein (2010, p. lx, 2014a, p. 14) argued that Marxism was flawed because its main aim, to abolish Capitalism, is largely unrealistic and undesirable, especially with the failure of successful or viable alternatives.

workable framework to provide practical measures to improve capitalism and serve the public interest through delivering social justice (Fainstein, 2010, p. lx, 2014b, p. 14).

Soja (2010, pp. 75, 92) also accused Marxism of not offering scholars advice 'short of the total transformation of capitalism' and developed the concept of *spatial justice* or 'equitable access to urban resources'. More recently, Lake (2016, p. 1208) made an appeal for social justice not just to be the 'object' of planning but also its 'subject' thus aiming to take planning back to its moral, social roots. These lines of thinking can be seen in the influential Raynesford Review (2018, pp. ix–xi) and wider work of the TCPA, for example: Ellis and Henderson, 2014; Ellis, 2019, which has called for planning to return to a social purpose.

Nevertheless, social justice as an analytical framework in planning research goes back to Hall's work, *Containment* (1973b, p. 433, 1973a, 1974, p. 406), where he assessed which social groups 'won' and 'lost' from the post-war planning system, especially the Green Belt. Likewise, Kiernan (1983, pp. 72, 81–83) launched an attack on the rational/unitary public interest model, which argued that planning can 'reconcile and satisfy all…interests', and developed a conceptualisation of planning being primarily conflictual as composed of 'competing', not 'congruous' groups and highly political although, like Soja and Fainstein, he also powerfully attacked Marxian theory[32]. Nevertheless, reflecting Hall's (1974) powerful critique of the Green Belt, Kiernan (1983, p. 74) argued that in planning, 'some benefit and some lose…the same groups usually benefit and other groups usually lose' with these effects falling 'disproportionately upon different socioeconomic classes'. He (1983, p. 75) therefore made a powerful appeal for planning to return to its 'socially redistributive function' and for the 'primacy of social justice'. This social justice would not involve 'punishment' of the rich but ensuring that there were 'palpable gains' for disadvantaged groups consequent on development

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[32] For example, Kiernan (1983, p. 81) argued that Marxism is 'stronger in diagnosis than prescription' and that its 'sweeping nihilistic analysis…scarcely leaves much room for the application of public policy' as demanding nothing less than the 'total systematic transformation of the capitalist order'.

(Kiernan, 1983, p. 84). Kiernan's highly practical and pragmatic arguments have resonance with this project's emphasis on practical and realistic policy solutions regarding Green Belt reform.

Other scholars have developed social justice as an analytical framework. Sandercock (1998, pp. 196–198) argued that there are 'overall winners and losers' in planning and, in an evaluation of the redevelopment of Melbourne Riverside (Sandercock and Dovey, 2002, p. 152), she argued that researchers/planners should ask:

> *'Who gains and who loses in this city-in-the-making and by which practices of power? Are these outcomes desirable and to whom?'*

This project asks similar questions of the Green Belt. Flyvbjerg (1998) has explored uneven power relations in planning and argues for 'phronetic planning research' which has the study of power at its centre and research which is pragmatic, practical and applied (Flyvbjerg, 2004, pp. 284–293). He (2004, p. 290) argued research should ask:

1. *'Where are we going?*
2. *Who gains and who loses, and by which mechanisms of power?*
3. *Is this development desirable?*
4. *What, if anything, should we do about it?'*

Again, this project asks these questions in this analytical framework and methodology (Chapter 5) with the assessment of whether planning and the Green Belt serve the 'public interest', as evaluated through social justice, being its principal focus, especially as Satsangi and Dunmore (2003) argued that planning has focused too much on conservation compared to social sustainability.

Finally, the researcher acknowledges the comprehensive philosophical literature on different types of justice, especially associated with Rawls, although space does not permit a detailed examination here (Chettiparamb, 2016, p. 1288; Lennon, 2017, p. 151). For example, there is both intergenerational and intragenerational justice (Sturzaker and Shucksmith, 2011, p. 175). Likewise, Low (2013, p. 295) helpfully highlighted that there are three aspects to justice: procedural,

distributional and interactional. This project, drawing on Fainstein's (2014b, p. 7) distinction, aims to examine both planning *processes* and outcomes, especially intergenerational and intragenerational justice. Consequently, whilst not *directly* employing Fainstein's (2000, p. 468, 2010, p. 5) framework of diversity, democracy and equity, it draws on her overarching *theory* of social justice to assess 'who benefits and who loses' from the Green Belt and wider planning system.

Developing the Just City Framework Further: The Feasibility of Green Belt Reform
The literature review Chapters (2/3) have demonstrated the Green Belt's normative and rationalistic popularity and longevity whilst the social justice approach advocates workable policy recommendations (Fainstein, 2010). Indeed, policy recommendations which do not sufficiently acknowledge the Green Belt's social and political significance sufficiently, such as advocating its abolition, are likely to fail yet, from a social justice perspective, successfully solving the severe housing crisis is still a vital current priority (Mace, 2018).

The 'feasibility test' will be applied to potential policy recommendations (Table 16) (Breheny, 1997, p. 209). This test was developed by Breheny (1997, p. 210) when critically evaluating urban compaction and brownfield-first policies but the premise of Breheny's argument, that planning policies need to be politically and socially acceptable in order to be workable (as reflected in the broader policy evaluation literature (for example: Marsh and McConnell, 2010; McConnell, 2010, 2011; Palfrey *et al*, 2012)), is a valuable insight. Apart from Mace's (*et al.*, 2016, 2018) innovative study on the MGB, arguably most Green Belt studies, especially those advocating TOD there (for example: Clarke *et al*, 2014), largely fail to acknowledge social and political feasibility by focusing on practical or economic feasibility. The Green Belt's history demonstrates that reforms cannot be 'forced' through and social and political opposition will not somehow 'fall away' in the future (see Chapter 2). This project therefore seeks to fill this significant research gap through developing a broader feasibility framework of housing development which is cognisant of social and political

feasibility alongside the still important economic and practical feasibility, thereby further developing

Breheny's (1997, p. 209) test. These form the structure of the empirical Chapters.

Table 16 - The Feasibility of Green Belt Reform	
Practical/ Environmental *Housing Crisis Chapter* (6)	Whether sufficient land exists in the Green Belt, without environmental protections/ restrictions, to meet housing demand at acceptable market densities. The approach taken in most studies, like Cheshire (2014) and AECOM (2015), on the MGB.
Economic *Housing Crisis Chapter* (6)	*Number:* Whether housebuilders can build enough homes in the Green Belt to meet demand and stabilise house prices with sufficient levels of profit (Archer and Cole, 2014). *Type:* 'Right' type of homes that people 'need', e.g. affordable homes, bungalows or 2-3 bedroom houses, rather than the most profitable (e.g. 1 bedroom studio flats or executive housing) (Jefferys *et al.*, 2015). Is there scope to diversify the market with affordable, self/custom build, social and rental tenures of housing (Ball, 2007; Mullins, 2018)? *Speed of Delivery:* Can new homes be delivered at sufficient speed to stabilise house prices and meet demand (Rydin, 2013; Communities and Local Government Committee, 2017)?
Social *Community Chapter* (7)/ Political *Politics and Governance Chapters* (8/9)	Crucially, this involves whether communities will accept Green Belt reform alongside politicans locally and nationally, given planning's political nature (Munton, 1986). Are there occasions when Green Belt development has been politically and socially acceptable and what factors lead to some Green Belt campaigns being stronger and more effective? Housebuilding will arguably be never extremely popular with local homeowners but are there ways in which Green Belt development can be more politically and socially *acceptable*?

4.4. Power and Politics in the Planning System

Moving from *which* interest groups have the most power to *how* competing groups seek to influence

and exercise power in planning as a 'system of negotiation', the modernist view of planning that

planners had a comprehensive understanding of the public interest and were apolitical, was quickly

discredited (Faludi, 1973; Barlow and King, 1992, p. 397). Indeed, the amount of commercial

influence in post-war redevelopment soon became apparent in the post-war era, especially in

Newcastle upon Tyne and with the Ronan Point disaster, which showed that planning sometimes

served other (commercial) interests as susceptible to lobbying (Davies, 1972; McLoughlin, 1985;

Pendlebury, 2001).

Planning has always arguably been political because, at its heart, it is about managing a scarce

resource, land, over which there are invariably competing interests thereby necessitating mediation

and compromise (Alexander, 2002, 2010; Campbell and Marshall, 2002; Lloyd, 2006). Planning is

deeply involved with people and their everyday lives both directly and indirectly (Warren and Clifford, 2005, p. 355). The literature has been highlighted on how planning *outcomes* regularly reflect those who have *power* in planning, especially homeowners and developers, although planning is nominally democratic (Fox-Rogers and Murphy, 2014, p. 263). As Cherry (1982, p. 116) argued: 'planning reflects the interests of those who wield power and influence…there have been some obvious beneficiaries (the middle and upper suburbanite or the land or property speculator)'.

The *way* in which homeowners seek to influence planning, how power operates and its political nature is explored through Lukes' (2004, pp. 14–59) *three dimensions of power* and Sims and Bossetti's (2016, p. 35) and Fox-Rogers and Murphy's (2014, p. 250) framework of formal and informal political power.

Luke's Three Dimensions of Power

This helpful framework, which seeks to explain how a 'dominant group' exercises power, is primarily used here to explore the often more subtle or informal ways that power operates (Lukes, 2004, p. 28; see also Sturzaker & Shucksmith, 2011, p. 170)[33]. It is applied to the Green Belt as the literature suggests that homeowners and housebuilders are the dominant groups at the rural-urban fringe and that planning outcomes often reflect their desires (Table 17) (Hall, 1974; Sturzaker, 2010).

Table 17 - Lukes's Three Dimensions of Power		
Dimension	How power is exercised	Evidence
First Dimension: *Who makes decisions.* Most basic level of power with the *outcome* of decision-making reflecting the most powerful (Lukes, 2004, p. 16). The 'overt' exercise	Decisions about local plans/major applications made by elected councillors in planning committees (PC). Although nominally representing the *whole* community, certain groups, especially the 'powerful anti-development lobby', are vocal/influential (Sturzaker, 2010, p. 1007). PC's largely reflect the *demography* of homeowners being	Guildford Local Plan: Green Belt release scaled down during an angry consultation process with 32,000 responses (Edwards, 2016A/B). The Plan was subject to a (failed) judicial review. Sims and Bossetti (2016, p. 36) found that 40% of councillors in outer London Boroughs said being supportive of more housebuilding loses votes.

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[33] The limitations of Lukes' work, especially the more theoretical question of what 'power' is and empirical question of establishing causal links, are acknowledged and explored in Chapter 8.

of power (Rydin, 1985, p. 58).	unsalaried: white, middle-class and older. Political interests sometimes determine decisions.	Greater Manchester Spatial Framework: Green Belt release reduced 60% after 44,000 responses/widespread protest.
Second Dimension: *The 'decision-making and non-decision-making' process* (Lukes, 2004, p. 22). 'Covert' exercise of power (Rydin, 1985, p. 58).	Consultation processes for Local Plans /applications are dominated by the loudest voices with other voices largely 'hidden' (Lloyd, 2006, p. 10). Vocal opposition to housing can intimidate voices from speaking in support through fear of social ostracisation, illustrating Bourdieu's (2005, p. 92) concept of 'symbolic violence' (Sturzaker and Shucksmith, 2011, p. 182).	Wisley Airfield (MGB, Surrey). 2000 home application refused but the developer found that 2/3 of local young people supported the proposal despite well-organised protest (Edwards, 2016). Amati (2007, pp. 585) found that most objectors to housing in the MGB are 'experienced' (previous objectors who can effectively use planning 'language').
Third dimension: *The dominant group's discourse. Decisions are accepted by people as the 'existing/natural' order of things* (Bourdieu, 2001, p. 35; Lukes, 2004, p. 28). 'Latent', 'most effective, insidious' exercise of power (Rydin, 1985, p. 65).	Power of discourse/imagination in idealising Green Belts while opposition to housebuilding is galvanised by the dominant myth of the countryside being 'concreted over'. The Green Belt is viewed as 'sacrosanct', 'precious' and 'natural'. This discourse is so powerful that many city dwellers and renters support it in what Sturzaker and Shucksmith (2011, p. 189) label 'thick acquiescence/symbolic violence' as excluding people from living in the countryside.	This discourse is often employed by CPRE/local campaigns. Many people confuse greenfield and Green Belt sites and assume that Green Belt boundaries can never be altered. CPRE often dominates housing debates with Pennington (2000, p. 195) finding that in *The Times*, CPRE was five times more referenced than competing interest groups. Cheshire (2013, p. 1) argues Green Belts are (viewed as) as keeping 'unwashed urbanites corralled in their cities.'
From: (Witt and Fleming, 1984; Darke, 2000, p. 389; Yarwood, 2002, pp. 277–282; Morphet, 2011, p. 130; Clifford and Tewdwr-Jones, 2014; Maidment, 2016; Sims and Bossetti, 2016, p. 9-15; Brock, 2018; Donnelly, 2020a).		

Politics and politics

Sims and Bossetti's (2016, p. 35) framework for highlighting how politics, power and interest groups operate in planning is applied here to explore planning's political nature. They (2016, p. 35) usefully highlighted that the 'Politics', formal political process, and 'politics' of planning, more informal but the wider political culture, including campaigns, the media and conversations, conjoin and determine planning outcomes. However, space is vitally important in how 'Politics' and 'politics' operate nationally and locally, especially as national Government is heavily involved in planning with England having a highly centralised state (Short, Witt and Flemming, 1986, p. 39; Peck and Tickell, 1996, p. 612). Likewise, Fox-Rogers and Murphy (2014, p. 244) have highlighted the importance of 'informal strategies of power' in the Irish planning system so these strategies are explored here (Table 18) and empirically elucidated in Chapter 8.

Table 18 - 'Politics' and 'politics' in planning		
Interrelated	'Politics'	'politics'
⬍	National: - National planning: NPPF, Green Belt policy, Population Projections (Standard Method), Housing Delivery Test (HDT). - Secretary of State call 'in powers' for appeal/local plans (Birmingham/Bradford) - Electoral campaigns: promises by Party Leaders and Manifestos pledges to protect Green Belt, esp. in 'marginal' seats - Lobbying by MPs/Green Belt issues raised (e.g. Andrew Mitchell/Paul Beresford).	National: - Lobbying/'behind closed doors' access by think tanks, HBF and CPRE. - Political: Pressure by constituency associations and party membership - Media: Influential Green Belt/ campaigns, e.g. *The Telegraph's* 'Hands off our land'. - National campaigns by CPRE and other organisations (National Trust, Shelter and YIMBY movement).
	Local: - Inherently adversarial application process often marked by 'Decide-Announce-Defend' (DAD). Approval of local plans/ applications by elected councillors and Green Belt issues in elections (2019). - Local plan examination process/appeals system run by Planning Inspectorate.	Local: - Consultation process and Green Belt campaigns (in Sutton Coldfield (Project Fields)), St Albans and Guildford[34]). Social media, leaflet drops and media campaigns to influence politicians. - Lobbying of councillors via technical 'kinship' (Amati, 2008, p. 390).
	From: Burningham *et al*, 2006, p. 6; Morrison, 2010, p. 159; Rydin, 2011, p. 95; DCLG, 2012; Vincent, 2014; Fox, 2015; Nowak, 2015; Edgar, 2015, p. 1; Edwards, 2016a; Brown, 2016a; Walker, 2016; Brown, 2016c, 2016b; Carpenter, 2016; Birmingham City Council, 2017, p. 48; Elliott, 2017; Harley, 2017; Sturzaker, 2017; Boddy and Hickman, 2018, p. 208; Horner, 2018; Halligan, 2019.	

4.5.   Conclusions from Power and Interest Groups in Planning Chapter

The aims of this chapter have been fourfold. Firstly, to explore planning theories to evaluate how far they reflect the realities of the Green Belt. Secondly, based on these theories, to build an overarching theoretical framework. Thirdly, based on this theoretical framework, to develop an analytical framework and shape the research questions. Fourthly, to elucidate the theoretical and analytical framework by exploring the ways in which power is exercised in planning. This chapter has therefore aimed to theoretically conceptualise Chapters 2 and 3 by viewing the Green Belt as the arena in which wider planning and societal conflicts are played out. It has sought to provide a link between the literature review Chapters and the methodology (5), which is shaped by this theoretical and analytical framework.

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[34] In Guildford, two anti-development political parties were formed: the Guildford Greenbelt Group (GGG) and Residents for Guildford and Villages (R4GV). GGG won 4 seats and nearly 7,000 votes whilst R4GV won 15 seats and nearly 20,500 votes in the 2019 Local Elections (Brock, 2018).

This chapter has shown the limitations of an orthodox Marxian approach by arguing that the planning system and society is more complicated than a simple struggle between capital and labour, especially regarding the Green Belt (Cherry, 1982). Post-structuralist approaches are also limited as not sufficiently accounting for the uneven power relations in planning, particularly the power of homeowners *and* housebuilders (Lake, 1993; Sturzaker, 2010). Consequently, both *overall* Marxian and post-structuralist theoretical frameworks are rejected with this chapter conceptualising the Green Belt as an 'intra-capitalist conflict' between homeowners and housebuilders (Foglesong, 1986, p. 22; Lake, 1993). Building on this framework, it has argued that social justice as an analytical framework, especially evaluating 'who benefits and who loses' from the policy, is a useful way to operationalise and elucidate this broader intra-capitalist conflict framework (Hall *et al.*, 1973a; Kiernan, 1983, p. 83). Moreover, this social justice approach attempts to offer practical reforms to capitalism hence providing a useful 'bridge' between theoretical conceptualisation and practical policy recommendations for the Green Belt (Soja, 2010). The section on the *way* in which power is exercised in planning elucidated the theoretical and analytical framework and developed the context for constructing the research questions. Having explored *which* groups have power in planning and evaluated *how* this power is exercised, the methodology seeks to operationalise these key concepts and themes.

Chapter 5: Methodology

5.1. Introduction

This chapter forms the bridge between the literature review and theoretical frame Chapters (2-4) and empirical ones (6-8) by setting out how the research questions were operationalised and methods used. Building on the themes developed in Chapter 3, the research design seeks to explore to what extent the Green Belt is the central cause of the housing crisis whilst, developing Chapters 2 and 4, the design also aims to elucidate who has most power in planning and how it is exercised. However, although planning is an inherently applied discipline (Rydin, 1985; Goodman *et al*, 2017), consideration of the epistemological and pragmatic aspects of research, especially methods, are still key (Yeung, 1997; Bryman, 2006a). The chapter, firstly, sets out the research aims before highlighting its underlying philosophy and questions and propositions. How these questions are operationalised, including the research design and mixed methods approach used, are then explored before outlining and evaluating the methods themselves. Finally, there is critical reflection on the research process and methods, especially the positionality and power of the researcher, ethical considerations and limitations (Rose, 1997; Mullings, 1999).

5.2. Research Aim(s)/Questions/Propositions

Aim
The overarching research aim, drawing together and summarising the main themes of the literature review Chapters (2-4), is:

> *'To critically evaluate the relationship between the Green Belt, England's housing crisis and the planning system'.*

Research Questions: Theory and Practice
In common with most academic (planning) research, this project focuses on planning/geographical theory *and* planning policy/practice (Rydin, 1985; Maidment, 2015). It aims to conceptualise the Green Belt's relationship with the planning system and society thereby exploring how the policy

could be improved as theory and practice are deeply intertwined (Campbell, 2000; Healey *et al.*, 2000). Whereas many planning studies either focus on planning *processes* or *outcomes* (Rydin, 1985; Lennon, 2020), this study brings them *together* by focusing on the Green Belt leading to sequential research questions which operationalise the overall aim:

1) *To what extent is the Green Belt the principal cause of England's housing crisis?*

Given that the literature suggests it is *a* cause and the amount of public discourse on the Green Belt (Raynsford Review, 2018a), this justifies proceeding with this research project. The question is therefore more *'how much'* or *'to what extent'* is the policy the *main* cause of the housing crisis so:

2) *Does the Green Belt need reforming to solve the housing crisis? If so, <u>to what extent</u>? If not, what other policies are needed to solve the housing crisis?*

Further operationalising this question by the more theoretical analysis question, similar to that of Hall *et al.* (1973a, 1973b):

3) *Who gains/benefits or loses/is disadvantaged from the Green Belt policy and, crucially, to what extent are these gains/losses problematic to society? Does it reflect the underlying power structures of groups which have the most power in society?*

To what extent these gains and losses *are* problematic to society relates to the crucial questions, based on planning's political nature and uneven power relations (Flyvbjerg, 1998, 2004):

4) *How and why are groups exercising power in relation to the Green Belt (i.e. why do people support it)?*

5) *More broadly, how can the Green Belt be conceptualised and what are the implications for planning and geographical theory?*

Finally, this feeds back into the crucial policy question:

6) *To what extent is reforming the Green Belt realistically and practically feasible/possible, especially in social and political terms (see Table 16 in Chapter 4)?*

These are summarised in Table 19:

Table 19 - Research Questions			
	Overarching Question: To what extent is the Green Belt the main cause of England's housing crisis and should/to what extent does it need to be reformed to solve this crisis?		
	'What'/Current situation questions	*Who gains/loses from the Green Belt and to what extent are these gains/losses problematic to society?* (Policy)	*Does this reflect the underlying power structures of groups which have the most power in society? How and why are these groups exercising power?* (Theory)
	'How'/Moving forward questions	*To what extent is reforming the Green Belt realistically feasible, especially in social and political terms?* (Policy)	*What should a 21st century Green Belt ideally be and what can it be realistically, given planning's political nature?* (Theory/Policy)

These questions relate to three fundamental testable propositions, based on the literature review Chapters (2-4), forming the empirical backbone of the thesis:

1. *The Green Belt is the main cause of the housing crisis, based upon the economic literature.*
2. *It is primarily supported by homeowners to maintain property values (drawing on neo-Marxian literature).*
3. *Due to proposition 2, the Green Belt is challenging to reform due to its social and political popularity nationally and locally (Mace, 2018).*

5.3. Research Approach and Philosophy

These aims and propositions reflect the researcher's commitment to critical realism alongside pragmatic research concerns - both considerations are arguably important in research (Sayer, 2000). Epistemology is essentially '*how* we are looking' at knowledge and 'how we use our methods to perceive it' whereas ontology is more about '*what* we are looking' at or the 'thing itself', i.e. knowledge (Mason, 2006a, 2018, p. 45). Critical realism is therefore an epistemology rather than an ontology (Bhaskar, 1989; Yeung, 1997, p. 51) with three working propositions:

1. Complete objectivity and knowledge of reality is unrealistic so the philosophy is 'critical' of positivism so 'post-positivist' (Archer *et al.*, 1998, p. 3; Sayer, 2000, p. 3; Johnson *et al.*, 2006, pp. 134, 138).
2. Rejection of wholly idiographic relativism holding that, through triangulation (which often involves mixing methods), a more complete, accurate portrayal of reality can be developed

hence the approach's 'realism' (Yeung, 1997, p. 53; Blaikie, 2003, 2009). Critical realism therefore involves 'mechanisms' for perceiving reality or an object of study with inferences developed through subjective interpretation of various data sources as direct observation cannot fully 'measure', 'reflect' or 'access' phenomena in all their complexity (Modell, 2009, p. 212).

3. Consequently, in contrast to inductive and deductive approaches, critical realism advocates an 'abductive' approach, which stresses the importance of interchange or 'iteratively abstracting' between the data and theory (Yeung, 1997, p. 51; Draucker *et al.*, 2007, p. 1137).

Critical realism was vital to the methodological approach of this thesis as, arguably, various 'mechanisms' and a range of methods are key when studying complicated phenomena and inanimate objects, such as the Green Belt, housing crisis and power in planning (Modell, 2009). The literature review and subsequent empirical Chapters show that these phenomena cannot be fully 'measured' by empirical observation (positivism) because, among other things, even hedonic economic models acknowledge the housing market's complexity whilst the socially constructed nature of housing is increasingly being acknowledged (Willis and Whitby, 1985; Munro, 2018). Moreover, power is often attempted to be exercised in subtle, covert and hidden ways *and* contested (Dowding, 2006; Fox-Rogers and Murphy, 2014). Indeed, as reality in its complexity, especially the Green Belt, is not completely knowable, the researcher takes a 'critical' premise (Archer *et al.*, 1998). Consequently, triangulation is vital and, in common with critical realist research generally, findings are stated in a tentative manner based upon existing data and awaiting further research rather than as definite, incontrovertible findings (Modell, 2009). This avoids the danger of overgeneralising or totalising narratives that empirical positivism sometimes articulates whilst also avoiding becoming so qualitatively grounded in place, like ethnography, that wider theorisation and policy relevance is limited (Golden-Biddle and Locke, 1993; Martin, 2001, 2015; Ward, 2005; Woods and Gardner, 2011). Indeed, the research adopts a qualitatively led approach which is *supplemented* by quantitative data.

Secondly, the study of multi-scalar policies, like the Green Belt, is particularly suited to critical realism because of the interconnectedness of the local, regional and national (Yeung, 1997; Peck *et al*, 2009). Positivist approaches often miss the richness of place or regional specificity and geographical variation (Tracy, 2010, p. 841; Swan, 2011, p. 187; Bryman, 2012, p. 52). This is poignant because, firstly, the Green Belt is now largely managed *locally* and, secondly, Amati and Yokohari (2006) have helpfully shown that how LPAs manage it can *vary significantly*. Conversely, the Green Belt being a *national* policy designation and campaign groups, like CPRE, campaigning locally *and* regionally/nationally, means that the national spatial scale cannot be ignored and this would be a significant weakness in a *completely* place-based, qualitatively led approach. Arguably, various multi-scalar 'mechanisms' and triangulation is therefore needed to reflect the complexity of reality regarding the Green Belt.

Thirdly, critical realism often draws 'heavily on theories for deriving explanations' (Modell, 2009, p. 213) thus justifying this project critically considering how the Green Belt can be conceptualised and how this may refine and relate to existing geographical and planning theories. Parker *et al* (2015, p. 520) have called for 'theoretically informed critique' of planning policy and practice (the aim of the literature review). Indeed, in line with critical realism advocating a reciprocal relationship between the theory and data as an 'iterative process', this research constantly reflects how the data relates to theory in the empirical Chapters whilst the research questions themselves issued from theory (Yeung, 1997, p. 51).

Fourthly, whilst not *fully* encompassing 'reality' regarding the Green Belt, there are arguably distinctive multi-scaler, cross-stakeholder lenses, mediums or 'mechanisms' through which the Green Belt and its relationship with the housing crisis and broader planning system can be explored (Modell, 2009, p. 212). This project, through the literature review, has identified the key, multi-scalar

mechanisms of power and politics, community opposition, governance, and the housing crisis. These themes have been highlighted as testable propositions and are the themes of the empirical Chapters.

5.4.   Research Design/Objectives

Having explored philosophical considerations, the research design operationalises this project's critical realist approach around triangulation and mixed methods in relation to spatial scales and the main actors/groups in planning to 'measure' and explore the Green Belt from different spatial scales and stakeholder perspectives[35] (Yeung, 1997; Neuman, 2011). The main actors are planners (both in the private sector, working for developers/consultancies, and public sector), planning stakeholders and the public[36], especially campaigners, whilst the spatial scales are local, regional and national. Given this complexity and the range of factors at work, the project uses an 'integrative logic' which Mason (2006, p. 6) defined as: 'mixing methods to ask questions about connecting parts, segments or layers of a social whole'. The 'social whole', is the Green Belt and its relationship with the housing crisis and planning system, whilst the 'parts, segments or layers' are the key actors *and* spatial scales which are related to, and joined together, by the 'mechanisms' (governance, community opposition, housing and politics). The research instruments were designed by this integrative logic whilst the methods themselves were developed and integrated to understand different actors and spatial scales through the mechanisms (Mason, 2006b, pp. 6–7, 2018).

Turning from 'how' methods were mixed to 'why', quantitative methods within a critical realist approach of not providing a *complete* representation of reality, can still be useful as a means of establishing general trends and causation, the 'what', such as the views of planners and the public on the Green Belt (Ely and Garner, 1991; Field, 2013). This is used alongside qualitative methods, using

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[35] See Tickell and Peck (2003); Jessop *et al* (2008); Haughton *et al.* (2016) and Peck (2015) for the interconnectedness of different spatial scales and the importance of various spatial actors.
[36] It is acknowledged that there are other key actors in housing, such as banks and financial investors, but the project primarily focused on the *planning* system (Fernandez *et al*, 2016; Robertson, 2017; O'Brien *et al*, 2018).

an 'integrative logic', to explore the 'why', and responses to this (the 'how'), related to aspects of the study about human behaviour and policy, including the housing crisis and planning's political nature (Onwuegbuzie and Leech, 2005; Kvale, 2007). For example, Winchester (1999) used questionnaires alongside interviewing when researching lone fathers in Newcastle, Australia using a similar rationale. The research therefore employs a pragmatic, qualitatively led approach within an overall realist, mixed methods framework as aiming to triangulate to find out about *as much as possible* about the Green Belt rather than trying to find a *representative, generalisable* sample (often associated with positivism) (Becker and Bryman, 2004; Creswell, 2014).

Research objectives relate more to *how* research is operationalised and its 'mechanics' to test and explore the questions and aims (Brannen, 1992, 2005; Bryman, 2012, p. 97). They are:

1. *To review existing literature on the Green Belt's history, form/function and policy effectiveness (answering the overarching research question 1 (see p. 87) and establishing what needs further research regarding the extent of the Green Belt's responsibility for the housing crisis).*
2. *To develop a critical theoretical framework based on the power-relations literature (to answer questions 3-6 - power in planning and applying theories to the Green Belt).*
3. *To evaluate to what extent the Green Belt is supported by homeowners to maintain property values or wider reasons, such as 'principle' motivations (regarding protecting the Green Belt or countryside) or general 'rational' concerns, such as congestion and infrastructure. To examine <u>how</u> campaigners', oppose development (exploring questions 2, 3 and 6).*
4. *To evaluate spatial variation in the effectiveness of the Green Belt in English regions thus broadening the discussion to wider than London and the South East (question 1).*
5. *To evaluate other potential policies to solve the housing crisis (to help to answer 1, 4 and 5).*
6. *To develop recommendations on how housebuilding in the Green Belt and generally could become more politically and economically feasible, <u>if reforming Green Belt/more housebuilding is a potential solution to the housing crisis</u> (questions 2 and 6 and to generalise the study to new housing developments more broadly).*

These are displayed diagrammatically in Figure 20 (Research Objectives):

Literature Review
- Explore the existing literature on the Green Belt (GB) to write a history and evaluation chapter.
- To write a theoretical chapter exploring how GB relates to wider planning/geographical theory.

Methods - National
- National: Planners - interviews and focus groups with key national planners and campaigners.
- National: General public - data analysis, i.e. CPRE GB Survey, to explore popular attitudes.

Methods - Regional
- Regional: Planners: qualitative - interviews/focus groups with planners, mainly in the West Midlands. Quantitative - GB questionnaire of West Midlands planners.
- Regional: Public; case studies with GB campaign groups and interviews with campaigners.

Results, Analysis, Discussion and Conclusion
- Results: Analysis of quantative data (regional - GB questionnaire) and (national - CPRE GB Survey). Analysis of qualitative data: transcription of interviews/focus groups and analysis of transcripts.
- Discussion/Conclusion: bringing these findings together to draw out overall implications for theory (theory adpatation, confirmation and building) and practice (policy implications for GB).

5.5.   Research Strategy: Methods

Research Aims in the Instruments

In translating the design into a practical strategy, a unified, core set of aims was used across different

spatial scales and groups relating to the literature and key mechanisms[37]. This ensured that the aims

and questions directly reflected the underlying policy and theoretical aims as recommended in the

literature (Saunders, 2012a; Saunders *et al*, 2016).

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[37] See the Appendix for the research aims incorporated in the research instruments and full list of interview/focus group questions alongside the Green Belt questionnaire.

Considering Spatial Scales

The strategy and design are anchored in this thesis around geographical scales thereby reflecting the researcher's view as a geographer/planner on the importance of *space* as a shaper and shaped by social relations (Massey, 1994; Soja, 2010). Firstly, considering how the Green Belt is perceived and viewed *nationally* is important to frame and contextualise the study alongside allowing it to draw wider conclusions (Sturzaker, 2010; May, 2011; Yin, 2011). However, *purely* focusing nationally would miss the richness of spatial variation and place specificity regarding the Green Belt's largely local management (Mace, 2018). Additionally, it is important for theory and practice to evaluate its effectiveness *across* geographical areas to conceptualise the Green Belt more broadly in *regional* England (Edwards, 2015, 2016c; Kilroy, 2017). It was in this spatial framework that the regional case study design was developed.

Considering Planning Stakeholders

The views of two main groups can be identified: professional planners/planning stakeholders (both retired and practising and in the public and private sector) and the public, especially campaigners[38]. Consequently, the research *audience* was segmented at the two spatial scales, regional and national, and then the most appropriate methods were considered and chosen pragmatically to suit the research questions alongside epistemological commitments (Yeung, 1997; Bryman, 2006a).

Merging Space and Stakeholders

National

Nationally, detailed data exists on the public's views of the Green Belt (CPRE's *Green Belt Questionnaire* (2015)) and housebuilding (*Social Attitudes Survey* (Park *et al.*, 2012)). Initially, the aim was to survey planners nationally to, firstly, establish general trends on planners' views of the Green Belt and the interviews would have then explored the 'how' and 'why' but the survey proved impractical (see 'Limitations and Problems') (Winchester, 1999; Woolley, 2009). Consequently,

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[38] Retired planners in the West Midlands have formed a distinctive, professional network, West Midlands Futures, which advocates for a (return) to strategic planning and forms a rich reservoir of knowledge and experience regarding regional planning (Goode, 2019a).

interviews were initially conducted nationally with professional planners and planning stakeholders to contextualise the study (Table 21 (pp. 106-109)).

Regional

Regionally, there is not an equivalent dataset on popular attitudes of the Green Belt and, given the cost and practicalities involved in sampling a general population, like CPRE's Oxfordshire survey (Whall, 2015), alongside the researcher's qualitatively led approach, campaigners were focused on specifically. This was to capture the views of a *specific* group, rather than the general population, but still look at 'professional' *and* 'everyday' campaigners in live regional campaign groups as 'everyday' campaigners are an under-researched group (Amati, 2007; Bradley, 2019a, 2019b)[39].

In terms of planners, the researcher conducted a Green Belt questionnaire which was advertised in the RTPI West Midlands Magazine, *Tripwire* (Goode, 2019e), and extensively on LinkedIn. Likewise, planners/planning stakeholders were interviewed regionally in the West Midlands alongside some in other regions (Figure 21; Yin, 2017).

Questions Across Research Instruments

Although the questions varied slightly between the national/regional and planners/campaigners, the research instruments used a core of questions with three broad sections (Table 20):

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[39] Professional' campaigners were often retired, RTPI professional planners and 'everyday' campaigners, non-planners, involved in opposing Green Belt development in their area (Amati, 2007; Sims and Bossetti, 2016).

Table 20 - Questions Across Research Instruments
Section A: Evaluating the Green Belt as a policy
1) Analysing the success of the Green Belt against its own objectives.
2) Analysing its impacts spatially.
3) Analysing its impacts on society (who gains and loses from it).
Section B: Exploring the links between the Green Belt and the housing crisis (The key mechanisms)
4) Governance and the effectiveness of locally led planning in managing Green Belts (policy improvement)
5) Exploring to what extent other policies can solve the housing crisis (policy evaluation).
6) Exploring why the Government is not reforming the Green Belt (the political aspects of Green Belt).
7) Examining whether/to what extent the Green Belt needs to be reformed as a policy.
Section C: Addressing community concerns about development
8) Why people oppose development in Green Belts (Green Belt specific reasons or general reasons?).
9) Exploring broader reasons why people oppose development (is it for material reasons, e.g. house prices, or general reasons, such as the effects of development upon congestion, local facilities etc.?)
10) The effectiveness of the Green Belt compared to the other urban growth management policies, such as green wedges (considering alternatives to the Green Belt).

Summarising Research Approach (See Figure 21)

Figure 21 - Summary of Methods

Methods - National

- Planners: interviews and focus groups with national planners and campaigners.
- Public: data analysis, e.g. CPRE's GB Survey, to explore popular attitudes.

Methods - Regional

- Planners: Qualitative - interviews and focus groups with planners. Quantitative - GB questionnaire of West Midlands planners.
- The general public/campaigners - case studies with West Midlands GB campaign groups: Save Stourbridge GB, Project Fields and South Solihull Community Group and interviews with campaigners.

5.6.   Data Collection Methods: Case Study Approach

Case Study Approach
Positives/Negatives and Typologies of Case Study Approaches
A case study approach typically involves focusing on particular case(s) or example(s) of a broader trend, phenomenon or subject of study (Denscombe, 1998; Yin, 2017). Its underlying premise is that a greater understanding and more can be learned through case study/studies than researching at a more general level, i.e. national statistics (Scapens, 1992, 2004). Case study research is particularly important in planning and geography given the importance of spatial variability and place specificity although spatial scales are interrelated (Thomas and Bertolini, 2014). Criticisms of case study approaches centre on questioning how generalisable the research findings are and their relevance to policy with Peck (2015, p. 160) arguing that an (over)focus on the 'particular' of case studies has undermined generalisable theory-building in geography (See also: Llewellyn, 1992; Dorling and Shaw, 2002; Johnson *et al.*, 2006, p. 146).

There is a range of case study approaches from positivist approaches of exploring a range or 'significant/representative' number of cases, typically eight following Eisenhardt's study (1989, p. 532), to develop 'statistical generalisation', to more interpretive or qualitative approaches of focusing on the richness of a single case, 'theoretical generalisation', as drawn out by Scapens (1990, 1992, pp. 378–380; Ryan *et al*, 2002, p. 149)[40]. Theoretical generalisation involves theorising from a particular case and stressing that theory applies in *those conditions* whereas positivist approaches typically develop testable generalisations and theories from cases about the population which are then subject to further investigation (Scapens, 2004).

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[40] In 2018, the researcher took a Postgraduate Certificate in Advanced Research Methods and Skills (PGCARMS) module, Case Study Design, with Professor Scapens hence the references to his literature in accounting but the methodological discussions are similar across the social sciences.

Case Study Approach Taken

The case study approach and the case itself (West Midlands Green Belt (WMGB)) reflects the overall research aims and the abductive, critical realist approach alongside spatial considerations (Yeung, 1997, p. 51; Silva *et al.*, 2014). Given the Green Belt's vast spatial extent and time and resource constraints, the study had to focus on a small number of cases (Mason, 2018). Secondly, case study research aiming to explore the richness and 'thick' detail of the case(s) usually fits within an *overall* qualitative approach (Scapens, 2004, p. 275; Yin, 2011; Yazan, 2015). However, conducting a series of 'mini' case studies in different parts of the UK was initially envisaged with attempts at statistical generalisation, similar to Sturzaker's (2010) five case studies of power and planning in rural authorities[41]. Nevertheless, the methodological literature highlights how this approach can 'lose' some of the richness and 'thick descriptions' of place that a small number of cases affords (Scapens, 2004; Tracy, 2010, p. 841; Bryman, 2012, p. 52). Consequently, it was decided that focusing in depth on a *single* case, the WMGB, would result in a richer, fuller study with the variety of issues in the WMGB whilst the dual focus on the national still broadened the study so that it has wider policy relevance (Scapens, 2004; Yin, 2017)[42].

The 'region' is an important planning concept, especially as the Green Belt is a *regional* growth management tool *and* a *strategic* policy (Mace, 2018). Consequently, this study evaluates its effectiveness *regionally* rather than just locally (Geddes, 1915; Wannop and Cherry, 1994)[43]. Moreover, campaigners and planners tend to operate regionally, such as CPRE and the RTPI having a West Midlands branch, with many (professional) campaigners taking a regional view of the Green Belt whilst planners rarely stay at one organisation for their entire professional career so usually have

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[41] For example, comparing Green Belts in England with those in Wales (and/or) Scotland and Northern Ireland where Green Belts operate slightly differently (Lloyd and Peel, 2007).

[42] This followed extensive discussions with Professor Scapens and supervisors about the methodology.

[43] The study adopts the Government's NUTS definition of the 'West Midlands': the former West Midlands County, Staffordshire Potteries and counties of Herefordshire, Worcestershire, Warwickshire, Staffordshire and Shropshire (Law, 2000; West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA), 2019).

a *regional* knowledge of Green Belt release, campaigns etc. (Bradley, 2019a, 2019b). Finally, the narrative of planners and campaigners tends to be regional and general rather than *purely* specific and local, like the view of the WMGB containing an industrial *conurbation*. Consequently, whilst the richness of place justifies focusing on a single regional Green Belt (Silva *et al.*, 2014), the policy's strategic nature means looking at the WMGB as a *whole* is important rather than focusing on a single Green Belt campaign, with WMGB campaigns being used as 'mini' cases within the *overall* WMGB case study.

Case Study: West Midlands Green Belt - History and Current Issues
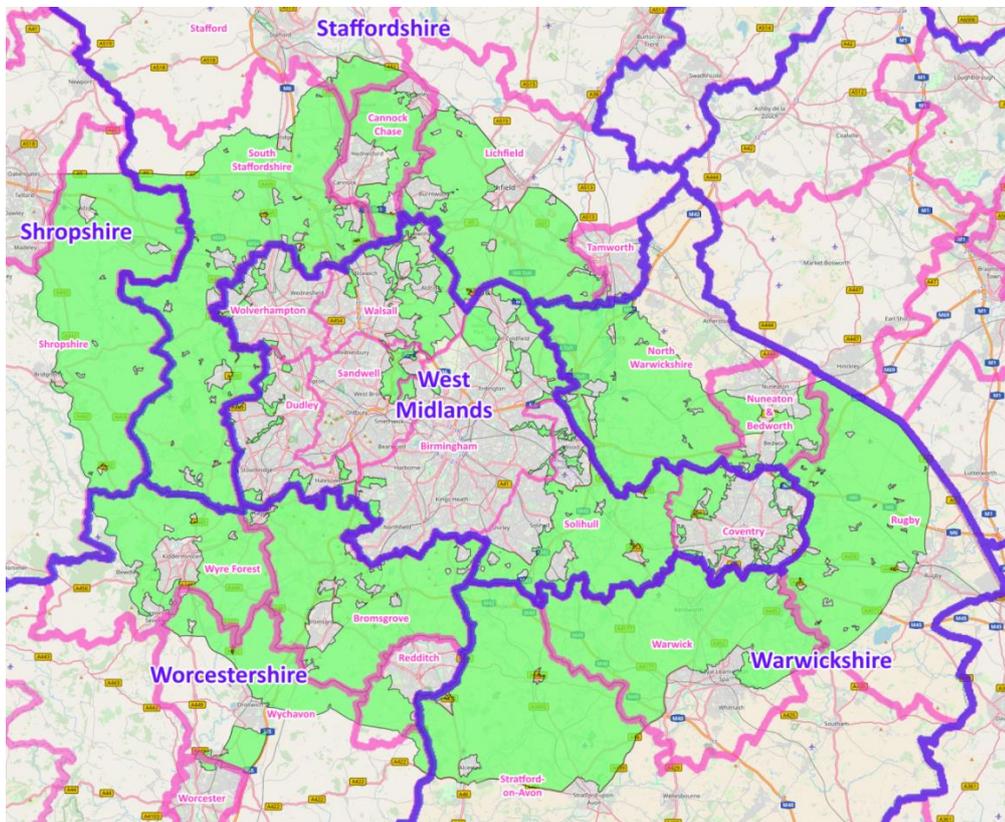
Figure 22 - Map of the West Midlands Green Belt (WMGB) (From: https://bit.ly/3hKNRwk).
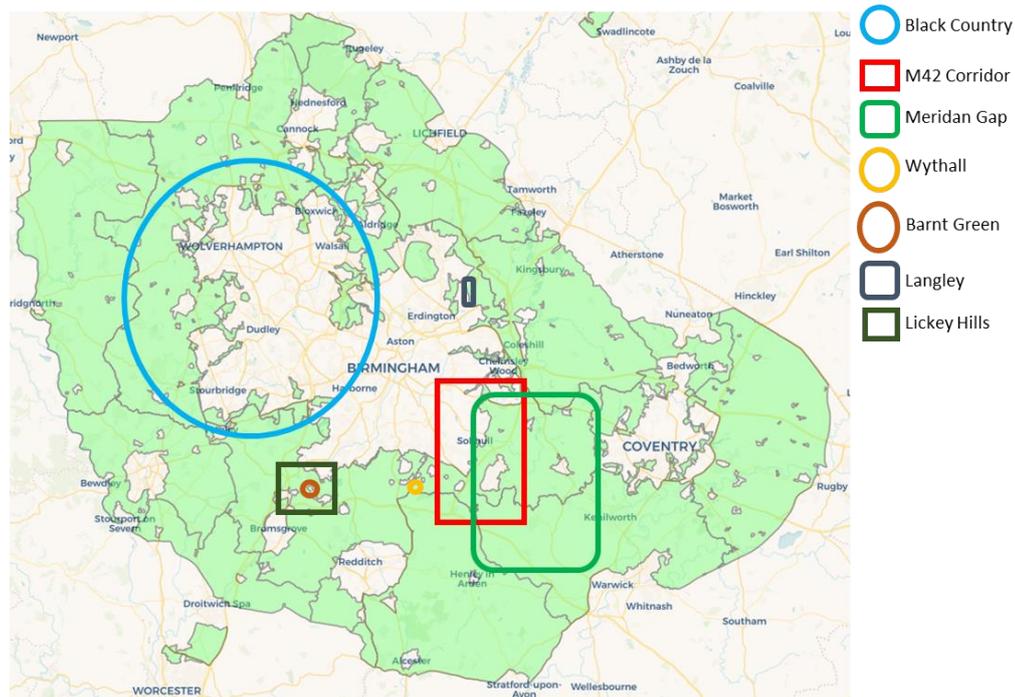
Figure 23 - Key locations in the West Midlands (adapted from: https://bit.ly/3rXTGuW).
Key: M42 Corridor: An economically buoyant area on the rural-urban fringe of the West Midlands Conurbation.
Meriden Gap: The WMGB separating Birmingham and Coventry and a very affluent area.
Black Country: A historically industrial area to the north west of Birmingham composed of the Metropolitan Boroughs of Wolverhampton, Dudley, Sandwell and Walsall.
Wythall: A village on Birmingham's rural-urban fringe where the City Council applied to build an overspill estate
Barnt Green: A wealthy village in the WMGB on the edge of the Lickey Hills with a station on the Cross City line.
Lickey Hills: A range of hills on Birmingham's southern urban fringe. Most of the land is owned by the City Council and well-used for recreation by the conurbation.
Langley: A proposed development of 6,000 homes adjoining the village of Walmley, Sutton Coldfield.

The WMGB covers nearly 225,000ha and forms a continuous 'ring', between 5-7 miles wide, around

the conurbation (which is home to nearly 2.9 million people) (Figure 22; CPRE and Natural England,

2010, p. 29). The WMGB was proposed in the West Midlands Group Study *Conurbation* (1948),

tentatively agreed in 1955 but not formally approved until 1976 (Hall, 1973b, p. 584).

As Chapter 2 documented, Birmingham grew rapidly in the Industrial Revolution, suburban growth

progressed apace in the inter-war period and this prosperity continued in the post-war era which,

alongside the imperatives of post-war slum clearance, proposals of new towns and expanding

existing towns outside the Green Belt, explain why the WMGB's boundaries were drawn so tightly[44]

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[44] Chapter 2 outlined how ribbon/suburban development continued at Barnt Green beyond the city's narrow, inter-war Green Belt in the Lickeys (Self, 1962, p. xii; Amati and Yokohari, 2007, p. 317). Birmingham's post-war

(Hall, 1973b, pp. 51–85; Law, 2000; Barber and Hall, 2008). Birmingham's acute housing needs built during the 1950s, especially as it wanted overspill population nearby as a local labour force and so people were not significantly displaced from their familial and social connections (Sturzaker and Mell, 2016, p. 28). Like Manchester's applications at Mobberley and Lymm, this culminated in the Wythall Inquiry (1958) whereby Birmingham's application to build a satellite settlement in the WMGB on the Worcestershire/Warwickshire boundary was refused by the Housing Minister due to it being in the Green Belt and widespread opposition by the rural neighbouring shires (see Chapter 9) (Figure 23; Eversley, 1962; Cherry, 1996, p. 152). Eventually, Richard Crossman, the (Labour) Minister for Housing, approved Birmingham's application for an estate at Chelmsley Wood, Warwickshire, for 52,000 people in 1964[45] (Sturzaker and Mell, 2016, p. 28).

The basis of the region's economic success, overreliance on the car industry, was the principal cause of its decline and deindustrialisation (Barber and Hall, 2008). From the 1980s, the region's primary focus has shifted towards urban regeneration and brownfield development with some Green Belt land released for employment, especially along the 'M42 Corridor', and very limited release for housing (Figure 23; Law, 2000, p. 64).

Birmingham is again the region's economic heart with a fast-growing, diverse population with population growth of 150-200,000 by 2031 predicted in the Birmingham Development Plan (BDP) (from 2016) and a 'need' for 89,000 new homes (BCC, 2017, p. 6). Consequently, there is huge development pressure on the WMGB as Birmingham City Council (BCC) claims to only have 'room' on brownfield land for 39,000 homes and has released some of the very limited Green Belt land within its boundary for 6,000 homes at Langley (Figure 23; Best, 2014; Carpenter, 2016a). The release was

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economic productivity, together with Coventry's, equalled that of the South East so the Government deemed it a 'congested region' and banned office building there in 1965 (Hall, 1973b, p. 520, 2002, p. 88).

[45] Chelmsley Wood was ancient woodland, as part of the ancient Forest of Arden, but BCC compulsorily purchased the land, which came into its boundaries, so was accused of 'annexing' land from Warwickshire (Hall *et al.*, 1973b, p. 57; Elson, 1986, pp. 36). New towns were designated at Redditch/Telford (1964) and existing towns, like Droitwich, Stafford and Tamworth, accommodated Birmingham's overspill (Cherry, 1996, p. 152).

fiercely opposed by the campaign group, Project Fields, and local MP, Andrew Mitchell, who

persuaded the then Communities Secretary, Greg Clark, to put a Holding Notice on the BDP

(Johnston, 2017a). This was subsequently lifted in 2016 with the Government recognising

Birmingham's housing need (Horner, 2018). Nonetheless, governance issues continue and are

compounded because BCC still claims to have a shortfall of 38,000 homes which can only be met by

neighbouring LPAs which are also heavily constrained by the WMGB, such as the Black Country and

Bromsgrove (Brown, 2016a; Carpenter, 2016a; Dewar, 2016). Moreover, the absence of strategic

planning and limited strength of the Duty to Cooperate (DtC) on strategic matters between LPAs

mean that the WMGB is an excellent case study for exploring the challenges of the Green Belt's

governance within the context of the 'localism agenda' and a pressing housing shortage (Haughton,

2017; Mace, 2018, p. 23). This was reflected in the BDP Inspector, Roger Clews (2016, p. 44),

recognising the 'exceptional, possibly unique' nature of Birmingham's housing shortfall.

More broadly, although each place and region has its own geography and history meaning that *direct*

comparison and 'policy transfer' has limited utility, the West Midlands shares *common issues* with

other regions meaning that there can be important 'lesson learning' (Dolowitz and Marsh, 1996, p.

343, 2000; Squires and Hall, 2013, p. 85; Squires and Heurkens, 2014, p. 2, 2016). In many ways, the

WMGB is an 'exemplifying case' of regional Green Belt issues (Bryman, 2012, p. 51). Firstly, it is

similar to other non-Metropolitan regions, such as the North West (Cheshire's 'golden triangle' and

Lancashire's mill towns surrounding Greater Manchester) and Yorkshire (the 'golden triangle' and

coalfields surrounding Leeds), in having large disparities between areas with economic deprivation

and extensive brownfield land, like the Black Country, and other areas with high levels of economic

growth and development pressure on the WMGB, like the M42 Corridor (Figure 23; Law, 2000;

Dorling, 2010). This enables analysis of the Green Belt's effectiveness in a more varied spatial context

than the Greater South East, which dominates the literature and policy (Ferm and Raco, 2020),

especially a context with widespread deindustrialisation and brownfield regeneration. Conversely,

the tremendous development pressure in other parts of the WMGB affords scope to explore the

challenges of managing of housing growth, *without* a governance structure like that of Greater

London or Manchester (Haughton, 2017). Secondly, the WMGB is smaller than the MGB, 224,000ha

compared to 514,000ha, meaning that it is different in spatial character but, being a similar size to

the West Riding and North West Green Belts (both nearly 250,000ha), it is comparable to the other

Green Belts surrounding England's largest (regional) cities (CPRE and Natural England, 2010, p. 20).

Consequently, whilst the project cannot be *statistically* generalised through multiple cases (Scapens,

1992, 2004), broader lessons and comparisons can still be drawn from the WMGB (James and Lodge,

2003, pp. 179–190).

5.7.   Other Qualitative Data Collection Techniques

Interviews
Positive and Negatives of the Interview Methodology and Types of Interview
Interviews, or a 'conversation with a purpose', are frequently used as a method across the social

sciences (Burgess, 1984, p. 102; Mason, 2018, pp. 110–114). Interviews typically explore the 'how'

and 'why' of a subject often generating high quality information whilst providing the opportunity to

probe deeper and ask supplementary questions as building rapport with interviewees (Robson, 2011;

Silverman, 2011). Concerns have been raised that a lot depends upon the questions asked,

particularly how they framed (Schoenberger, 1991, 1992), but the researcher found a wide variety in

responses to similar questions demonstrating its effectiveness as a method (McDowell, 1992, 1998).

The *type* of interview can vary from structured to unstructured (Flowerdew and Martin, 2005; Kvale,

2007). Structured interviews, with a fixed interview schedule, are often associated with more

quantitative approaches as permitting the direct cross-comparison of answers but this can interrupt

the natural 'flow' of conversation and opportunities to probe deeper with follow-up questions

(Valentine, 2005). There are the reverse challenges for unstructured interviews, which are often

associated with qualitative research, especially ethnography (Davies and Dwyer, 2007; Qu and

Dumay, 2011). In common with its critical realist approach, this project employed a semi-structured

interview approach with similar but slightly different questions at the two spatial scales, national and

regional (Winchester, 1999). A common interview schedule reflected the research aims, permitted

cross-comparison of responses and was sent in advance to allow participants time for preparation

(Saunders *et al*, 2016). However, there were opportunities to add points/comments/observations

during the interview whilst the researcher sometimes varied the interview schedule to go with the

'flow' of conversation and occasionally added supplementary questions (Burns, 2000; Kvale, 2007).

Type of Data Collection (see Figures 24)
Composition
72 interviews were conducted overall with 75 interviewees including 3 joint interviews[46]. 63% of the

interviews were regional reflecting this project's case study design.

Region
Outside the West Midlands, 7 interviews were conducted in the South West of England, 2 (in)

Yorkshire, 1 East of England, 1 East Midlands and 2 South East.

Sector
Using the simplistic split of 'private' to 'other' sectors, 31 interviewees (40%) were from the private

sector whilst the remainder were from other sectors[47]. Again, this was split relatively evenly although

the figures were more complex regarding the non-private sector (figure 24).

Seniority
The project aimed to interview planners with high(er) levels of seniority as having more experience

and an independent voice on the Green Belt alongside being widely recognised as the 'authoritative'

voices of the profession (Slade *et al*, 2019). Nevertheless, the thesis wanted to also capture the views

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[46] These joint interviews were generally suggested by participants so that two people from the same organisation could be interviewed at the same time.
[47] Dividing this figure up was difficult but the planner's sector at the time of interviewing was given to give a contemporary perspective (Slade *et al*, 2019). Non-private sector includes the voluntary sector (i.e. CPRE), institutions (such as the RTPI), academia and other stakeholders from local/central government, including politicians. The private sector includes a financial journalist, developers, planners and land promoters (see Kenny (2019) for various definitions).

of young(er) planners so a young planners focus group was held in Birmingham and 13% of practising

planners interviewed were 'young'[48].

Gender

There was not such an even split with 28% female and 72% male. Although the proportion of male-

to-female in the RTPI's membership is more even at 40% female/60% male (Kenny, 2019c, p. 8), this

research focused on the Director level which is less evenly split (Bicquelet-Lock, 2019b; Bicquelet-

Lock *et al*, 2020). However, 86% of attendees at the young planners focus group were female giving

some balance although gender was not expected to be a key determinant of Green Belt perspectives

like one's region.

Figure 24 - Composition of Interviewees

Spatial Scale	National 37% (28 interviews with 29 participants)	
	Regional 63% (45 interviews with 47 participants)	West Midlands 46% (33 interviews with 35 participants)
		Other Regions 17% (12 interviews with 12 participants)
Sector	Private 40%	Working for developer/house builder/land promoter 19%
		Working for planning consultancy 20%
		Financial Journalist 1%
	Public etc. 60%	Voluntary sector 12%
		Academia 9%
		Public Sector (Politicians/planners) 40%

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[48] Classed as having been a planner less than 10 years from graduation/qualification (Kenny, 2019c).

Seniority	Managerial or above (excluding politicians) 83%	'Director' or 'Head' Level (68%) 'Young' Planners (18%)
	Non-Managerial 17%	
Gender	Male 72%	
	Female 28%	

Other Interviews: Written and Attempted

3 other participants who were too busy for interview asked for questions to be answered

electronically (1 of these participants responded and the other 2 were too busy). This was not as

effective as interviewing because the participant 'gave' the answers rather than the questioning and

probing of interviews but this was better than no response. Finally, over 100 interview request

emails were sent out but, inevitably, not all requests were answered.

Identifying Participants

Assigning codes to each interviewee for easier identification was considered with the number of

interviews conducted. However, given the importance of space and a participant's seniority/sector of

work (which individual codes make more complicated to trace), it was decided to highlight the

background of participants' with each quote, especially as many participants were happy with their

position/organisation being named (see ethics). Table 21 shows how participants were given

abbreviated titles rather than full codes which had the advantage of being able to locate a

participants' background whilst simplifying their titles.

	Table 21 - Participants Geographical Scale	Sector	Abbreviation	Month of interview
	National			
1.	National Conservative Politician	Politician	National Conservative Politician	June 2019
2.	Senior Civil Servant in Ministry of Housing	Public	Senior Civil Servant, Ministry of Housing	November 2018
3.	Leading Private Sector Planner	Private	National Private Sector Planner (1)	February 2019
4.	Financial journalist	Private	Financial journalist	December 2018
5.	Campaigner for environmental charity	Voluntary	Campaigner, environmental charity	November 2018

6.	Planner from the RTPI	Voluntary	RTPI Planner	November 2018
7.	Leading national planner with extensive private sector experience	Private	National Private Sector Planner (2)	November 2018
8.	Planner from the TCPA	Voluntary	Planner, TCPA	December 2018
9.	Planner from the Home Builders Federation (HBF)	Private	Planner, HBF	March 2019
10.	Academic housing market economist	Academia	Academic housing market economist	November 2018
11.	Planning academic	Academia	Planning Academic (1)	November 2018
12.	Planning academic	Academia	Planning Academic (2)	December 2018
13.	Labour Advisor on Housing Policy	Political	Labour Advisor on Housing Policy	November 2018
14.	Retired planner with extensive private and public sector experience.	Private	Retired Planner (1)	February 2019
15.	Planning academic with a range of planning experience	Academia	Planning Academic (3)	February 2019
16.	Strategic Planner with extensive experience, South East	Public	Strategic Planner, South East	February 2019
17.	Former Civil Servant Planner with extensive experience	Public	Former Civil Servant Planner	May 2019
18.	Planner from a body representing property interests	Private	Planner from property industry (1)	December 2018
19.	Planner from a body representing property interests	Private	Planner from property industry (2)	December 2018
20.	Planner representing housebuilders	Private	Planner from housebuilder (1)	December 2018
21.	Private sector planning director with public sector experience	Private	National Private Sector Planning Director (1)	February 2019
22.	Researcher from the Centre for Cities	Voluntary	Researcher, Centre for Cities	February 2019
23.	Planner from the Countryside Land and Business Association (CLA)	Private	CLA Planner	April 2019
24.	Private Sector Planning Director (South West)	Private	National Private Sector Planning Director (2)	May 2019
25.	Public Sector Planner (West Midlands)	Public	Public Sector Planner	April 2019
26.	Principal planner at private sector built environment consultancy	Private	Private Sector Young Planner (National)	February 2019
27.	West Midlands Planner with extensive voluntary, public and private sector experience	Private	Leading West Midlands Planner	October 2018
28.	Former West Midlands Conservative MP	Politician	Former West Midlands Conservative MP	December 2018
Regional (West Midlands)				
29.	Private Sector Planner, West Midlands (Young Planner)	Private	Private Sector Young Planner (West Midlands) (1)	February 2019
30.	Planner from national housebuilder	Private	Planner from housebuilder (2)	March 2019
31.	Strategic Planner from public sector, West Midlands	Public	Strategic Planner, West Midlands (1)	May 2019

32.	Local politician from Staffordshire	Public	Local politician, Staffordshire	March 2019
33.	Private Sector Young Planner (West Midlands) (2)	Public	Private Sector Young Planner (West Midlands) (2)	February 2019
34.	Private Sector Planning Director (West Midlands)	Private	Private Sector Planning Director (West Midlands) (3)	March 2019
35.	Private Sector Planning Director	Private	Private Sector Planning Director	March 2019
36.	Local councillor in Solihull giving individual views	Politician	Local councillor, Solihull (individual views)	November 2018
37.	Private Sector Young Planner (West Midlands) (3)	Private	Private Sector Young Planner (West Midlands) (3)	March 2019
38.	Retired Civil Servant; Planner at CPRE West Midlands	Voluntary	Planner (1), CPRE West Midlands	March 2019
39.	Policy and Campaign Advisor	Voluntary	Policy and Campaign Advisor, West Midlands	April 2019
40.	Planner (2) at CPRE West Midlands	Voluntary	Planner (2), CPRE West Midlands	April 2019
41.	Retired Planning Consultant, now Planner (3) at CPRE West Midlands	Voluntary	Planner (3), CPRE West Midlands	April 2019
42.	Former Planning Director at West Midlands local authority	Public	Former LPA Director, West Midlands	January 2019
43.	Retired Strategic Planner, West Midlands Regional Assembly	Public	Retired Strategic Planner (1), West Midlands	November 2018
44.	Planner (1) from West Midlands Housebuilder	Private	Planner (1), West Midlands Housebuilder	December 2018
45.	Planner (2) from West Midlands Housebuilder	Private	Planner (2), West Midlands Housebuilder	December 2018
46.	Policy Planner (1) in a West Midlands local authority	Public	Policy Planner (1) (West Midlands Council)	November 2018
47.	Policy Planner (2) in a West Midlands local authority	Public	Policy Planner (2) (West Midlands Council)	November 2018
48.	Planner in a West Midlands local authority	Public	Public Sector Planner (1) West Midlands	May 2019
49.	Planner from public sector, West Midlands	Public	Public Sector Planner (2) West Midlands	April 2019
50.	Retired Planner from West Midlands Regional Assembly and Regional Strategic Planner	Public	Retired Strategic Planner (2), West Midlands	April 2019
51.	Retired Structure Planner (West Midlands) and the West Midlands Regional Assembly.	Public	Retired Strategic Planner (3), West Midlands	April 2019
52.	Planning Director in West Midlands Local Authority	Public	LPA Planning Director, West Midlands	April 2019
53.	Policy Planner (3) in West Midlands local authority	Public	Policy Planner (3) (in a West Midlands Council)	June 2019
54.	Local Politician, Sutton Coldfield	Politician	Local Politician, Sutton Coldfield	March 2020
55.	Retired LPA Director (West Midlands)	Public	Retired LPA Director (West Midlands)	April 2019
56.	Retired Planner, West Midlands LPA	Public	Retired Planner, West Midlands LPA	May 2019
57.	Private Sector Planning Director (West Midlands)	Private	Private Sector Planning Director (West Midlands) (2)	December 2018
58.	Regional policy expert	Public	Regional Policy Expert	May 2019

59.	Retired Structure Planner/50 years of experience working in local government in the West Midlands	Public	Retired Strategic Planner (4)	May 2019
60.	Planner with 30 years of experience working in local government in the West Midlands	Public	Retired Public Sector Planner	May 2019
61.	Public Sector Planner (West Midlands)	Public	Public Sector Planner (3) West Midlands	May 2019
62.	Retired Civil Servant	Public	Retired Civil Servant	June 2019
63.	Retired Longstanding West Midlands MP	Politician	Retired Longstanding West Midlands MP	June 2019
Regional (Other than West Midlands)				
64.	Planning academic	Academia	Planning academic (4)	January 2019
65.	Retired private sector planner with public sector experience	Private	Retired Private Sector Planner (1)	March 2019
66.	Retired private sector planner with public sector experience	Private	Retired Private Sector Planner (2)	February 2019
67.	Retired Planner (South West)	Public	Retired Planner (South West)	April 2019
68.	Young planner from a private sector environmental planning consultancy	Private	Young planner at environment consultancy	May 2019
69.	Private Sector Planning Director (South East) (1)	Public	Private Sector Planning Director (South East) (1)	January 2019
70.	Private Sector Planning Director (Bristol) (1)	Private	Private Sector Planning Director (Bristol) (1)	April 2019
71.	Private Sector Planning Director (Bristol) (2)	Private	Private Sector Planning Director (Bristol) (2)	April 2019
72.	Young planner from a national housebuilder	Private	Young planner, national housebuilder	December 2018
73.	National Private Sector Planning Director (3)	Private	National Private Sector Planning Director (3)	January 2019
74.	Private Sector Planning Director (South East) (2)	Private	Private Sector Planning Director (South East) (2)	June 2019
75.	Local authority planner (South East)	Public	LPA planner (South East)	June 2019

Type of Interviews Conducted

Although involving a significant amount of travel, most interviews were conducted face-to-face with the literature generally recommending this as the best way to build rapport with interviewees, gauge their reaction to questions alongside enabling participant observation of office layouts etc. (Elwood and Martin, 2000; Conti and O'Neil, 2007; Harvey, 2011). However, it was impractical to conduct every interview this way so 5 interviews were conducted via telephone. Although not as 'natural' as face-to-face, the researcher and participant 'grew' into the interview and a good rapport developed as Irvine *et al* (2013) found regarding telephone interviews.

Participant Selection

Nationally and regionally, the researcher focused on the 'triangle' of key stakeholders in the development process: pro-development actors (developer/housebuilder/land promoter), anti-development actors (environmentalist/conservationist) and local/regional/national government (managing these competing interests) (Healey, 1990; Adams and Tiesdell, 2013, p. 77). Although a useful framework, it is now simplistic given that planning consultancies often work for *both* private sector and (increasingly) public sector clients (Parker *et al*, 2020). Moreover, LPAs themselves may be divided whereby planning officers are proposing Green Belt release through a local plan, for example, whilst this maybe opposed by some local politicians as in South Oxfordshire (Mace, 2018; Marrs, 2019b). Nonetheless, this multi-scalar triangle of actors can still be identified regionally and nationally so formed the main participant identification technique as aiming to get developer *and* conservationist perspectives, particularly those of practising planners and professional campaigners. Around this 'triangle' are 'interested parties', so academics, think-tanks and 'expert bodies', such as the TCPA, RTPI and legal profession (Adams and Tiesdell, 2013, p. 60).

Another selection technique was identifying planners and planning stakeholders who had published on, written about or spoken on the Green Belt (such as the Centre for Cities) (Clarke *et al*, 2014). Several interviewees were part of the researcher's professional network, including those met or speaking at events, especially RTPI Conferences[49]. 'Snowballing', whereby planners recommend other planners, colleagues, friends or helpful contacts to interview was particularly useful as planning is a relatively small profession (Conti and O'Neil, 2007, p. 67; Parker *et al*, 2020, p. 199).

A large number of interviews (72) were conducted because, although 'data saturation' was eventually reached regarding *general* viewpoints on the Green Belt, the later interviews still yielded rich data with a range of geographical insights and a longitudinal aspect with commentary on political

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[49] See full list of conference attendance in the Appendix.

developments, like the 2019 Local Elections (Guest *et al*, 2006, p. 59; Saunders and Townsend, 2016, p. 836).

Interview Process

Each participant was notified via email that the interview would take around 25-30 minutes and be recorded[50]. Although the shortest interviews lasted only 8-20 minutes with particularly busy participants, largely MPs, most participants were generous with their time and set aside an hour, the average length of interview, although some retired planners were interviewed for nearly 2 hours. The researcher always asked the interviewee at the beginning how much time they had available and regularly clarified this throughout the interview but, if participants offered more than 25 minutes or were happy to keep talking, the interview kept going (McDowell, 1992, 1998). At the end, participants were promised a research summary and some even requested a full copy of the PhD.

Focus Group
Positive and Negatives of Focus Groups

Focus groups are a well-used method because they permit a larger number of people to participate and give their views on a research topic compared to individual interviews (Bedford and Burgess, 2001; Gidlow and Ellis, 2011). The focus groups in this study aimed to ask similar questions to the interviews but trigger wider debate and discussion on the Green Belt (Limb and Dwyer, 2001; Cameron, 2005). Scholars, like Mitchell (1999) and Longhurst (2010), have combined interviews and focus groups as a methodology and way to triangulate (Winchester, 1999; Woolley, 2009). Indeed, as planners often expressed contrasting views on the Green Belt, even from similar, private sector backgrounds, the focus group afforded a forum for discussion, disagreement and debate (Smithson, 2000; Montell, 2017)[51]. Additionally, they explored relevant wider issues, such as land value capture and opposition to development. However, focus groups have been criticised as difficult to manage

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[50] The 'Ethical Values' section covers the email and consent process of interviewing.
[51] This has broader importance with the RTPI's call for planners to be 'reflective practitioners' and the role that Universities can play in this (Slade *et al*, 2019, p. 8).

because certain individuals can dominate the discussion and other attendees maybe reluctant to speak (Cameron, 2005; Tardiveau and Mallo, 2014).

Focus Group Process

Two focus groups were conducted: one at a planning consultancy in their office in the South Midlands (November 2018), focus group I, and another at a global property company in their Birmingham office (January 2019), focus group II[52]. The aim of both was to have a mix of planners to encourage debate. Focus group I included planners and surveyors (15 in total) with a wide range in ages and seniority whilst focus group II was 7 young planners with a range of roles (from graduate up to principal planner). Both focus groups were organised and advertised by 'gatekeepers' internally within the companies, following contact from the researcher, and they circulated details of the project summary and focus group questions a few weeks before it took place (Heath *et al.*, 2007, p. 403). Although there probably would have been higher turnout if they had included planners from other companies, it was mutually decided that just including planners from the same company rather than an 'open' invitation was more straightforward (alongside there being confidentiality reasons (Cameron, 2005)). Each participant signed the consent form and it was outlined that the discussion was held under 'Chatham House Rules' to enable the participants to express their views freely.

The questions followed a similar structure to the interviews but were asked and phrased in a broader, more open-ended fashion to stimulate discussion (see Appendix). The researcher primarily tried to ensure that the focus groups flowed well and, after raising a discussion point, was reluctant to disrupt the 'natural' flow of conservation which often followed (Smithson, 2000; Montell, 2017). However, there were dominant individuals in the groups who talked more than others with some younger planners reluctant to speak (Bedford and Burgess, 2001; Cameron, 2005). The researcher

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[52] The 'gatekeeper' who organised focus group I was happy for the company to be named but the researcher decided, to ensure consistency, not to name the company or individuals although the position of participants were given (Heath *et al.*, 2007, p. 403). Likewise, focus group II was organised by gatekeepers and it was agreed not to name the company but call it 'a global property company with offices in the West Midlands'. It was still fine to name the individual positions of participants, i.e. 'graduate planner'.

asked around the room to try to bring in everyone who wanted to speak (Limb and Dwyer, 2001).

Focus group I was more free flowing, probably reflecting the greater range of experience in the group

and maybe the company's culture of debate and discussion. However, the researcher had to move

the discussion 'on' at times to ensure that all the key points were covered but needed to give more

'steer' at the young planners focus group to keep discussions going. Nevertheless, both focus groups

lasted for over 1 hour 30 minutes reflecting the enthusiasm and interest of those involved.

Engagement with Campaign Groups

The researcher contacted three regional campaign groups: Project Fields (PF), South Solihull

Community Group (SSCG) and Save Stourbridge Green Belt (SSGB). These groups are opposed to the

release of land for housing from the WMGB at the rural-urban fringe so were poignant cases in

exploring campaigners' motivations. It also gave the opportunity for everyday campaigners to give

their view rather than just relying on professional campaigners who were all retired planners. Of

course, these groups were not fully representative of the region's geography, but this was largely

unavoidable given that campaign groups and this project were time-limited. The groups represent a

range of geographical contexts from the prosperous north-west (PF (Sutton Coldfield)) and south-

east of Birmingham (SSCG (Meriden Gap)) to the industrial Black Country (SSGB (Stourbridge)) (figure

25):
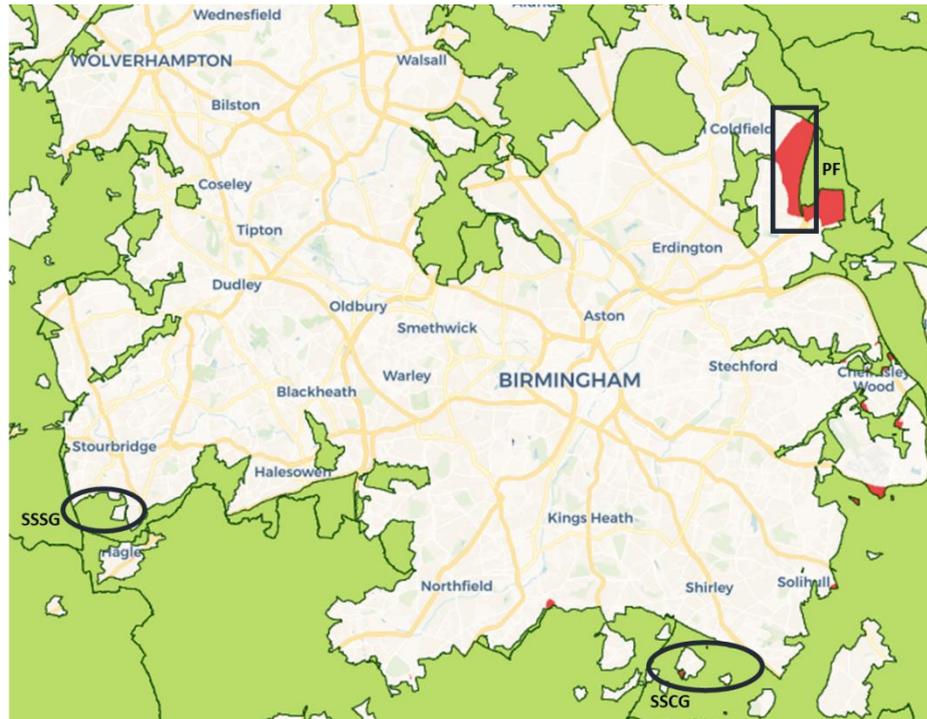
Figure 25 - Approximate locations in which the campaign groups are operating (adapted from: https://bit.ly/3pQUZdv).
Key: Save Stourbridge Green Belt (SSGB) – opposed to any release of land in the Green Belt for housing in the Black Country Core Strategy Green Belt Review (as this process is still ongoing, no sites are shown in red).
South Solihull Community Group (SSCG) – opposed to several releases of land in the Green Belt for homes in the Solihull Local Plan (2020) (as this is a Draft Plan the sites are not displayed in red).
Project Fields (PF) – opposed the release of land in the Green Belt (see red) at Langley for 6,000 new homes.

Project Fields (PF)

PF opposed the BDP's release of land in the Green Belt for housing at Langley and campaigned very

vigorously (Elkes, 2012, 2014, 2015, 2016; Brown, 2016c, 2016b, 2016a). The organisation has

remained 'live' and engaged extensively in the subsequent consultation process so forms an

interesting case study of proactive engagement alongside oppositional campaigning thereby acting in

quite an 'agonistic' way (Parker and Street, 2015, p. 794; BCC, 2018; Horner, 2018). Indeed, PF was

affiliated to, and supported by the Conservatives in Sutton Coldfield, including the influential MP

Andrew Mitchell, and the PF Leader, Suzanne Webb, was subsequently elected as a BCC Councillor

then Conservative MP for Stourbridge in 2019 covering the area where SSSG are campaigning (Elkes,

2014; Webb, 2020b). Webb still frequently campaigns on the Green Belt as a principle and in her

constituency showing the multi-scalar character of Green Belt politics (Goode, 2019a; Webb, 2020a,

2020b)[53]. A local politician and PF campaign were interviewed as part of a Masters Dissertation in 2016 with the politician being re-interviewed for this project and the PF campaigner giving her consent for the material to be re-used.

Save Stourbridge Green Belt (SSGB)

This 'live' campaign group is opposed to any release of land for housing from the WMGB within the reviewed and updated Black Country Core Strategy, especially as the Urban Capacity Review (2018) highlighted that there is not enough 'room' to meet housing need on brownfield land. Consequently, a repeatedly delayed Green Belt Review is being undertaken whereas the 2011 Strategy articulated the policy of a 'strong Green Belt' (Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council *et al.*, 2011, p. 42, 2018, p. 2, 2019, p. 35)[54]. Although Stourbridge is a relatively 'leafy', middle class town, the strategic nature of the Core Strategy means that the wider 'industrial' Black Country features prominently in SSGB campaigning. SSGB draws support from the West Midlands Metro Mayor, Andy Street, who frequently campaigning on protecting the Green Belt and a brownfield-first policy[55] (Parkes, 2019). Street is a Conservative Mayor in what has traditionally been a Labour Conurbation winning a tiny majority in 2017 through gaining votes in the wealthy urban-rural fringes (Stourbridge, Solihull and Walsall) (Gutteridge, 2020).

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[53] For example, at PMQ's (11th March 2020), Webb (2020a, p. 2) asked: 'Will the Prime Minister support me to ensure that we keep the focus on the regeneration and remediation of brownfield sites?' In Webb's (2020b, p. 3) maiden speech, she argued 'We should be bolder when it comes to climate change…I refer specifically to the Green Belt, which is under much pressure in my constituency. I have long championed the protection of the Green Belt, and I know that we can do things differently when it comes to building houses. After all, these greenspaces are the lungs of this great country. If we are serious about climate change, we need to start thinking differently about how we plan for our future homes and cities, and, importantly, how we can protect those vast green lungs with fair funding for remediation, and focus on the regeneration of brownfield land'.

[54] A joint Plan by the Black Country authorities: Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council, Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council, Walsall Council and Wolverhampton City Council (2011, 2019, p. 3). Some of these Councils are more urban than others but, as the Strategy covers the whole area, it includes a Green Belt Review (Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council *et al.*, 2019). The Black Country has vast areas of brownfield land but some of its urban-rural fringe, especially around Stourbridge, is very wealthy.

[55] Street argued 'I simply don't accept this Report (the Urban Capacity Review) and will do everything I can to oppose its conclusions' whilst he called Green Belt release the 'easy option' (Parkes, 2019, p. 1).

The researcher contacted SSGB regarding a focus group and the representative responded that it would be better to circulate the questions via email given how busy the 'everyday' volunteers were. There was a good response (20 respondents) who answered in a comprehensive way, the responses covered 9 pages overall, so a follow-up interview was deemed unnecessary. These responses were a rich resource for elucidating the views of 'everyday' campaigners.

South Solihull Community Group (SSCG)

SSCG is opposing Green Belt releases in the Draft but repeatedly delayed Solihull Local Plan (Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council, 2020). The researcher contacted SSCG requesting a focus group and the representative asked to see the questions first to raise the matter at a meeting and respond accordingly, so the questions were forwarded. However, despite contacting the representative several times, the researcher did not hear anymore.

One of the professional campaigners interviewed in their home lived near an area of proposed Green Belt release which SSCG are campaigning on. The researcher was given an extensive guided tour around the area, including the affected fields, by another campaigner interviewed on the same day who also lives nearby and has extensive local knowledge. Likewise, the resident campaigner and her husband did a guided tour of the garden to view the potential development from various angles and the researcher was driven around the local area. The professional campaigner promised a guided tour of the wider area during the spring (2020) but, due to the ongoing disruption surrounding Coronavirus, this tour has not taken place. Indeed, although an explicitly ethnographic approach was not pursued (Golden-Biddle and Locke, 1993; Katz, 1994), the researcher aimed to understand how development in the Green Belt would personally affect campaigners and their concerns. This can only be properly done when shown around proposed developments by campaigners, including how it will directly affect their lives, although those living immediately adjacent to developments often have the strongest views (Bradley, 2019b, 2019a).

Other Developments

A retired Structure Planner, West Midlands, and his wife, who was also a planner, were interviewed

in their home in the Green Belt. Although not living next to a proposed development, the interviewee

drove the researcher around a development on brownfield land in the Green Belt, Hatton Park, to

explore how housing developments affect local communities. The Hatton Parish Plan (2013), which

includes the views of local residents on the Green Belt, was forwarded to the researcher to help with

the research.

The researcher has stayed regularly in Kent in recent years with relatives who live on the edge of the

Green Belt and extensively explored the local area by walking and participant observation recorded

through photos and reflections recorded in a field notebook (see Appendix).

Field Diary

A field diary was kept of the interviews, especially observation notes about the office location and

interview idiosyncrasies that were not necessarily recorded, such as how jokes were told, as

recommended by academics like Conti and O'Neil (2007) (see Appendix). McDowell (1998, p. 2139)

recommended making these notes on the same day of the interview and the researcher sought to

follow this advice although it was not always practicable. Likewise, valuable information that was not

taped, like other useful people to interview, was noted down but not anything that was asked to be

kept 'off the record'. The researcher asked for and picked up information about, and publications by,

the companies when interviewing to get a wider perspective on the type of organisation (as was

done by Raco *et al* (2019, p. 1070) in their interviewing of property developers).

Qualitative Data Analysis

A spreadsheet of interviewees was kept incorporating key, non-sensitive information about the

sector, gender, and region etc., and this made interview analysis, i.e. calculating the proportion of

people interviewed regionally and nationally, straightforward after data collection.

Secondly, the researcher listened to recordings of the interviews as part of the data analysis. Although the interviews were transcribed for the researcher, there was still the important job of listening to interviews and checking them for any words/phrases that the transcriber could not decipher.

Thirdly, the transcripts were read, cross-compared, analysed and searched for key quotes which formed the backbone of the empirical Chapters (see an appendix for example coded transcript)) (Denscombe, 1998, p. 88; Basit, 2003, p. 149; Birks and Mills, 2011)).

5.8.   Quantitative Data Collection Techniques

Questionnaire and Primary Data Analysis
Positives and Negatives of Questionnaires
Questionnaires have traditionally been a positivist methodology aiming to find a statistically significant sample of a particular group (Fowler, 2014). The rationale is that more participants can take part in a questionnaire compared to an interview or focus group so, it is argued, that they result in a more representative dataset (Groves *et al.*, 2009). Questionnaire data is often in numeric form to allow useful statistical analysis through software, such as SPSS (Daniel, 2012; Field, 2013).

However, there are long recognised problems with questionnaires. Firstly, it is difficult to get a high response rate due to widespread 'over-surveying' and 'survey fatigue' (Rogelberg and Stanton, 2007, p. 195; Baruch and Holtom, 2008, p. 1139). Secondly, there is 'response bias' as those responding to questionnaires are usually the ones who are more initially interested in the research (Dillman *et al*, 2008; Poncheri *et al.*, 2008, p. 614). Additionally, there is the question about whether people give what they think is the 'right' answer rather than what they really believe. Thirdly, there is debate among scholars, especially more positivist ones, about whether it is wise to include a section for qualitative, non-numeric responses (Saunders, 2012b).

Other scholars, researching hard to reach groups, such as refugees, have argued for a more post-positivist approach whereby questionnaires aim to find *as much as possible* about a group rather than necessarily a representative sample (Bloch, 2004; Marshall *et al.*, 2013; O'Reilly and Parker, 2013). Indeed, concerns about questionnaires often reflect the positivist 'gold standard' of quantitative research, reliability, validity and generalisability, especially for researchers who have a questionnaire as the *centrepiece* of their research design (Johnson *et al.*, 2006, p. 146; Cassell and Symon, 2012; Cassell *et al*, 2017).

Questionnaire Approach Taken

Questionnaires remain under-utilised in planning research notwithstanding their utility (Goodman *et al*, 2017). The researcher's questionnaire was designed in a PGCARMS Module, *Questionnaire Design*, led by Dr Karin Bottom[56]. The module stressed the importance of ensuring that the questionnaire's approach reflects one's epistemological commitments whilst the questions asked should clearly reflect the research aims/questions to avoid asking unnecessary questions (Flowerdew and Martin, 2005; Baruch and Holtom, 2008, p. 1139).

The questionnaire developed reflected the researcher's use of an integrative logic when mixing methods because its aim was to find out as much as possible about the Green Belt from planners rather than capturing a statistically representative sample of their views (Lindsay, 2005; Mason, 2006b). Consequently, getting a representative sample (reliability) and a significant or high enough response rate (validity and generalisability) was not such a *critical* issue although the researcher still aimed to maximise the response rate (O'Reilly and Parker, 2013, p. 192). Moreover, capturing a representative sample would have been problematic, especially a stratified one, as detailed data on the sector of work, seniority etc. of planners in the RTPI regions is not publicly available and not every planner is an RTPI member (Robinson, 2014, p. 22; Saunders *et al*, 2016, p. 221; Kenny, 2019c).

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[56] Dr Bottom is an expert in questionnaires as a data collection technique and the course was run in 2018.

Finally, within this mixed methods approach, the qualitative responses/comments were viewed as very useful as providing additional information rather than as 'impure', non-numeric data that prevents quantitative analysis (Poncheri *et al.*, 2008).

The questionnaire's aims were the same as for the other research instruments whilst the themes and questions closely followed the interview questions (albeit they were rewritten as agree/disagree statements in an appropriate form for questionnaires (see Appendix)). A Likert Scale was used and the emphasis of the questions varied from positive to negative on the Green Belt to keep respondents alert and to avoid bias (Groves *et al.*, 2009; Field, 2013). The questionnaire was broken up into key sections thus reflecting the advice of other academics carrying out questionnaires (Parsons *et al.*, 2009).

The initial aim was to collect quantitative *alongside* qualitative data as part of the integrative logic whilst the questionnaire would be a *national* one of planners (Mason, 2006b, pp. 6–7; Dillman *et al*, 2008). However, despite discussing questionnaire distribution with the RTPI due to their vast network, this was not a viable option given its understandably strict policies. It subsequently moved to being a regional questionnaire, adding another dimension to the case study, although it was launched later than expected through an advertisement through *Tripwire* and was regularly promoted on LinkedIn (Goode, 2019e). The RTPI therefore acted as the 'gatekeeper' organisation (Bloch, 2004, p. 139). However, there was a disappointing response rate of only 9 despite repeated announcements advertising the questionnaire and it being 'open' for over 3 months. Again, due to the difficulties of contacting planners individually, the researcher would ideally have liked the RTPI to have emailed the questionnaire to every regional member as a more targeted approach. However, advertising in *Tripwire*, a highly respected and well-read magazine, was the next best option. There was not a statistically significant sample to carry out data analysis but the qualitative comments and observations were still helpful and this attempt at mixed methods research demonstrates the great

challenges of mixing methods successfully and recruiting participants for questionnaires (Lindsay, 2005, p. 121).

Secondary Data Analysis

Secondary data sources formed a key part of data analysis, especially for quantifying and exploring public attitudes towards the Green Belt and housebuilding generally (see appendix for the full dataset analysed). Some of these questionnaires, like CPRE's (2015) questionnaire, had the full dataset and raw data publicly available so support for the Green Belt could be analysed according to different housing tenures, ages and regions etc. Alongside spatial and social analysis, similar longitudinal datasets, for example CPRE's questionnaire in 2005/2015, permitted analysis of temporal attitudinal change. Although there was not space for these datasets to be *fully* presented in the PhD, they still played a useful role in triangulating and exploring attitudes in a quantitative way (Onwuegbuzie and Leech, 2005; Modell, 2009). There were also questionnaires on general societal attitudes towards housebuilding, like the Social Attitudes Survey (NatCen Social Research, 2017), thus permitting the project to have wider relevance on community opposition towards housebuilding generally.

Wider Material and 'Grey Material'

A large amount of material on the Green Belt was read and analysed including news articles, policy announcements and updates, the planning press, especially *Planning Portal*, *Planning Resource* and the *Planner*, LinkedIn commentary and blogs by practitioners[57], think tank reports, such as *Rethinking the Planning System* by Policy Exchange (2020), and local media coverage of Green Belt campaigns, like the Guildford Green Belt Group (Brock, 2018; Munro, 2018, p. 1091; Raco *et al*, 2019, p. 1070). Some of this secondary material was directly included in the empirical Chapters (for example: Young, 2019), but it also formed a key role in challenging and shaping the researcher's thoughts and findings

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[57] Such as blogs by Mike Best, a Turley Director, based in Birmingham, who writes a blog, *Best Laid Plans* (Best, 2019), on the planning situation in the West Midlands and Phillip Barnes, Planning Director at Barratt Homes.

on the policy, especially how it is portrayed by different groups and contrasting political perspectives (Munro, 2018).

Conference Attendance

The researcher presented at several academic and practitioner conferences alongside attending lots of conferences, especially RTPI ones, in a variety of geographical locations to explore Green Belt issues around the country (See full list of conference attendance in the Appendix). These formed a direct part of the recruitment strategy because most planners interviewed were previously met in informal conversation at conferences[58]. Moreover, the conferences were extremely valuable for raising awareness of the project, getting informal feedback, and discussing the Green Belt and research propositions in an informal way. Although this 'data' could not be included as directly attributable material, these conferences and conversations formed a key part in developing and shaping the researcher's findings (see appendix for a sample of the researcher's field diary of conversations at conferences). Moreover, the researcher wrote 13 detailed RTPI Conference Reports in exchange for free conference places (for example: Goode, 2019a, 2019b). Firstly, this reduced cost of attendance meaning that more conferences could be attended. Secondly, these publications were included in a range of RTPI Branch Magazines, including (the) South West one (*Branchout*), South East (*InPerspective*) and *Tripwire* (Goode, 2019d, 2019c, 2020c), to publicise the research to planning audiences across the country. Thirdly, it raised project awareness as these reports included a research summary with the researcher's contact details, although this only led to one interview directly. Fourthly, it developed the researcher's independent, expert 'voice' on planning and permitted him, based upon this, to write a series of articles disseminating and summarising aspects of the research, such as the effectiveness of Planning Committees and the Green Belt's governance, to promote broader debate and discussion in the profession (Goode, 2019b, 2020g).

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[58] The researcher found it much easier to secure an interview with someone that he had met or heard speak, probably due to the issues of trust.

5.9.   Positionality and Power

Positionality has been highlighted as a key issue by feminist geographers, especially the power dynamic between the interviewer and interviewee (Rose, 1997; McDowell, 1998; Mullings, 1999; Conti and O'Neil, 2007). Even the interview and focus group location has been underlined as important (Elwood and Martin, 2000). There was a clear power and experience imbalance between many of those interviewed and in focus groups, with most at Director level or retired with several decades of planning experience, and the researcher at the beginning of his planning/academic career. However, most participants were respectful of the researcher's doctoral research and he was often viewed as 'independent' and 'impartial' as belonging to a respected institution, the University of Birmingham, which was widely perceived as 'neutral'. The researcher tried to portray himself as 'professional', as recommended by Conti and O'Neil (2007, p. 73) and Harvey (2011, p. 439) when interviewing elites, by wearing a tie to nearly every interview and focus group and calling himself a 'Researcher'/'Planner' funded by the ESRC rather than a 'student'. In the interviews and focus groups, the researcher often adopted McDowell's (1998, p. 2138) approach of switching from 'whiz kid' to 'naive layperson' to draw out the best responses. However, on reflection, the researcher was perhaps too polite and deferential to the interviewee rather than critically questioning them although, given these power imbalances, being respectful but inquisitive was important and often drew out better responses than a confrontational approach (Conti and O'Neil, 2007). Moreover, this respectful attitude also reflected the researcher wanting to keep to the interview schedule and early career position rather than being an 'established' academic. Indeed, perhaps because of career considerations, the researcher sometimes tried to bring in his planning knowledge so that he would be taken seriously by interviewees whereas perhaps, at times, a more 'naïve' approach would have worked better (McDowell, 1998, p. 2138). The researcher found that the interviews with 'young' planners were more 'equal' in power relations (Elwood and Martin, 2000).

The researcher aimed to hold interviews and focus groups in an interviewee's workplace as the interviewee was more likely to agree to an interview when travelling was not involved. It also provided an opportunity for participant observation, including viewing different office layouts, company cultures and promotional material (Raco *et al*, 2019). Interviews in offices, especially meeting rooms, worked well because they were quiet for recording, the participant often felt relaxed as in their own workplace yet was unlikely to be overheard by colleagues (Elwood and Martin, 2000). Interviews in other locations, including coffee shops with retired planners, did not work so well because of the background noise with recording which meant that the researcher was not so relaxed. A few interviews took place in University meeting rooms which worked well because the researcher was more relaxed and there was probably a more even power balance (Elwood and Martin, 2000). Some interviews occurred in the homes of retired planners/campaigners because of mobility issues etc. These were probably the most informal, lengthiest interviews and generally worked well as it enabled retired participants to show helpful documents, like old maps etc. One even included a 'working lunch' looking at maps.

Finally, in terms of the researcher's own positionality, he was instinctively in favour of policies to solve the housing crisis as not a homeowner himself so, given the economic literature (Cheshire, 2013, 2014c), was initially more anti-Green Belt. However, the researcher tried to keep his mind open throughout the process to the evidence, tried to be as impartial as possible, interviewed a wide range of planning stakeholders and, ultimately, found his view became more nuanced on the Green Belt (see Chapter 6).

5.10. Ethical Values and Implications

Ethical values are now essential to social science research, especially as it often involves working directly with humans (Katz, 1994; Thomas and Piccolo, 2014). There is also debate around the ethics of reusing secondary data (Coltart *et al*, 2013; Morrow *et al*, 2014).

Ethics involves protecting research participants by offering confidentiality/anonymity alongside a broader set of values surrounding how research is conducted (Thomas and Piccolo, 2014)[59]. Although ethical procedures have been critiqued as being 'captured' by the medical/scientific academy, it was still important to ensure confidentiality to protect participants, especially given the Green Belt's politically sensitivity (Macfarlane, 2010, p. 21). The researcher followed formal 'procedural ethics', such as gaining initial ethical approval and participants signing a consent form, and 'ethics in practice', i.e. situational judgments made in the field, like not recording an interview when a participant asked not to be although she had initially agreed to it via email (Macfarlane, 2010, p. 21).

The recruitment emails sent to participants included the project's aims/objectives alongside assurances of confidentiality so that participants were fully aware of the project's nature and scope (see Appendix) (Saunders, 2012a; Saunders *et al*, 2016). At this stage, it was often established whether the participant's organisation/job title would be named (confidentiality was offered to all participants and no personal names were included, even when participants were happy to be named to ensure consistency as recommended by Saunders *et al* (2015)).

There was a range of responses based on 'informed consent' (Heath *et al.*, 2007, p. 403). Some participants were happy being individually named, others were happy for their position being named (i.e. Director/Junior Planner) and most in the private sector were happy for the company being named with the caveat that it was their *personal view, not the companies*. Others, mainly in the public sector, did not wish to have their organisation/LPA named, probably because of fears about their views becoming public to councillors and being taken as the 'LPA' view. In contrast, councillors

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[59] Anonymity is the process by which an individual's identity/identifying information is completely obscured so it is impossible to trace an individual, such as in the researcher's questionnaire (Saunders *et al*, 2015; Saunders *et al*, 2016). Anonymity would typically involve not giving the participant's organisation, sector or location of work which may take place with confidentiality (in which the participant's name etc. is not given so their individual identity is obscured but not completely impossible to trace) (Saunders, 2012a; Saunders and Townsend, 2016). Interview and focus group participants were offered confidentiality but not anonymity so that their sector/seniority was important to contextualise the quotes.

interviewed were all free to give their views, albeit that it was their personal view as a councillor, *not* the Council's view. Although the researcher's preferred option would have been to name a participant's company or council to give a sense of their background and context, to ensure consistency with the public sector and to increase confidentially, it was decided not to refer to any planner's council or company specifically. However, the general geographical area and seniority were mentioned, i.e. 'Local Authority Planner, West Midlands' or 'Private Sector Planning Director, West Midlands', apart from individuals representing organisations where the context was important, such as the RTPI and CPRE.

A project information sheet and interview/focus group schedule was sent in plenty of time to allow participants to prepare (Denscombe, 1998; Arksey and Knight, 1999). On the day, participants signed a consent form and those interviewed by telephone gave their consent electronically (Irvine *et al*, 2013). Participants were asked if they were still happy to be recorded and it was clarified again whether their organisation would be named - a spreadsheet was kept recording this. The researcher asked how much time each participant had to tailor the length of the interview/focus group to the participant and not overrun (Harvey, 2011). At the end, the researcher asked whether any of the questions and answers needed clarifying and if there were any other points or comments to add. As participants were granted confidentiality, it was deemed unnecessary to send a full transcript to each participant or to clarify every reference where they were quoted in the PhD or publications apart from where participants specifically requested as maintaining academic integrity and independence in research and how it is interpreted is also vital (Saunders *et al*, 2016)). However, the researcher was careful not to take quotes out of context or to misrepresent the speaker and sought to keep in contact with participants and notify them of research outputs through sending a research summary (one was sent to the RTPI during data collection to gauge their feedback and another sent with final recommendations and findings).

National datasets did not include any identifying information and datasets were referenced thus overcoming issues of reusing secondary data where identifying information is included (Bishop, 2005, 2009; Irwin, 2013)[60]. The researcher's Green Belt questionnaire of planners also did not include identifying information, i.e. email addresses and company names (Parry and Mauthner, 2004; Yardley *et al.*, 2014)[61]. Initially, the questionnaire was going to be of 'RTPI Members' but, to ensure the questionnaire was not seen as a piece of RTPI research, the title was changed to 'planners in the West Midlands' (Goode, 2019e).

5.11.   Limitations and Problems: Participant Selection and Timing

Participant Selection
Research participants were, to some extent, self-selecting rather than necessarily representing the *whole* profession but, given that planning is a 'small world' professionally, it would have been very challenging getting a *fully* representative sample (Conti and O'Neil, 2007, p. 199; Parker *et al*, 2020, p. 199)[62].

A more pressing problem was the reluctance of public sector planners to participate in the research and share their views. The researcher and project information sheet made clear that the project was *not* looking at *specific sites* in the Green Belt but at the *general principle* of the policy. Nevertheless,

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[60] The other critique of reusing secondary data is that participants may not be aware of how the data would be (re-)used when they gave their consent (Grinyer, 2009; Irwin, 2013, p. 297; Yardley *et al.*, 2014). In response, it is argued that academic independence to interpret data is equally important, reusing data is often covered by participants consenting to data being in the public domain and it is usually anonymised (Bishop, 2005, 2009).
[61] To ensure that the data was anonymised. When the questionnaire was launched (July 2019), interviewing had finished so recruiting more interviewees with an option to opt-in for interview was not needed.
[62] 1) A clear rationale for contacting a participant was needed, i.e. they had worked on a Green Belt project, rather than just the fact that they were a planner. 2) Regional data on the sector/age of planners to develop a representative sample is not publicly available (Kenny, 2019c). Even if it was available, not everyone contacted would have been available to interview. 3) It is often difficult to contact people. Email contact was used where a participant's address was publicly available alongside LinkedIn but there were still uncontactable people that the researcher would like to have interviewed (i.e. no email address was available, the participant would not 'connect' LinkedIn or the researcher sent an email to an institutional address for the attention of particular individuals but did not receive any response).

public sector planners were still reluctant participate with one LPA agreeing to a focus group and then withdrawing.

Timing

The researcher planned to interview national participants first to contextualise the topic and then regional participants. However, given the travelling involved with national interviews mainly being in London, it was necessary to spread these out so regional interviews occurred simultaneously although most national interviews took place first. The wider political situation changed quickly during interviewing although it was dominated by Brexit (October 2018 – June 2019). For example, exploring the implications of the 2019 Local Elections with more participants would have been very interesting but most of the interviews were already conducted then (Branson, 2019b). However, data collection has to take place at one point in time.

5.12. Conclusion

This chapter has weaved together three key threads which underpin the methodology: epistemological considerations (critical realism), pragmatic concerns (what methods are best suited both the discipline (planning/geography) and topic (the Green Belt)) and the crucial spatial dimension (Bryman, 2006b). All three threads are arguably vital in planning research, especially when studying a complicated, multi-scalar topic like the Green Belt (Goode, 2019a). More broadly, this study's mixed methods approach reflects planning's interdisciplinary nature as drawing in a range of disciplines (Goodman *et al*, 2017; Kilroy, 2017). Moreover, the Green Belt is a particularly rich topic for theoretically conceptualising wider issues related to space and governance whilst being very relevant for practice as probably England's most renowned planning policy (Law, 2000). However, a strong, robust methodology, rooted in research aims and drawing on wider epistemological approaches, has been this chapter's main aim (Yeung, 1997). The results, analysis and discussion flowing from these methods are now turned to.

Chapter 6: The Green Belt, the Housing Crisis and Reforming the Policy

6.1.   Introduction

This chapter explores the study's central theme, the (housing) crisis, and is policy-orientated as laying the empirical groundwork for contextualising wider issues, including governance, politics, and community opposition, examined later in the thesis. It directly addresses the overarching research question about the extent of the policy's responsibility for the crisis and how far it needs to be reformed.

As Chapter 3 has demonstrated, economic studies regularly argue that planning restrictions are *a* cause of the crisis yet they often struggle to *disentangle* the *extent to which the Green Belt is specifically responsible* (Hilber, 2015; Kenny *et al*, 2018). Moreover, the *discursive* or *socially constructed* nature of housing is increasingly being recognised by academics with the 'linguistic turn' in housing studies so it is important to consider how planners/campaigners view and construct the crisis through their own worldviews to triangulate and view it from different angles (Harrison and Clifford, 2016; Munro, 2018, p. 1092). Indeed, as the key actor in the planning system, how planners view the crisis is vital to policy and practice, especially for developing recommendations grounded in what is politically possible rather than just theoretically desirable (Campbell *et al*, 2014; Kenny, 2019c). This is crucial given the severity of the crisis and its political importance yet the Green Belt is still probably England's most longstanding and popular planning policy (Dockerill and Sturzaker, 2019). The chapter also relates to planning theory by empirically examining the neo-Marxian framework. The first half of the chapter deals with causation and the second half with recommendations. Although focusing on *policy*, the chapter sits within the heart of the study's broader recommendations surrounding the need for longer-term, strategic governance and a national Green Belt debate.

6.2.   To what extent is the Green Belt responsible for the housing crisis?

The Housing Crisis: A Disputed Term
General Context

The term 'housing crisis' is a widely-used, if controversial, one (Harris, 2019; Gallent, 2019). National

Private Sector Planner (1) remarked:

> '*The context of housing growth…is intrinsically more politicised because we all need homes. I read into this* [research description] *quite a politicised thrust rather than a technocratic or non-partisan thrust. It is not to 'what extent is **the Green Belt restricting development or encouraging development in the right places', it is 'solving the housing crisis' but there seems to me to be something quite politicised implicitly within that.**'*

The main reason for this study using the term 'crisis' was not political but because it is the most

widely used, popular term to describe England's housing 'problem' thereby linking the thesis to the

contemporary political and policy agenda (Airey and Blakeway, 2019). The 'crisis' is primarily an

affordability one whereby the high level of house prices and their rising nature makes it hard,

particularly for young people, to cobble enough money together for a mortgage deposit thereby

'locking' them out of homeownership and forming households and families, especially as private

rented housing is typically more expensive, insecure and poor quality (Ryan-Collins, 2018, 2019, p. 1;

Christophers, 2019; Gallent, 2019a, p. 489). Indeed, in recognition of its complexity, the thesis used

the phrase *housing* rather than *affordability* 'crisis' throughout although it focused primarily on

house prices. As a West Midlands regional policy expert argued:

> '***Young, newly forming households cannot get decent accommodation at a reasonable price either to buy or to rent, that is my definition of the 'housing crisis'***…*Everyone should be able to get a house at the price they can afford'.*

The term 'crisis' is critiqued because there have always been housing problems in Britain and people

who are poorly housed (Aubrey, 2015; Gallent, 2019b). However, affordability and housing issues

have intensified greatly recently as, until the 1980s, a large amount of social housing was built

providing an alternative form of accommodation whilst, until the mid-2000s, access to mortgages for

homeownership was relatively affordable to most people (Griffith and Jefferys, 2013b; Bramley and

Watkins, 2016; Bramley, 2019). Consequently, the growth of house prices and private rented accommodation conjoining with the lack of social housing have caused a problem which arguably merits the term 'crisis' or what some, even on the Right, have called a 'catastrophe' (Rees-Mogg and Tylecote, 2019, p. 11). Housing costs are the biggest driver of intergenerational and intragenerational inequality in England and this inequality is reaching Victorian levels whereby one's ability to purchase a house and wider life chances depend more upon inherited wealth or the 'bank of Mum and Dad' than one's ability and earning potential (Bentley, 2017; Halligan, 2019, p. 3).

There are other societal issues related to the crisis including the geographical immobility of labour, housing insecurity for future retirees, the lack of suitable 'family' homes and homes for the elderly to 'downsize' to, dependence upon volume housebuilders for most housebuilding, the cost of land, second homeownership, rising homelessness and the 'overcrowding' of many homes compared to spare bedrooms in others (Hudson and Green, 2017; Dorling, 2019; Kenny, 2019a; Morphet and Clifford, 2019). Indeed, the complex, multifaceted nature of the crisis also merits the term *housing crisis* rather than just *affordability crisis* and means that there are no immediately straightforward solutions (Pendlebury, 2015; RTPI, 2016a; Kilroy, 2017). Moreover, the dependence of the British economy upon rising house prices means that 'radical' solutions, designed to 'crash' the market, would be dangerous as Planning Academic (2) warned (see also Hinsliff (2018)):

> '*The trajectory* (of rising house prices) *is supported by the way in which the underlying economy functions…on debt trading and financial services…**a real fundamental crash [is] the big one that, actually, unseats this mode of production completely but it doesn't really matter [then] because we face social collapse - complete social and economic collapse**. So, you could say, in a way, 'in order to solve the housing crisis, we need to basically pull apart all the economic system and then face a couple of generations of abject squalor while we are trying to rebuild something'. **But I don't think that is the solution, either, because that is like the nuclear solution and what you need to do…**(is) **divert capital investment away from housing to small businesses and towards manufacturing. So, the answer to the housing crisis from many people's perspective is a rebalancing of the economy away from debt trading to making stuff**. How that will be achieved, I don't know*'.

This clearly justifies this project's approach of exploring realistic recommendations regarding housing rather than anticipating a transformation of the mode of production (Fainstein, 2010; Monbiot *et al.*, 2019). Conversely, the severity of the housing problem as potentially posing an existential threat to the current economic system provides a further basis for labelling it a 'crisis' (Donnelly, 2019b). In this regard, the word 'crisis' is used politically as a problem which urgently requires solutions.

Another critique of the word 'crisis' is that there are multiple 'crises' with the housing market being marked by spatial 'nuance' and heterogeneity and that the 'crisis' often written about in the media is more accurately the crisis in London (Kilroy, 2017; McKee *et al*, 2017, p. 60). However, whilst the crisis is *most severe* in the Greater South East (hence the study's focus on Green Belts in *regional* England to explore spatial heterogeneity), a similar set of housing issues emerged in the data around England, especially house prices out of the reach of local people (Gallent, 2019a; Gallent *et al.*, 2019). These shared spatial characteristics merit the term 'crisis' in a geographical as well as a temporal sense.

How Planners and Campaigners Defined the Housing Crisis

Most planners and campaigners acknowledged that there was a serious housing problem reflecting popular discourse, people's lived experiences and how the crisis is now firmly rooted in national consciousness (Inch and Shepherd, 2019; Harris, 2019). However, campaigners varied in how seriously they viewed it with a few comments made by everyday campaigners disputing its existence with a SSGB campaigner saying '*the so-called housing crisis is man-made*'. Nevertheless, an example of a typical qualified response by a professional campaigner was:

> '*You used the phrase 'housing crisis'...there is a danger in that phrase in that it is a little bit too glib. **The way I see it is that there are shortages of a particular types of housing in particular areas. There is no one single national housing crisis.***'* (Planner (1), CPRE West Midlands)

This was echoed by other campaigners and retired planners, especially regarding the housing market in the West Midlands:

'Of course there are hot spots, but you can still buy a house…in Bearwood which is, you know, 10-15 minutes from Birmingham city centre on a bus...for £100,000, maybe less than that possibly. OK - 'what sort of area?' but there are houses there. It is not that extreme. **The big issue is really about the scale of social housing. Forget the house prices. The house price thing – it's not a red herring but it's over inflated by the development interests.** *The big builders, all they want, their business model is to have greenfields, roll out their development and take away the profits...But that doesn't do anything for the people in real need.'* (Retired Strategic Planner (2), West Midlands).

However, practising planners invariably referred to the 'housing crisis' and it was often used as an

unquestioned, self-explanatory phrase as the main justification for new housebuilding and a more

relaxed Green Belt rather than a phrase to be explained and qualified (Inch, 2018; Gallent, 2019a).

This was particularly pronounced among middle aged and younger planners who used it to fashion

their professional identity and could personally relate to it:

'A massive correction…probably isn't good for our economy. You know, with assets that have been created by them [the elderly] being careful, patient and investing wisely over their lifetimes, why should they suffer a massive correction in their net worth? But, at the same time, we all have got to recognise that that has got to change. So, affordability is improved and the gap [affordability ratio] *goes from 11.5-7.8 and maybe to 5. 25 years ago, the best you could do with a mortgage was by borrowing 3.5 times the combined salary. Well, there isn't a mortgage product left of that type because there is probably nobody in the country that can afford to buy a house with only 3.5 times their salary! But getting back to something closer to that obviously is making…it more possible for people to have some sense of one day owning their own home in the place that they want to live…I have got two teenage children...***the prospects of them ever owning their own home?!...they are going to be well into their 30s or possibly 40s before they own their own home and then will they ever be on the property ladder in the way that my generation has been able to?***'* (Private Sector Planning Director (West Midlands) (2) in his 50s).

'*At this rate, we are not going to solve the housing crisis through retaining the Green Belt***.** *So, actually, could there be an opportunity in the future when things get worse that someone might go - 'shall we try it?' [reforming the Green Belt]…*
Lots of our people in our team pay more to rent than they would if they had a mortgage but they can't get on the housing ladder because they don't meet the criteria or they don't have the £25 grand deposit to buy a house. Sorry, a bit of a sore topic' (Planners in their 20s at Focus Group II).

Some of the quotes reflected the literature critiquing the 'crisis' including its geographical intensity in

London (Wetzstein, 2017; Inch and Shepherd, 2019). However, consensus crystallised around

(un)affordability of housing so clearly this should be a key factor in developing recommendations.

Hudson (2015) convincingly argued that it is vital to consider what 'success' involves in solving the

crisis whilst organisations, such as the TCPA (Raynsford Review, 2018a; Ellis, 2019), have articulated a broad vision of housing that is affordable, safe and decent. These wider qualities are vital but this project focuses is on affordability, including renters *and* owner-occupiers, so 'successfully' resolving the crisis would mean that renters, social and private and future/existing owner-occupiers can afford and have access to the tenure of their choice (Griffith and Jefferys, 2013b; Jefferys *et al.*, 2015). Although inevitably an ideal aspiration, it is important to have an objective when analysing policy, especially housing policy (Hudson and Green, 2017).

Critically Evaluating the Links Between the Green Belt and the Housing Crisis
As the crisis is such a multifaceted problem, even the most trenchant critics interviewed admitted that it would be unfair to *entirely* blame the Green Belt or planning regulation generally for the crisis, especially as planning is limited in how much it can achieve as only allocating *locations* for development and having limited oversight over housing tenure (Lord and Tewdwr-Jones, 2018; Goode, 2020a). Successfully resolving the crisis arguably requires a *range* of policy responses across local, regional and national government departments although planning is well-placed to solve the crisis given planners' ability and that of the broader system to bring together a diverse range of partners to work on complex solutions with there being scope for more ambitious planning (Whitehead *et al.*, 2015; Hills, 2019; Kenny, 2019b, 2019a).

Although many planners struggled to identify the *extent* to which the policy is responsible for the crisis, those who were most critical highlighted it as being one of the most important causes, especially in the Greater South East. Perhaps the strongest remark was an attack in *Branchout*[63] by a retired, local authority planner who labelled it the 'woe of the West of England', 'greatest indictment' of planning and called for its removal (Baker, 2018, p. 22). Another strong view was

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[63] *Tripwire* is the RTPI West Midlands Magazine and *Branchout* the South East one (see Chapter 5).

expressed by this private sector planner in *Tripwire* entitled, 'Yes, that's right: I hate Green Belt',

which read (Griffiths, 2017, pp. 3–5):

> '*Green Belt…continues to raise its head as the leading issue in the supply of new housing. I intensely dislike how it is used, appropriated and manipulated by those who often have a lot to lose if it disappears…I know how restrictive and unfair it can be…it can fundamentally create unsustainable patterns of development*'.

These quotes demonstrate the anger and passion that the Green Belt can generate alongside the

depth of frustration that some planners have towards it although they were not representative of

the whole profession. Indeed, even the most critical planners interviewed acknowledged:

> '***The Green Belt is, if you like, just one factor which has led to the housing crisis***…*It is a very restrictive, inflexible policy and it has contributed to the housing crisis in so far as it surrounds most of our major cities…it is most probably more responsible than simply, you know, the countryside policies and everything else because, if you look at where the heat is coming from, it is your London's, Birmingham's and Manchester's to some extent. And therefore that is causing price inflation, you know, the shortage of supply and right type of location*' (National Private Sector Planning Director (3)).

Interestingly, the language and reasoning of economics featured strongly with the Green Belt being

blamed for restricting housing supply and raising house prices with some even citing Paul Cheshire:

> '*Green Belt settlements* (are) *very attractive to certain groups within society and **then it is just simply economics of demand outstretch supply. The only way is that house prices go up. It is not rocket science**'* (Retired Private Sector Planner (2)).

> '*There has to be some sort of direct link between being in the Green Belt and having that proportion of added value onto a house because of the kind of the security and knowledge that nothing is going to come to you in the future…a considerable value is added on to a house in the Green Belt because of the…designation.*' (Local Authority Planner, South East).

> '***In any supply and demand equation, if demand is high but you restrict the supply, the price will go up. So, yes, that can happen in Green Belt…***economically that is just inevitable…in any market, there are winners and losers…there are consequences of Green Belt policy, inevitably, for those people who are required to live outside the Green Belt because they can't afford to live in it (you have increased journey times, cost)…The older generation…already living in the Green Belt…they have the best of both worlds in that they are closer to facilities, I guess, and they benefit more from house price inflation (but that is not unique to Green Belt)…**most of the value in property is owned by older people and the ones who are having a problem getting on to the housing ladder are those who tend to be younger**'* (Private Sector Planning Director (South East) (2)).

This last quote is helpful in drawing out who 'gains' and 'loses' from the policy and the inequitable distribution of housing among different generations using a social justice and just city approach (Flyvbjerg, 2004; Fainstein, 2010; Corlett and Judge, 2017). According to this line of argument, the Green Belt clearly *does* have problematic, negative societal consequences reflecting Hall *et al's* (1973a, 1973b) findings in *Containment*. These societal consequences are not restricted to the Greater South East with the Green Belt creating issues with housing need *across* England, including the West Midlands (Bramley *et al.*, 2017).

However, whilst the policy is widely recognised as *a* cause of the crisis and an element of reform is arguably needed, the evidence is not incontrovertible on this social justice question and the complex reality of the housing crisis emerged meaning that the Green Belt should not be abolished. For example, regarding the same question about the crisis, this young planner from a national housebuilder replied:

> '***That is a very difficult question partly…****There are obviously are a number of other factors, but the Green Belt particularly, if you look at London and the South East (areas like Tandridge) - incredibly high house prices building very few homes and certainly the areas that we would expect to sell slightly higher house prices happen to coincide with areas that have very limited growth. However, I don't think it is fair to say that the Green Belt is the only reason for that…[demand] is contributory…I don't think you can discount the general lack of availability of houses…some houses built in the cities haven't necessarily improved affordability*'.

Similar, nuanced views were expressed by other planners, who highlighted national factors, such as the economic cycle and lack of social housing, and local ones, such as locational characteristics, affecting housing:

> '***The Green Belt is not the cause of the housing crisis****. I think there is a bit of a coincidence in the number of places that are facing significant housing shortages, such as Birmingham, Oxford (and those sort of areas), and areas which are influenced and affected by the Green Belt…on a national level, there are multiple factors which are at play and the cyclical market is one…there are lots of graphs out there* [figure 26] *which show that up to, like the 1960s, the kind of number of public sector houses delivered was getting us much closer to the target which the government is now talking about*' (Planner in Focus Group II).
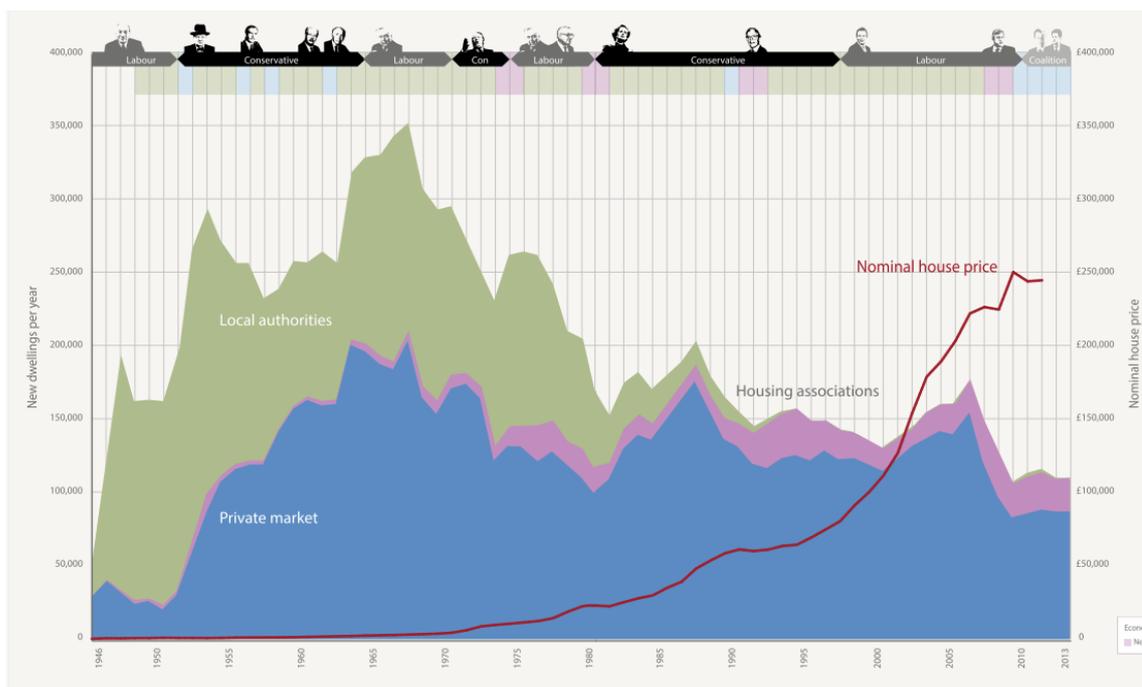
Figure 26 – The famous graph referred to by a planner in focus group II on the correlation between house prices and housing output (Jefferys *et al.*, 2015, p. 6).

'*It is an outcome rather than a driver...**I don't think that you can say because of Green Belt, house prices go up - it is because we don't build enough houses**. **People still want to live there because they are in accessible and sustainable locations**...If you didn't have any of these other policies, the most expensive houses would be those that are in the best places where most people want to live* [in the Green Belt]*...with the best environment and all sorts of things. **And if you didn't have Green Belt, would they still be popular? Yes!**'* (Planner, HBF).

'***I find it difficult to point at any conclusive evidence on the link between Green Belt as a planning policy and, let's say, residential house prices**. I don't know whether the economics are that simple...there are so many factors at play...**where jobs are or what the environment is, whether there is any difference in terms of accessibility or locational factors.**'* (Private Sector Planning Director (South East) (1)).

Private sector planners were expected to be highly critical of the Green Belt, as assumed by neo-Marxian literature (Short *et al*, 1987), but, whilst clearly there was criticism, planners thought more broadly and critically about the crisis. The HBF planner's quote and others highlight that the Green Belt often covers very attractive places to live with excellent 'locational characteristics', i.e. good schools communications and environment (See: Pendlebury, 2015). Establishing to what extent these specific locational characteristics were responsible for high house prices as opposed to the Green Belt designation is very complicated as they are probably deeply intertwined (Hilber and Vermeulen, 2014). This featured strongly in the West Midlands where the Green Belt covers wealthy areas, such

as the Meriden Gap, Bromsgrove and Lichfield, whilst the conurbation is largely 'industrial' (Goode, 2019a). As part of the research, it was found that the house price affordability ratio of a range of 12 settlements located in the WMGB was 10.9 and outside it was 7.8[64]. Regional respondents were asked whether this was evidence that the WMGB led to higher house prices as opposed to wider factors, such as locational characteristics. Most planners argued it was a mixture:

> *'**The bottom line is a Green Belt policy can help you protect the nice aspects of what you have already by limiting growth**…it can have a negative impact in terms of house prices and general land values because basically it creates an artificial market, which if it wasn't covered by Green Belt, wouldn't exist*' (Public Sector Planner (3), West Midlands).

> *'There is in Green Belts an elitism in so far as they are currently located next to the most prosperous areas. I think a lot of people who are defending Green Belt are doing it because they want to protect their own way of life. If you're in a suburban area and have immediate access to the countryside, or living in the countryside itself, you are* [protecting your] *own property values and the uniqueness of having Green Belt around you. I think that applies more in London and the South East, where there's a much wider Green Belt (Kent, Hertfordshire and so on). **But I think it also applies in the West Midlands. So, in large areas around Birmingham and the Black Country, are swathes of Green Belt land areas which extend as far as Warwick and areas to the east of Meriden Gap (in particular) - very sensitive enclaves for very wealthy people**. Having said that, they have to live somewhere.'* (National Private Sector Planner (2)).

There were similar responses from other regions including that many places in the Green Belt are already desirable to live but the policy adds an extra 'layer' to house prices through the perceived protection it gives against development, new neighbours and views being interrupted.

Interestingly, campaigners, rather than completely dismissing the Green Belt's impact on house prices, acknowledged there was *some* impact but highlighted complexity, property stock and locational characteristics, especially in the West Midlands:

> *'**It is such a difficult question…but I don't think it is a straightforward, simple causal relationship between Green Belt policy and house prices**. I mean let's take an example of Solihull…house prices in Solihull are significantly above the regional average for a particular type of house. Obviously, first of all, you have got to look at the mix of housing in each local authority area and*

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[64] The 'Green Belt' settlements were Solihull, Hagley, Kidderminster, Wombourne, Brewood, Cannock, Shenstone, Kenilworth, Balsall Common, Bloxwich, Henley-in-Arden, Alcester. The 'unconstrained' settlements were Worcester, Evesham, Shrewsbury, Stafford, Atherstone, Daventry, Wellesbourne, Southam, Leicester, Coalville, Burton-on-Trent and Uttoxeter. The house price affordability ratio was found by dividing average house prices by average incomes (Hilber, 2015).

not simply say - 'Well, house prices in Solihull are simply higher than house prices in Cannock'. Probably the main reason why that is the case is that Solihull has a lot more 4-bedroomed detached houses than Cannock does in proportion to its housing stock. **But, once you have standardised for that factor, I think purely the Green Belt has some effect on house prices but I don't think it is the only factor - it is part of the overall environmental offer.** *The fact that Solihull is as it is, is partly due to it being protected by Green Belt for 60 years but also other environmental aspects. You know, the Green Belt has assisted in Solihull remaining…with a high environmental quality but…there have been several elements…that leads onto difficulties, again using Solihull as an example, of how far you are prepared to relax Green Belt policy to allow development in the future because you might be, as it were, killing the goose that laid the golden egg.'* (Planner (1), CPRE West Midlands).

'*Henley, Knowle and Dorridge are middle-class ghettoes*[65]*…people say I am a NIMBY because I live in this area but this area has a role to play and, if you are trying to attract inward investment…you have got to have high quality places where people want to live...I always remember the old Chief Executive at Solihull said, because he was from London, when he moved up here to Solihull, it feels like the Home Counties and his wife was quite happy to move here! Those high-quality areas will undoubtedly have a premium, in terms of their* [house price]*…You always have to be very careful about comparing eggs with eggs, because the type of house you are looking at…Do look at the ratios within the conurbation and different parts of the conurbation. It would be interesting because you could look at and compare across the sector…Edgbaston and Harborne; then you could look at Smethwick and the middle of the Black Country.'* (Retired Strategic Planner (1), West Midlands).

Unsurprisingly, these points were highlighted by a local politician who highlighted locational

characteristics:

'*There are high value Green Belt areas…*[Solihull] *and there are…lower value Green Belt which are in other parts around Birmingham. So, I don't think it automatically leads to higher prices…**in fact, I strongly don't believe that. I think you could build all over our Green Belt and you would probably find people still want to come and live in Solihull - that's because it has that distinguished demand and need. I am very supportive of meeting needs but not necessarily supportive of meeting demand*** *but, blowing the Council's own trumpet we have some of the best schools in the country, best environmental qualities, 15 green flag parks…low Council Tax rates…the fact is people want to come and live in Solihull is because they want to come and live in Solihull.* **Obviously, the Green Belt is a contributory factor but many choose to live in the urban areas of Solihull, not necessarily in the Green Belt countryside so, you need to distinguish the Green Belt from a control mechanism, and Green Belt in terms of its effect on the price of land (that is a different matter)***… we are well connected and that is one of the things a lot of people want.'* (Local councillor, Solihull (individual views))

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[65] Dorridge, Knowle and Henley-in-Arden are wealthy settlements surrounded by the WMGB in the Meriden Gap (see list of key terms).

These quotes elucidate the complexity of the crisis generally and impact of the Green Belt upon house prices specifically with prices determined by *wider factors* than the Green Belt including structural forces and locational characteristics, especially in the West Midlands. Nevertheless, a consensus emerged that the Green Belt is a *significant* causal factor in high house prices *in particular areas*, especially in the Greater South East and around large conurbations, like Birmingham. Consequently, exploring the possibilities of Green Belt reform *is* important although the extent of its responsibility alongside whether reform would 'solve' the crisis is also fiercely debated. These findings therefore underline spatial variation as vital in understanding the crisis (McGuinness *et al*, 2018; Payne, 2020). The next section briefly explores other causes before critically evaluating the potential success of Green Belt reform.

The Housing Crisis: A Complex, Multifaceted Crisis - Critically Considering Other Causes
The Financialisation of Housing

Wetzstein (2017, pp. 3159, 3174) wrote of the deep 'megatrends' affecting housing, including the 're-urbanisation of capital and people', 'cheap credit' and 'intra-society inequality', and described the *global* 'urban affordability crisis' so housing is affected by international, structural forces rather than *just* the *national* Green Belt. This can be related to neoliberalism, global flows of capital investment into property and its financialisaton as an asset due to the rapid expansion of mortgage finance since the 1980s (Inch and Shepherd, 2019; Madden, 2019; Valesca, 2019). Participants referred to these trends such as this national Conservative politician:

> '*Largely housing has become a financial investment so it is subject to the kind of ebb and flow of financial funds and it is due to other...requirements of quality, size and all the rest of it.*'

Again, given the dependence of the economy upon mortgage debt and rising house prices (Houle and Berger, 2015; Rae, 2015), it is difficult to see how, in the short term, the economy can move away from this as Planning Academic (2) argued.

Societal and Demographic Changes

There are the large scale, societal changes of recent decades with a retired, longstanding West

Midlands MP reflecting on how changes in household structure have increased demand for housing.

Planning has to largely respond rather than shape these longstanding, societal trends in a capitalist,

liberal democracy but they have an important impact upon housing demand (Breheny, 1997).

Existing Stock and Brownfield Land: The Urban Compaction Debate Revisited

A. Campaigners Perspectives

Concerns were raised about better utilising the existing housing stock and brownfield land. This view

was put most strongly by the regional policy expert (West Midlands):

> '***The Green Belt is the answer to a different question…irrelevant to the housing crisis...completely irrelevant. Just a separate question, separate set of issues, separate answer***. *In terms of the housing crisis as it affects the people who are hit by it, it is about social housing stock, the quality at the poorer end of the existing stock and private renting rules, regulations, and supervision. And it is the whole business about creating an urban fabric and a place-making thing…all those things hang together. It is schools, hospitals and public transport systems. The Germans and French do this better than us.* **Those are the things. Dealing with the housing crisis, like I say - Green Belt forget it - even if you built it over it wouldn't make damn bit of difference to the horrible mess**'.

Although this was an extreme view, the importance to the crisis of existing housing stock were widely

acknowledged as vital factors as strongly expressed by SSGB campaigners:

> '***They say there is a housing crisis but figures suggest there are as many as 250,000 houses lying empty in the country. Surely a better strategy would be to get those houses moving and make them habitable?*** *Couple those houses with brownfield sites and Green Belt will not have to be touched at all.*'

> '*Green Belt housing is nearly always in areas where top of the market property is built. That's not what is needed!...**A person should be appointed in each LA to identify ALL empty property and allocate funds to make it habitable. Where it is privately owned, it should be acquired for market value where it has been empty for 2 years.***'

> '***There are thousands of empty homes - do those up first and use up brownfield and derelict sites before encroaching on Green Belt land.***'

These quotes are particularly strong because Birmingham and the Black Country are popularly

perceived to have large areas of brownfield land (Law, 2000; Barber and Hall, 2008). However, this

argument was also made by some retired planners, including Strategic Planner (1), West Midlands:

> '***Retain a healthy market within the inner city...So, that people also invest in the existing housing stock***. *The great danger is that you can end up with unplanned decentralisation. So, you get this movement out and under-investment in the inner part, which will eventually lead to, if you are not careful, the American scenario obviously which is like a hollowing out.*'

However, as alluded to in the SSGB quotes and explored in the literature review, whilst *theoretically* there maybe enough brownfield land and empty homes/bedrooms to meet housing need, the *reality* in a capitalist economy is that people 'vote with their feet' in choosing where they live (Breheny, 1997, p. 216; Dorling, 2015). The counter argument, espoused by Labour's 'Urban Renaissance', is that if housing stock and place quality in deprived areas with brownfield land is improved, like the Black Country, people will move to those areas (Mace, Hall and Gallent, 2007; Shaftoe and Tallon, 2009).

In turn, this raises several issues as there is currently limited public money available for brownfield regeneration and property improvements whilst property rights probably limit the scope of possible state intervention as, in a democratic, capitalist society, the state cannot tell or force people where to live (Breheny, 1996; Hall and Breheny, 1996). There is still an overwhelming societal preference towards suburban, semi-rural living in homes with gardens which has been reinforced by people revaluating their housing situation and desiring more domestic and outdoor space during Coronavirus and the lockdowns (Breheny, 1997; Whitehead *et al.*, 2015; Greenwood and Whittaker, 2020). Moreover, there is a range of ethical issues with estate regeneration and 'clearing' old properties, such as New Labour's Renewal Programme (Tallon, 2013, p. 91).

B. Planners Perspectives

The viability of brownfield sites and the market was highlighted by private sector planners:

> '***There definitely isn't enough brownfield land to meet the housing crisis***. *We will need greenfield development to meet the housing crisis and even CPRE accept that...The issue is therefore do you reassess the Green Belt and build in the Green Belt because they are the most sustainable locations or do you perpetuate the blanket negativity of Green Belt?*' (Planner, HBF).

> '*During the nineties and early noughties, a lot of brownfield was regenerated. So, all the stuff that is readily doable, for the most part, has been done...brownfield isn't always situated in the most sustainable location. If you look in Birmingham, there is an awful lot in Digbeth that has been done*

and the fringes but that is very high density or flats essentially. **And, whilst that suits certain people and a certain demographic, it is not going to suit everybody...And I think it is naïve to say that urban living is the solution and over-densification**' (Planner, housebuilder (2)).

These arguments surrounding urban densification have become increasingly poignant with

Coronavirus and the lockdowns (Goode, 2020e). One planner explored the argument, increasingly

used at Green Belt/greenfield appeals in industrial cities like Leeds and Birmingham (Watson, 2019;

Young, 2019b, 2019a), that developments on brownfield land often yield less affordable housing due

to viability:

> '**The market goes by what is available**. *So if we have got a restrictive Green Belt, does that push development to the less desirable areas?...if it is a brownfield site that perhaps is contaminated or there are other constraints that affect viability, then the developer may not be able to afford the S106 contributions towards the form of housing that is needed, education and that kind of thing. Whereas maybe, if we were on a cleaner site, they could afford to do those things...So, it is a bit of a balance on that end really.*' (Private Sector Young Planner (West Midlands) (2)).

Based on the evidence, it is vital that greater importance is given to the existing stock and that a

brownfield first policy is retained. Nevertheless, it is apparent that the Green Belt *does* need to be

'looked at' and, probably, *some* more land is needed in the Green Belt to solve the housing crisis.

Critical consideration is therefore needed as to *how* it could be reviewed, as Chapter 9 charts, with

Planner (3), CPRE West Midlands (individual views) acknowledging:

> '*I think there isn't quite enough* [brownfield] *land* [to meet Birmingham's housing needs]. *It is important to look at our existing housing stock and I do think we need to build council houses. I don't think you should just keep chipping away at the edge of the Green Belt...you should jump it and do some new towns...Redditch was a great success, in my opinion...it has worked and in the right location that could work again.*'

Social/Affordable Housing and the Land Market: A Key Battleground

Affordability was a key issue, especially the importance of social housing, around which a consensus

formed among planners and campaigners. For example:

> '*It would be over-reacting to blame the Green Belt entirely for the housing crisis because there are so many other hugely systematic issues in terms of our land market.* **To be honest,** [it] **probably plays a relatively small role as opposed to all kinds of other things that might have affected affordability and the housing market, whether it is the** [lack of] **social housing or kind of the way that land in valued***...they are such big drivers and it is* [Green Belt] *probably blamed too*

much because it is sort of easy for these other people, who don't necessarily understand the complexity of housing markets which is very perplexing.' (Young planner, environment consultancy).

'You need to have councils building more affordable homes, like they did in the 50s and 60s; you can't just have Green Belts in isolation. It works best as part of a package.' (Campaigner, environmental charity).

Again, this shows that, whilst Slade, Gunn and Schoneboom (2019) have argued that younger planners are generally given insufficient space for critical reflection, some planners thought critically and reflectively about the crisis. Nevertheless, whilst social housing commanded widespread support, Retired Strategic Planner (3) (West Midlands) cautioned about the difficulties of implementing it, reflecting the theme of campaigners desiring to protect an area's semi-rural 'character' (see Chapter 7):

'People start to think, 'Oh, I don't want all these poor people who misbehave and it will all bring drugs and things like that and criminal activity - blah, blah, blah'. **So, a lot of it comes down to a 'them' and 'us'…they just feel it is an invasion even of their space/lifestyle**.'

Moreover, there is still the crucial issue of *where* social housing would go with recent research on council housebuilding identifying land as a key issue (Morphet and Clifford, 2017, 2019; Kenny, 2019b). Consequently, whilst *more* land is probably needed for housebuilding, affordability is a key issue with growing recognition of the inability of volume housebuilders to cater for *all* housing need, utilising the study's definition of affordability for 'success' in solving the crisis (Hudson and Green, 2017)). This involves the wider issues of the land market, cost of new houses built and oligopolistic structure of the housebuilding industry (see Chapter 3; Bentley, 2017; Ryan-Collins *et al*, 2017). The cost of new housing built in the Green Belt was highlighted as a major issue by politicians and campaigners, especially the attractiveness of development sites in the WMGB compared to 'brownfield/industrial' ones in the conurbation, as the SSGB campaigner quotes below demonstrate with 'affordability/affordable' being one of the most used words (14 times):

'If it is decided that greenbelt must be developed, then it should be aimed at recreational/farming activities. **Also, for 90% affordable, with specialist housing (which is in short supply) for vulnerable people and affordable schemes for the elderly (there is a growing demand)**. *As this is*

affordable, people don't all rely on cars so you need good public transport and local facilities people can walk to. Make greenbelt developments 100% sustainable, use recycled materials, make them carbon neutral, minimal pollution etc.'

'*Affordability does not seem to change when many of these houses being built are at the higher end. Building £500k plus houses does not convey "housing crisis" to the vast majority of people.*'

'*Affordable housing, I see, is commonly used regarding development proposals in green belt and brownfield sites. Is this smoke and mirrors/lip service to appease…? The percentage of people who can actually afford these homes is very low. Unfortunately, when development is allowed on Green Belt land it is often for 'Executive' homes which command a price premium that takes them out of the financial reach of those who need affordable housing. The footprint of these types of homes is also usually larger so…building on Green Belt land is usually inefficient.*'

Similar observations were offered by a Project Fields campaigner who highlighted that 'new houses built here sell for over £300,000' and a Former West Midlands Conservative MP:

'*Green Belt land can be very expensive so it is hard to deliver affordable housing. The land price is high because Green Belt is usually very attractive greenspace and it's at a premium…some of the most expensive land…so I think you continue to need Green Belt protection but we probably need more resources to make it possible to regenerate the brownfield sites.*'

Although it is easy to criticise these campaigners as vilifying volume housebuilders, 'NIMBYs' and using superficial, 'legitimate' reasons to obscure their 'true' motive of opposing development (Rydin, 1985; Short *et al*, 1987), there does appear to be genuine popular concern centred on affordability, especially that new housing in the Green Belt is too expensive 'for them', i.e. for locals (Bradley and Sparling, 2017; Bradley, 2018; Gallent, 2019a). This was reflected in some of the quotes by retired planners:

'*That argument is a red herring and it is a popular one*[66]. *The volume housebuilders push it all the time…to the extent that the government…after being the best friends of the volume housebuilders, they are supporting smaller builders, self-build and other things because the volume housebuilders have let them down. The land banks that the volume housebuilders have got, if they had released those, then you wouldn't have this crisis that we have now, but they won't and they never will because that will mean that they can't control the market as they do at the moment…a near monopoly housing market*' (Retired LPA Director, West Midlands).

'*If you took that* [Green Belt] *protection away, the market would actually carpet* [Solihull] *and all the clever developers and landowners would pile in to try and make their money out of their land*

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[66] That the Green Belt is causing the affordability crisis.

and, actually, there is only a finite infrastructure environmental capacity in this area' (Retired Strategic Planner (2), West Midlands).

Another planner said in informal conversation that most of the Green Belt is covered by housebuilder 'options' so that they had a vested interest in a more flexible Green Belt although many of options are opaque (Ward, 2005, p. 333).

Interestingly, planners from housebuilders and the private sector acknowledged that their aim was *not* to lower house prices, locally and nationally, because their business model is premised on maximising profit, the price of new housing is largely set in the 'second hand market' and land is expensive (Saunders, 2016, p. 42; McGuinness *et al*, 2018). However, they highlighted that new housebuilding is still vital to provide a *proportion* of affordable housing in the absence of extensive social housebuilding, to enable 'movement' in the housing market (i.e. increasing options for first time buyers or allowing older people to downsize) and to diversify housing stock (as explored in the literature review, especially Bramley's (*et al.*, 2017) research). For example:

> '***OK, so when you are buying land in the Green Belt, you always pay a premium because generally the market area is already quite high because of the lack of stock and people are desperate to buy there when they have got the money. So, your second-hand market normally dictates…*** *When you then build brand new houses, the expectation of the landowner is that 'Well, the market is really good', so their expectation of what the developer will pay is significantly increased and also…once you have got a consent in a Green Belt authority, you then take your units to market and there is not as much competition. So, people are willing to pay more…there are a lot of landowners who would love to sell you land in the Green Belt but their expectation of value is high and that is just because of the Green Belt impacts.'* (Planner, national housebuilder (2))

> '*Clearly, maximising land value and disposing of land for the highest land value is the business we are in and, you know, it is no secret that we are active largely in areas that historically have been constrained in their growth and delivery because, ultimately, the land values in those settlements will be increased but that is also linked to the fact that there is a demand issue…* ***It would take a massive flood of housing to the market to*** *[address]* ***the kind of pricing thing but unless we start taking steps towards that, the situation is not going to resolve itself****… If we delivered houses, 5 here and 2 there, we won't get the affordable housing whereas we will get 30 or 40% on this (large) site which would be for affordable housing.'* (Planner, West Midlands land promoter)

This section demonstrates how large housebuilders *alone* cannot deliver sufficient quantities of affordable housing to solve the crisis (Griffith and Jefferys, 2013a; Morphet and Clifford, 2019). The

issue seems compounded by the land price and structure of the housebuilding industry demonstrating the value of other providers, especially social housing, to fill the 'gap' in housing provision whilst affordability and the land market need to be addressed *alongside* any reform to the Green Belt.

In terms of briefly addressing solutions to affordability, a radical suggestion by planning academic (2) was to reduce property speculation:

> 'Well, imagine the pitch to people - from henceforth local authorities will look at all demographic need, that is the 300,000, **but all housing built under that level in the UK will be restricted to single family occupancy and it will be liable to capital gains**. Only when we have delivered at that level will we allow free market housing to be built beyond that.'

Whilst this idea maybe theoretically desirable, there would clearly be difficulties implementing this in a capitalist economy with its viability concerns as the academic continued:

> 'Debt trading is the basis of the UK economy...It would impact on public revenues and tax-take. So, by doing that you would be basically closing all the schools. So, all your public commitments - you couldn't fund them.'

As land prices are very important in the cost of housing, especially with the perceived scarcity of land with residential planning permission, the complicated and contentious underlying issue of land value capture needs addressing *alongside* reforming the Green Belt. Better ways of funding local services and providing affordable housing need to be found although this is beyond this project's scope and requires wider societal and professional debate (Cheshire, 2009; Crook and Whitehead, 2019). The idea of Development Corporations to capture land value uplift in the Green Belt has recently been articulated (Cheshire and Buyuklieva, 2019) whilst Wolf (2015a, p. 2) suggested a 'Green Belt tax' to support brownfield development and Balen (2006) that such a tax could be used to fund widespread forest planting. A planner in Focus Group I called for land to be 'nationalised'. The issue's complexity was debated in Focus Group II:

'PI: *It is so much part of our culture, homeownership and having land as assets,…I don't think it is politically tenable and I certainly can't see it a Conservative government taking it further*[67]*…*[although] *that could be one way that might work and allow housing to come forward*.

PII: *It would do us out of a job though!*

PI: *That would certainly solve the problem of local authorities not having the people there to do that work in the first place.*

PII: *Could you imagine how politically unpopular it would be if CPO did something on somebody's land, if they would allow you…*

PIII: *I think it is a great concept and idea. It is not how the market works though is it because, you know, often the deals are done subject to planning and the capture is in…for the landowner.*'

This underlines the contentiousness of this important wider issue but there is potential for more effective land value capture accompanying Green Belt development to potentially support brownfield regeneration and improve the remaining Green Belt.

Broader Reflections on Solutions to the Housing Crisis

Reflecting upon the data, there is arguably no single, 'magic bullet' to solving the crisis and, although Green Belt reform needs to be an important aspect of it, there are other, broader solutions, which space does not permit to fully explore here, including greater state involvement in site assembly (Letwin, 2018b, 2018a), dividing up large sites between housebuilders, such as Fairfield Park, Bedfordshire, and encouraging a wider mix of housebuilders and tenures through the local plan process (Adams and Leishman, 2008; Lichfields, 2016). Planning could have greater power to determine the tenure and type of property permissioned. The possibility of land value capture has been raised and could be in the form of a Green Belt 'tax' which funds brownfield regeneration to address popular fears about development in the Green Belt being at the expense of brownfield land (Wolf, 2015b, p. 2). Integrating public transport with housing is key to achieve carbon neutrality alongside urban design and placemaking to ensure that developments generally, but particularly in

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[67] This planner was talking about nationalising land in response to the researcher's question: 'So, were you thinking that it should be more like the Netherlands where local authorities can purchase land of agricultural value, assemble the site, put all the roads and facilities in and then sell it on to housebuilders to build?'

the Green Belt, have a real sense of place (Building Better Building Beautiful, 2020; Harris, 2020).

Many quotes could be given but Retired Strategic Planner (3), West Midlands, was especially helpful:

> '**If there are Green Belt incursions to be made, it shouldn't be on the basic of what I call 'the bog-standard developer approach'…It has to be done in a very innovative way so that it is seen as adding real value to what the place should be, look like and feel. That is why I mentioned the Hammarby Sjostad…**_There must be some clear principles established as to what it should look like…ideally, we should be basically mandating them_ [housebuilders] _to build to at least level 4, potentially 5_ [in New Labour's Code for Sustainable Homes]_,…those are the big challenges and I think it is something that, you know, a region could take some political leadership on'._

This first half of the chapter has evaluated the extent of the Green Belt's responsibility for the crisis and analysed who gains and loses from it using a social justice approach. Whilst the Green Belt is to some extent responsible for the crisis and there are 'winners' from it (homeowners through adding _some_ value onto property prices), the crisis's complexity and multi-faceted nature means that it cannot be said to be the _primary_ cause of the crisis. Conversely and paradoxically for neo-Marxian analysis, campaigners against Green Belt development are often concerned about _affordability and the expense_ of new housebuilding. Consequently, as Chapter 8 develops, it cannot be said to be _significantly_ contributing to unequal power relations in planning or unproblematically subject to 'rent-seeking' by homeowners (Rydin and Pennington, 2000, p. 153). This informs the next section evaluating the extent to which reforming the Green Belt would help reach the aspirational objective of affordable housing for all.

6.3. Does/To what extent does the Green Belt need to be reformed to solve the housing crisis?

Conceptualising Green Belt Policy Reform and Wider Recommendations
Three broad schools of opinion emerged regarding reform although these inevitably overlapped (figure 27). Most planners and campaigners agreed that the Green Belt's governance needs reform and movement to a higher strategic level (see Chapter 9). Some planners, but mainly campaigners, argued that the _policy itself_ fundamentally was working well but that there could be minor improvements, such as improving recreational access. Most planners, especially private sector ones,

argued that the *policy should be retained but reformed and become more 'flexible'*. This would mean critically considering its overall purpose *alongside* reviewing its spatial extent (i.e. assessing all land in the Green Belt against the five purposes). Thirdly, a small minority of planners argued for its abolition or significant roll-back. Each school of thought is evaluated but Green Belt abolition is ruled out, not for only planning reasons, but because it is politically unrealistic.
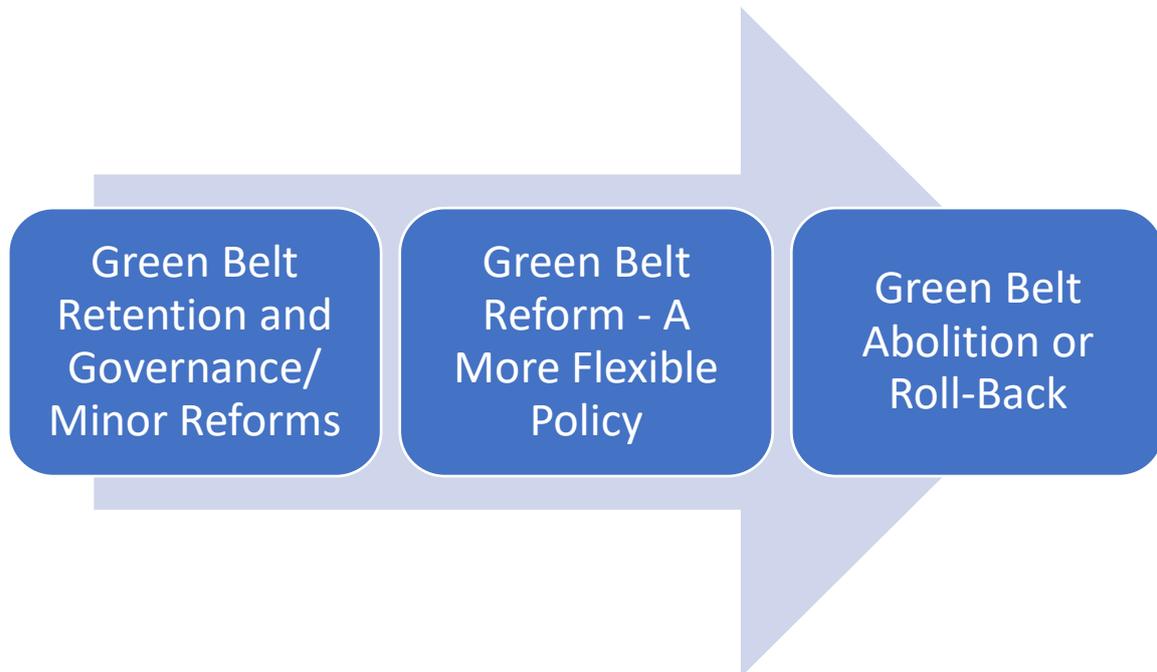
Figure 27 - The Spectrum of Green Belt Perspectives

The strength of feeling about the Green Belt means that reform is challenging to write about (Sturzaker and Mell, 2016; Bradley, 2019a). However, consensus crystallised among planners on the need of *retaining the Green Belt's concept but reviewing its overall spatial extent and purpose(s).* The policy improvements suggested by campaigners are adopted in this study although the evidence suggests that it is probably time for reviewing the Green Belt, ideally as part of a national plan. Its purpose and spatial extent could also be debated through a national conversation (see Chapter 7; Broadway Malyan, 2015; Parham and Boyfield, 2016), with this section outlining an alternative purpose anchored around dual sustainability and social objectives. As a national policy, its spatial extent also probably needs reviewing in broad terms nationally alongside a strategic review, such as

the 1964 South East Plan (Lainton, 2014), to assess how well land serves its purpose(s) and whether

alterations/additions/deletions are needed. However, any reform to the Green Belt *policy* should be

alongside and in tandem with reforms to its governance structure (see Chapter 9).

Green Belt Retention and Governance/Minor Reforms
The argument for retaining the Green Belt was made on several levels from the amount of political

and popular support it commands through its historic longevity and effectiveness. Those supporting

retention did not identify it as a *principal* cause of the crisis with these responses elucidating these

arguments:

> '*My concern is not with the policy itself but how it is applied.*' (Policy Planner (1) (West Midlands))

> '*It has been really effective…**if you look at the objectives of the Green Belt, I think it still works
> well**. My feeling going around different planning authorities, to planning committees and meeting
> with planning officers, clients, large landowners and developers is that the policy does resist new
> build development, except for the exceptions stated in the NPPF, and tends to prevent sprawl or
> keep land open which is the purpose of the Green Belt. **So, therefore, I don't think the policy of
> Green Belt needs to be amended, not radically amended**…very special circumstances are required
> and that is a very high bar. What I think needs to be done…is better guidance and/or an element
> of good practise or case studies*' (Private Sector Planning Director (South East) (1)).

> '*It has fulfilled its function up until the last six years...We still need agriculture and landscapes that
> are important visually for people to enjoy those beautiful natural areas. **But where there are
> Green Belt areas that aren't of such a high landscape quality but can be improved for country
> parks and other sorts of recreation, as we are building higher and higher densities,…it is even
> more important to get good access to good country areas for the health of the nation**. The fact is
> that it has worked. The Green Belt has stood us in very good stead over the last 100 years. But,
> yes, it has got to change for the next 100 years…We need to have a greater insight into what
> makes the Green Belt important…and **look at ways that it can be improved and enhanced.***'
> (Planner (3), CPRE West Midlands).

> '*If you did away with the Green Belt completely, I think you would take away one part of the
> planning system that most people know and one of the most important parts…it wouldn't be long
> before the developers were saying you can take away this bit and that bit and the entire planning
> system would collapse. I think it is that deeply engrained and, also, politically almost impossible to
> get rid of in its entirety…I said that the policy was sound and it is, but in a sense, it is negative and I
> would like to see it expanded to be positive and being considered as a major regional contribution
> to combatting climate change…to see emphasis given to the protection and creation of more
> natural habitats - the more, better, bigger and joined up philosophy that Professor Newton put
> out.*' (Retired Strategic Planner (4))

Many of those arguing for 'retention' were participants from the West Midlands where the WMGB has successfully contained a relatively compact, contiguous conurbation and the WMGB's predominately rural character forms a juxtaposition to the 'industrial' conurbation so it is generally well-used for recreational, like the Lickey Hills (Law, 2000; Goode, 2019a)[68]. The quotes above are helpful in articulating a positive vision for how the Green Belt could be improved illuminating a potentially renewed purpose. As outlined in the literature review Chapters (2, 3), Howard and Unwin envisaged the Green Belt as an active, dynamic area for the recreational use of cities forming the rationale for the inter-war land purchases although this link with recreation was weakened in the post-war era with modernist ideas of separating town and country (Amati and Yokohari, 2003, 2004, 2006). A strong case exists today for again giving the Green Belt a clearer, recreational role in its purpose(s) but private landownership alongside agricultural requirements pose challenges (although there maybe a possibility of changing land use with the post-Brexit subsidy regime (Harrison, 1981, 1983; Willis and Whitby, 1985; HM Government, 2018)). Moreover, the lockdowns accompanying Coronavirus demonstrated the pressing need for *local* greenspace and not relying too heavily on the Green Belt for the recreational use of cities (Goode, 2020e; Manns, 2020).

The Green Belt needing to have an environmental purpose emerges strongly, especially the importance of natural habitats and their ecological value (CPRE, 2015). An overarching objective of sustainability for the Green Belt would work well to capture these positive benefits as opposed to the negative role of preventing urban sprawl. These exciting and innovative ideas demonstrate the need for a broader, societal debate on the Green Belt's purpose and the quotes also make the case strongly for retaining it *as a concept*. Interestingly, even National Private Sector Planning Director (3),

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[68] The West Midlands is more densely populated, 8,380/sq mi, than the next largest conurbation, Greater Manchester, 5710/sq mi (CPRE and Natural England, 2010, p. 29). The Greater Manchester/West Riding Green Belts are also 'moth eaten' and not continuous like the WMBG (Planner (2), CPRE West Midlands).

who argued for the Green Belt to be abolished, conceded that they would be more valuable if they

had greater recreational access:

> '*The original Green Belt Act…was to allow London councils to go and buy land, you know, so Green Belt is owned by the city and used for recreational purposes. **If it was to get your land to go into the Green Belt, you would have to agree to enhance public access, yes, that would be quite a thing. But one would, actually, think a lot of landowners, if push came to shove, might not want to agree that***.'*

Green Belt Reform - A More Flexible Policy

Planners critical of the Green Belt sometimes lacked clarity as to how it could be reformed. The

consensus seemed that, whilst the Green Belt has been successful at achieving its historic objective

of preventing urban sprawl, they were critical of whether these objectives were 'right' and

appropriate for the 21st century, stressing the need for a more 'flexible' Green Belt with this phrase,

'flexible/flexibility', being constantly used. Raco, Durrant and Livingstone (2018) similarly found the

importance of 'flexibility' to developers in city centre/inner city developments. Secondly, concerns

were raised about if the Green Belt's current spatial extent is 'right' and whether all land serves the

Green Belt's purposes. The point was made that *a* Green Belt was and is necessary, especially around

London, and that the extent of the Abercrombie's Green Belt was generally 'right', but the large

scale, further extensions to the MGB in the 1970s/80s meant that it was now too 'large' (see

discussions in the Field Diary in the Appendix). However, planners largely did not comment on the

size of what the WMGB should be thus reflecting its smaller spatial extent. Thirdly, it was often

highlighted that the Green Belt was introduced alongside new towns and regional policy, so their

effective working depends upon other mechanisms for meeting housing need, whether new towns or

urban regeneration. However, it was argued that the Green Belt has now become an entity in itself

rather than viewed as a suite of policies whilst their inflexibility partly stems from their political

sensitivity. For example:

> '***It would be helpful for national government to identify broad locations for growth. That would take a more flexible approach to the Green Belt and perhaps encourage other areas to release more Green Belt***…*there is probably, as with the original extensions of Green Belt, a dilution in the*

*purpose of it and, for many local authorities as well as opposition groups, necessarily some misunderstanding or misrepresentation, as I see it, of the real purpose…**Originally, it was to restrict urban sprawl and it particularly focussed on London but that does not necessarily mean that growth is now not appropriate in other areas. I feel that the Green Belt has fulfilled its purpose up to a point but there should be probably a greater review as to why certain areas have continued to be.'*** (Young Planner, National Housebuilder).

'Abolishing it would be quite radical wouldn't it? I think it is a difficult one. You need to have a look at Green Belt in the context of in the 21st century but what is its purpose? You need to look at what do we want in the 21st century the Green Belt to do…what do we want the function of it to be? I think we have also got to look at what the land is actually like and doing.' (Planner, housebuilding industry).

'We need to rethink what the Green Belt is…for the 21st century, and I think that purpose should be around green infrastructure and natural capital, which is a massive agenda issue at the moment for the most. So, we need to rethink about the greenspaces we have between cities and between towns…as well as sort of the purpose of the Green Belt' (Strategic Planner, South East).

Building on these observations, modifying the Green Belt's purpose to bring sustainability to its centre, underpinned by the twin pillars of social and environmental sustainability, would be an appropriate way forward to assess whether land is suitable for the Green Belt or affordable housing developments. However, this must go alongside a national debate/conversation on its purpose and spatial extent.

Green Belt Abolition or Roll-Back

Building on the neo-Marxian, economic framework (Short *et al*, 1986), private sector planners, especially those acting for housebuilders and landowners, were expected to be extremely critical of the policy and desire its abolition. However, there was a surprising consensus *against* its abolition and in favour of retaining the concept. This was partly related to its popular, political support so that, even if planners *personally* preferred its abolition, they did not consider this a viable option. For example:

*'Green Belt is so well-recognised, if it were done away with it would be seen by a lot of people as being a deliberate ploy to concrete over the countryside. So that to the extent that Green Belt has got to survive in some form, a reformed Green Belt policy that does the job it was originally intended to and is flexible enough to allow for stable plans of growth, could be achievable and deliverable. **But in my personal view, not the company view, I'd do away with it tomorrow.**'* (Private Sector Planner)

Private sector actors being in favour of regulation, like the Green Belt, echoes Raco *et al's* (2018;

2019) work on large scale developments in inner London and suggests that housebuilders/planners

and the private sector takes a more nuanced view towards regulation than that presumed by the

neo-Marxian framework. Moreover, arguably the Green Belt benefits housebuilders through

restricting new housing supply, maintaining house prices and excluding smaller housebuilders due to

the cost and complexity of regulation (Gilmore, 2014, p. 2, 2016, p. 6). Likewise, the difficulty of

getting land released from the Green Belt to some extent protects their professional expertise and

creates a 'need' for planners (Airey and Doughty, 2020). National Private Sector Planner (2) argued:

> '*It's not in anyone's interest to dispense with Green Belt altogether. I think Green Belt is one of the important parts of British planning and **it wouldn't be in the builders' interest to dispense with Green Belt as, once you do, you lose the quality of the environment. By releasing so much land altogether, you devalue what you are trying to achieve so no builder or landowner would want all the land released because otherwise that reduces its value.***'

This resonates with Dear and Scott's (1981, p. 13) observation that the Green Belt is a 'historically-

specific and socially-necessary response to the self-disorganising tendencies of privatised capitalist

social and property relations…in space'.

Nevertheless, a small minority of planners did advocate the Green Belt's abolition. These tended to

be younger or middle-aged and, whilst some planners were quite conservative and did not think

outside their professional mind-set or the current legislative framework, others were more free-

thinking and radical[69]:

> '***I would actually like to get rid of the Green Belt***. *Areas of restraint, I think, are good and Green Belt is too much of a blunt instrument. **We need a more flexible and organic** [policy] because the housing market is changing rapidly.*' (Private Sector Planning Director)

> '*So many authorities around the UK don't have Green Belt but still manage to restrict development on the edges through the use of other policies…it is a bit outdated and, actually, there are other ways that you can plan proactively to restrict growth around your settlements…through a*

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[69] The researcher encouraged participants to think about theoretical and ideal possibilities alongside the *status quo* in line with calls for planners to be 'reflective practitioners' (Slade *et al*, 2019, p. 8).

proactive plan process…maybe you don't need Green Belt at all. **I know it wouldn't be popular and I don't think a government would ever want to suggest it**.' (Planner in Focus Group II)

'*The purposes…of the policy* [could move] *toward something along the lines of more general criteria, so perhaps biodiversity net gain. So, it has effectively the same principle…that would kind of produce the same sort of outcome but in a more flexible and probably more appropriate way. Just sort of slapping a land designation around certain areas - I don't think really achieves what we are trying to achieve in planning today. A specific set of criteria…specifically linked to the sprawl of London at a specific time…I am not sure it is necessarily the most appropriate way forward for what we are trying to achieve with the system today.*' (Local authority planner (South East))

Although it is important to think more broadly and critically about the Green Belt in this academic

study, abolishing it is politically unfeasible so not considered as a serious option (Mace, 2018).

Regional Green Belts and Green Belt Swoops
Metropolitan and Regional Green Belts
This chapter has synthesised regional Green Belt perspectives but differences exist *between* regional

Green Belts. Firstly, the MGB one is larger than the WMGB in *absolute* spatial terms although, *in*

proportionate terms, not significantly larger[70]. This leading West Midlands planner reflected:

'*I wonder what a 60-mile Green Belt around Birmingham would have looked like?* **So, we have got a small one but what's happened beyond that?** *There has been a lot of development.*'

Nevertheless, the 'tightness' of *regional* Green Belts around conurbations, especially the WMGB, was

often referred to as a major issue by planners and, although not as pronounced as the Greater South

East, challenges still exist with regional housing crises and managing urban housing shortfalls,

especially Birmingham's (see Chapter 9) (GL Hearn, 2018).

Green Belt Additions and Deletions
The possibility of adding land to the Green Belt or 'swops' was raised by some:

'*Whether as part of* [releasing land from the Green Belt]*, you have a quid quo pro to say actually, 'whilst we will be taking some land out, we will add to the Green Belt elsewhere. But in overall terms, the Green Belt will actually be getting bigger, not smaller'. But even that I think, would take an awful lot of political courage'* (Private Sector Planning Director (South East) (2)).

'*Finally, we have got a Government policy on Green Belt which seems to support deletion of Green Belt but doesn't countenance addition of Green Belt. It seems to me and, I think to CPRE as a whole, you can't have one without the other.*' (Planner (1), CPRE West Midlands)

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[70] Calculations based on data from CPRE and Natural England (2010) and population statistics from the ONS.

However, Green Belt additions are only feasible through a strategic Green Belt review given that LPAs are rarely contiguous with Green Belt boundaries (see Chapter 9). Nonetheless, the CLA planner was strongly opposed to additions:

> '***The outer boundary of the Green Belt needs to stop moving.*** *I mean, if you leave the boundaries where they are now and you have to take bits out in order to deliver housing development inside - that's fine, but in some fifty-years' time, we might just as well say the whole of England is classified as Green Belt and then where does that get us?...So, it comes back to my two points – one, the cost to society of Green Belt and what was the original purpose of Green Belt and should we be reviewing it*?'

Although helpful for outlining farmers and landowners views on Green Belt reviews and the difficulties they can create, arguably their needs and requirements must be weighed against the *overall* welfare benefits of society of a more flexible Green Belt[71].

Green Belt TOD, Alternative Policies and Other Ways of Analysing the Policy

The debates in the quotes about the effectiveness of TOD, alternative policies, such as green wedges, and alternative ways of assessing the policy, like the sustainability of leapfrogging, were similar to those explored in Chapter 3 (see Appendix for quotes on these issues)[72]. This study focused primarily on *social* justice and a strategic governance framework is arguably required to proper consider proposals, such as TOD (see Chapter 9).

6.4.   Towards a Sustainability Purpose of the Green Belt

On balance, the evidence suggests that the Green Belt's purpose needs reviewing but, as outlined in Chapter 7, this needs to be part of a national 'conversation'/debate on the trade-offs, costs and benefits of Green Belts as part of a national plan and following a programme of public education on planning. Indeed, a retired Conservative West Midlands MP, who was very supportive of the Green

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[71] A middle way approach would be to have strategic Green Belt reviews every 25-30 years to give more certainty to landowners and farmers (see Chapter 9).

[72] This research was conducted before Coronavirus and the lockdowns, which have vastly increased the amount of homeworking and online retail thus reducing the need for TOD and reducing problems with 'leapfrogging'. However, the perceived danger of travelling by public transport and more motor trips around local areas could increase congestion (Budnitz *et al*, 2020; Goode, 2020b, 2020e; Wicks, 2020).

Belt, acknowledged that all the land in England needs reviewing, potentially through a Royal

Commission on land use. A national plan could also take a similar form to the New Town Commission

or the UK2070 Commission (2020) whereby evidence is collected from a range of sources

(Cullingworth *et al.*, 2015).

This project recommends an overall sustainability purpose to give the Green Belt a positive purpose

compared to the rather negative and perhaps outdated one of preventing urban sprawl. Focusing on

sustainability would help modernise the concept meaning that it is more relevant in a context of

rapid climate and environmental change (Monbiot *et al.*, 2019). As Table 22 shows, this necessarily

broad purpose would be underpinned by the interlocking pillars of social and environmental

sustainability:

Table 22 - Overarching purpose of the Green Belt: Sustainability	
Environmental	Social
- Support biodiversity/green infrastructure. - Prevent urban sprawl. - Ecosystem services, i.e. river restoration.	- Enhance recreational access. - Support 'social' uses, i.e. urban farms/allotments - Affordable housing.

Environmental sustainability builds upon campaigners and planners recommendations of a 'greener'

Green Belt to make it 'work harder' in its environmental value through shifting the focus from

landscape/openness to more flexible environmental enhancement, such as river restoration and

community farming, which could be encouraged with the post-Brexit subsidy regime (HM

Government, 2018). This would interlink with a social purpose, tied to recreation (as also supported

by the RTPI (Blyth, 2017)), where these sorts of beneficial activities would be encouraged thereby

broadening the Green Belt's purpose beyond the environmental to social sustainability (Sturzaker

and Shucksmith, 2011). However, the affordability issue needs addressing, especially of new housing

in the Green Belt, so a social purpose could stipulate that development in sustainable locations must

serve a social purpose, i.e. have a high level of affordable or social housing or fulfil a particular 'need'

in an area, like housing for the elderly (RTPI, 2016a; Blyth, 2017). If stipulated in policy, hopefully this would reduce landowners' expectations about the land price and new housing in the Green Belt may become more affordable to allay the public's fears regarding affordability[73]. These points are elucidated in these quotes:

> '*In rural areas…are the exceptions* [sites but]*…there is a need for affordable housing everywhere and market housing, but could it be a combined site* [in the Green Belt]*? Arguably, your market housing will enable affordable housing in the case of viability and paying for additional facilities in that settlement or funding other services.*' (Private Sector Young Planner (West Midlands) (2)).

> '*The RTPI has said it is time to think about…a social purpose…there is a social aspect to Green Belt we can look at: who uses them? who benefits from them? There is a kind of moment with Green Belt…where you could say - 'well, if you added a social purpose, that would mean if someone were to come forward with a proposal to build 100% affordable/social housing in an accessible location of the Green Belt, politicians might say - 'Well, OK that meets social purpose''. That's a very different issue from saying that's speculative development for 100% market housing should be allowed…the Green Belt could perform a kind of unique useful function where, to a certain extent the hope value in Green Belt land is quite low (because people believe it won't be changed).*' (Planner from the RTPI).

> '*There is a growing interest in promoting woodland and wetland creation in the Green Belt on the urban fringe (in particular) and that probably has a very good mixture of public benefits. Also, improving land management for climate change and adapting to fix it…we would certainly agree that more could be done to encourage sustainable food production as well…this is what we would call the misconceptions that are put around by the anti-Green Belt people - that Green Belt has no specific environmental value because it is intensively farmed.*' (Planner, environmental charity)

6.5. Conclusions

The housing crisis is a complex, multifaceted, and longstanding problem involving a mixture of supply and demand issues although it has intensified in recent years. Relying largely on private sector housebuilders and/or Green Belt reform *alone* will arguably not be sufficient to solve the crisis, especially with the dependence of England's economic model on homeownership and rising house prices (Archer and Cole, 2014; Gallent, 2019b). However, in the absence of a fundamental change to this model, neither is the problem of affordability going to go away or solve itself. Based upon the arguments of planners and campaigners, this chapter has highlighted important proposals which

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[73] A Green Belt 'tax' could also dampen landowners expectations (Wolf, 2015a, p. 2).

could address the central issue of affordability *and* a Green Belt with a sustainability purpose fit for the 21st century. On affordability, a social purpose would help to ensure that more affordable housing gets built there whilst, more broadly, better funding and coordination of infrastructure potentially through land assembly by the public sector, sufficient facilities/services and higher quality design accompanying development is vital for (re)building public trust and confidence in housebuilding (see Chapter 7). Coupled with an environmental purpose, a 'greener' Green Belt could emerge with increased recreational access whilst encouraging biodiversity and ecological improvements. However, the constant theme stressed by campaigners and planners is that the Green Belt's *purpose* should not be divorced from its *spatial extent and governance,* so it is vital that any Green Belt reviews take place strategically to properly planned any releases (see 'recommendations' Chapters 9 and 10). The data also highlighted the case for more powerful, proactive and progressive planning as a central means by which the crisis could be solved in the same way that the state took a leading role in development in the post-war era from 1945 until 1979 and house prices remained stable (Goode, 2020f). The next two Chapters (7 and 8) explore the crucial issues of the social and political feasibility of Green Belt reform. As developed in Chapter 7, a national Green Belt debate, alongside more public engagement and education in planning, is vital so that Green Belt reform commands public consent through potentially involving more people in planning.

Although this chapter could have been more ambitious regarding Green Belt reform and was largely written within the parameters of the capitalist system of mass homeownership, this thesis's golden thread is that planning is inherently political. Consequently, it is arguably more valuable, in terms of research 'impact', to stay largely within the realms of what is politically possible whilst recognising what maybe theoretically desirable, such as replacing Green Belt with another policy (Martin, 2001, p. 112; Woods, 2011). Planners being generally more supportive of the principle of the Green Belt than the assumption by the neo-Marxian framework (see Chapters 4 and 5), suggests that the

relationship between planning regulation and housebuilders is more complicated than the literature suggests (Raco *et al*, 2018).

The chapter has also highlighted the importance of measures designed to diversify housing providers, especially building more social housing, reduce empty homes and provide more support for brownfield remediation to lessen development pressure on the Green Belt. However, it is still important to critically consider how far land in the Green Belt could be used to accommodate more housing so that the character of *existing* urban areas does not change or deteriorate too rapidly due to large-scale urban intensification and densification. To some extent, the *way or process by which* development takes place in the Green Belt is as important as *where it takes place*. The next three Chapters (7, 8 and 9) therefore turn to the *process* of planning.

Chapter 7: Conceptualising Community Support for the Green Belt and Opposition to Housebuilding

7.1. Introduction

This chapter also proved challenging to write as the strength of feeling about the policy again became evident when speaking to regional and national planning stakeholders. However, as outlined in Chapter 6, the public acceptability of Green Belt reform and wider housebuilding is vitally important to the governance and *process* of planning, especially with growing popular awareness of the housing crisis and the Government's 'target' of 300,000 new homes per annum (Mace, 2018; Bradley, 2019a). The chapter explores the motivations and attitudes of campaigners and communities to the Green Belt alongside broader attitudes to housebuilding as viewed by planners and campaigners/the public by weaving together qualitative and quantitative material and, although the findings are generalised nationally, they are grounded in the regional case study of the West Midlands. This is vital as housing policy is currently largely 'place neutral' and 'spatially blind' whilst arguments surrounding the house price hypothesis are often based on broad datasets or inference upon intuitively powerful and logical assumptions rather than directly engaging with campaigners (McGuinness *et al*, 2018, p. 330; Bradley, 2019b, 2019a).

This chapter relates the findings to planning and geographical theory as underlining the limitations of the materialist framework of the house price hypothesis, as outlined in Chapter 4, and explores the usefulness of the place attachment, environmental psychology and cultural geography literature, which underlines popular emotional attachment to place and the countryside (Short *et al*, 1986; Davison *et al.*, 2013, 2016; Anton and Lawrence, 2014). It contextualises Chapter 8 on *how* campaigners seek to exercise power in planning and outlines recommendations highlighted by planners and campaigners thus establishing the empirical groundwork for strategic planning as the cornerstone for rebuilding public trust in planning (see Chapter 9).

7.2. Conceptualising Why Communities Support the Green Belt and Oppose Development: The Views of Planners

Popular Knowledge of the Green Belt

The relationship between community opposition to housebuilding and planning is complicated and the subject of extensive academic and practitioner debate (see Chapter 4) (Sturzaker, 2017; Brownill and Inch, 2019). Broader debates about the representativeness and amount of engagement in planning are largely beyond this study's scope but were reflected in discussions on the Green Belt and housebuilding generally.

However, notwithstanding the difficulties created by limitations in the public understanding of planning, especially the Green Belt, one of the policy's greatest and most enduring achievements is its 'capacity' to interest and 'engage political public's' at a time of widespread apathy with, and disinterest in planning (Law, 2000, p. 57; Bradley, 2019a, p. 181) as some practitioners recognised:

> '***It is pretty much the only part of the planning system which the public think they understand and are aware of.*** *They don't understand it - they just think they know what it is!* ***In that respect, I think it has a value in itself in that there's something they understand about and are broadly right in their conception of (that it stops things happening).***' (Retired Strategic Planner (1), West Midlands)

> '*It is probably the most positive aspect of the planning system that has entered the public psyche and for that reason it is a very strongly supported subject. Not just by organisations, like CPRE, but individual members of the public are aware of what Green Belt is.* ***Often, they misunderstand what Green Belt is but they cling to it with great enthusiasm. In PR terms…it is 10/10 effective***' (Retired Planner (1)).

Some planners were more sympathetic to campaigners whilst others, like Public Sector Planner (3) (West Midlands), acknowledged the barriers to people getting involved in planning, especially its technical nature and the lengthy nature of most planning documents (Parker and Street, 2019).

Others were more sceptical, such as National Private Sector Planner (1), who argued that that there

should be greater trust in planners as 'experts', like the NHS, rather than arguing that people need

training and education to more effectively engage with planning[74]:

> '*The planning system is so complicated and there can't be many elements of public policy where you have a public policy but ask people, who know nothing about it, to engage with it…we expect people to be able to engage with quite complex strategic and local issues, despite having no background or training or expertise.*' (National Private Sector Planner (1)).

Indeed, these quotes show broader, deep levels of distrust between planners and campaigners as

seen in this observation by a Policy and Campaign Advisor, West Midlands:

> '***People in less affluent areas are also people who know less*** [about] ***how to*** [articulate their] ***point of view but they still have the same values about the Green Belt****…people believe, have their faith in Green Belt, which is good, but there is a lot of confusion between greenfield and Green Belt…It is very easy for particular politicians but, particularly for the housebuilders, to present the image that -* '***because there are these people who object and care about their countryside and have a self-interest (as we all do) - all this is a tool for NIMBYism'. Therefore, it is that kind of image that is presented as,*** '***why should we protect these middle-class people who have got lots of money?'*** *(They are not all middle-class who live in or on the edge of the Green Belt!)…It is an easy way of getting around the difficulties. If you are building housing in these areas on the edge which are not well-located, the very people who you say need it, say the poorest, aren't the people who are going to get the benefit'*.

Different types of knowledges frequently come into collision in the planning system, especially

'planning' knowledge, often characterised as evidence-based, scientific and objective, and

'community' knowledge, associated with emotional, experimental and subjective knowledge

(Bradley, 2018, p. 24). Although both types are key, an important component of this project is

assessing what the *right balance* should be in the planning system.

Planners Perspectives on the Motivations of Campaigners
Overview
Planners are the key actors in the planning system and have extensive interaction with the public and

wide-ranging knowledge and experience of community opposition and its resulting politics[75].

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[74] As Wargent and Parker (2018) have argued regarding Neighbourhood Planning, Monbiot *et al.* (2019) in relation to 'Planning Juries' and the Raynsford Review (2018a, 2018b, 2020) about planning more generally.
[75] Planners help to shape and inform policy, as part of expert groups/professional institutes, like the RTPI, Government 'sounding boards' and responding to consultations, such as the NPPF/White Paper, so how they view and value public engagement is vital (Parker *et al*, 2018, 2020). Planners carry out public consultation so their approach to consultation and how seriously they take it shapes 'real' planning schemes.

Planners' views of campaigners and their motivations may not always be representative as sometimes viewing campaigners as irrational and ignorant juxtaposed to planners being 'experts' and 'objective' (through constructing 'conceptual binaries' and resorting to the 'public deficit explanation' (Gibson, 2005, p. 383; Welsh and Wynne, 2013, p. 552)). However, how planners *perceive* community opposition is still vitally important and needs to be researched (Brownill and Parker, 2010; Inch *et al.*, 2019). Community attitudes are particularly important regarding the Green Belt given the widespread public support that it commands in principle and fierce opposition there often is to releasing land from it for housing in practice.

Planners generally viewed the public as not understanding the Green Belt policy (the public deficit explanation (Welsh and Wynne, 2013)) and were particularly sceptical and discrediting of campaigners. Mace (2018, p. 4) helpfully distinguished between 'rationalistic' and 'normative' support for the Green Belt whereby 'rationalistic' relates to house prices and the material impacts of development for individuals or a political tool for politicians whereas 'normative' relates to more principled, conceptual support. However, this chapter explores how most planners argued that house prices were not campaigners' *primary consideration* (the 'property' argument/house price hypothesis)*,* but located opposition to housebuilding as being deeper, more instinctive emotional fear of change. This included the specific desire to protect one's local area (the 'place' argument) and underlying popular love of, and attachment to the countryside and Green Belt as principles (the 'principle' argument). Of course, property prices could be wrapped up in desires to protect one's local area and the Green Belt being popularly perceived as synonymous with very desirable, pleasant places to live, such as Solihull/Warwick/Lichfield/Four Oaks in the WMGB (see figure 28), was often mentioned. However, opposition was often related to protecting *a semi-rural way of life rather than directly protecting house prices*. Moreover, intertwined with these normative, principled concerns, were more materialistic fears about the impacts of development on infrastructure and facilities, such as traffic and school/GP places. This all underlines the importance of research also being cognisant of

space, place attachment and cultural geography in the study of campaigners as opposed to the

primarily materialistic emphasis of the house price hypothesis literature (see Chapter 4) (Devine-

Wright, 2005, 2009; Bailey *et al*, 2016; Davison *et al.*, 2016).
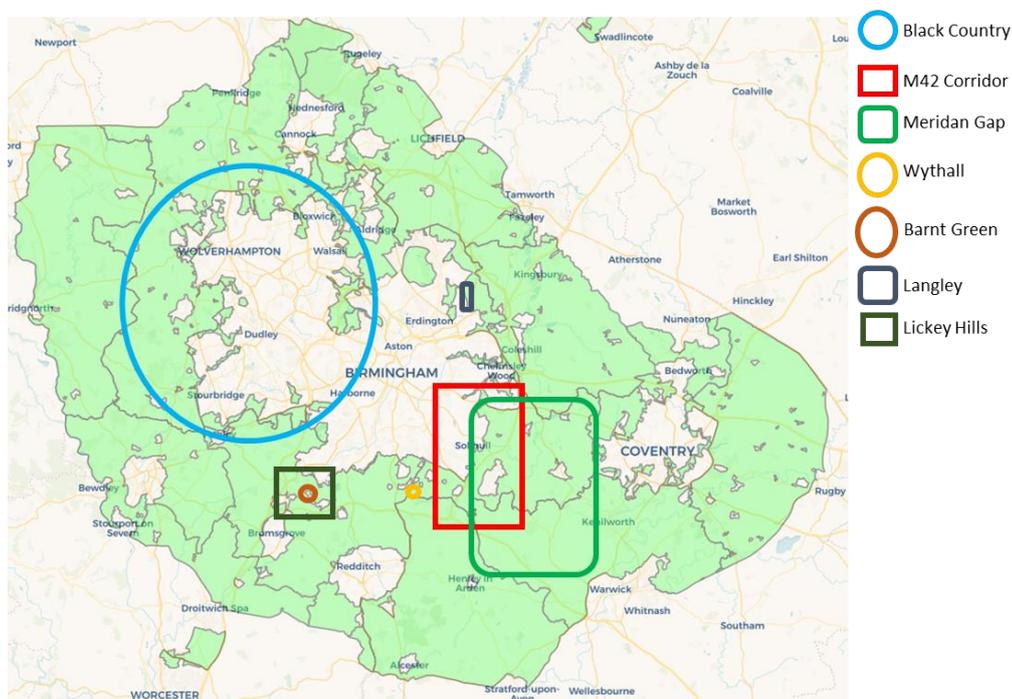
Figure 28 - Key locations in the West Midlands (adapted from: https://bit.ly/3rXTGuW).

Finally, it was argued that these multi-scalar fears of change among *everyday* campaigners were

often deeper motivations than support for the Green Belt *per se* but, as the strongest protection

against development, it was often used as an oppositional technique to serve the underlying

objective of preventing change.

General Points

However, there was still heterogeneity in responses from planners whilst the difficulties of

establishing popular motivations were acknowledged, as this Senior Civil Servant in the Ministry of

Housing argued:

> *'There have been a few surveys*[76] *and we should try to get to the root of this, but it is very difficult because of what people say and what is their actual reason?'*

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[76] Surveys on why people oppose development, like CPRE's (2015) survey, are explored later in this chapter.

Indeed, although themes emerged, planners acknowledged that people oppose development for a range of interrelated reasons and a complex web of sometimes contradictory motivations. Although this makes conceptualising and theorising more complicated, acknowledging the diversity, hybridity and intersectionality of campaigners is key as recognising them as 'real', complex people as this quote demonstrates (Rose, 1997; McDowell, 2016; Beebeejaun, 2017):

> *'**Housing is one of those areas where people are capable of holding two conflicting ideas in their head at the same time** so it's probably the…only commodity where people want the price to go both up and down!'* (Retired Strategic Planner (1)).

This cautions against recommending one 'silver bullet' policy solution addressing and satisfying why people oppose housebuilding but the range of proposals developed in this thesis, based upon the observations of planners and campaigners, seek to address these varied yet common motivations.

Motivation - Place/Principle Arguments
Principle Arguments: Support for the Green Belt and the Countryside
Firstly, the normative aspects of the principle/place argument were well articulated at both ends of the political spectrum. A Labour Advisor on housing explained:

> *'The opposition from the public is essentially to development…a sort of anti-development vogue…people just don't like change and then they run a lot of arguments* [like]…*'Oh well, it won't be affordable to that many people', the disruption from the construction process, strain on services etc., traffic congestion, air pollution (this is an avenue they have recently taken to) - I mean, you know, they really go for it. They throw everything in...So, I think it is just change'.*

A national Conservative politician expressed similar sentiment although he agreed with it:

> *'The original purposes of the Green Belt are about beauty and the sense of communities as meaningful places rather than sprawl without an identity. I think they apply as much today as they did in the 1950s.'*

Support for the countryside and Green Belt is interrelated
Firstly, planners often referred to popular support of the countryside among campaigners and the public as an intuitive response and universal principle which can be appealed to. The key to campaigning success is being able to persuade people that what is at stake is not merely a NIMBY or local issue, but a legitimate, general issue/principle that people feel strongly about (like a

development being a representative 'threat' to the countryside or wider Green Belt) (see Chapter 8)

(Amati and Yokohari, 2006; Amati, 2007). Planners accused the public of largely misunderstanding

the difference between greenfield and Green Belt sites showing the powerful 'affective' narrative of

the 'countryside' with the Green Belt being popularly seen as a synonymous institution (Warren and

Clifford, 2005, p. 378; Mace, 2018). As Planner (2), CPRE West Midlands argued:

'*If you abolish the Green Belt, there will be just as much objection to development!*'

This was echoed by a young planner from a national housebuilder:

'**They** [the public] *see that countryside outside their house has just as much value as Green Belt and therefore we come up to as much objection and local opposition*…*to it* [development generally]*…But, because the Green Belt policy has stayed similar over a really long period of time, it means that the layperson has a really clear understanding of what that means…without much understanding of how it is possible to release land from the Green Belt under the current policy through the local plan process.* [This] *becomes a bit of a sticking point and* [Green Belt] *is probably the most accessible, short plan policy that we have and therefore people…will stick to it very clearly. You know, when you look at what people say at public consultation, perhaps on the local plan or large-scale planning applications, it tends to be things that they understand. Number one is building on the Green Belt and building on the countryside which sometimes gets a bit confused…that contributes massively to how people view releases of land from the Green Belt because I don't think they understand it'*.

This illustrates the central paradox that, whilst planners generally hold engagement in planning as an

inherent 'good' (Brownill and Parker, 2010), there is widespread frustration with, and distrust of the

public's passionate support of the Green Belt.

The Principle of Protecting the Countryside
The quotes above and other planners highlighted that campaigners' concerns relate more to the

underlying desire to protect the principle of the countryside:

'(There is a) *huge concept misunderstanding on the public's side about the Green Belt and countryside. They can get, at times, used for the same thing…Certainly, the society of the English and countryside is such that people feel very emotional about losing land to housing…we have this huge popular attachment to the countryside, which is part of our psyche…popular concern can be easily whipped up by those who still value it* [the countryside] *very solemnly with very powerful voices and a personal interest…because either they are able to access it very regularly/easily or have views over the countryside or live in it'* (Former Civil Servant Planner)*.

'**Whether it is Green Belt or not, we will still probably be met with the same level of objection (almost)**. *Green Belts - people will know it's Green Belt and say 'Don't touch it, it is Green Belt, I*

read in the Daily Mail da di da di da'. But, obviously Green Belt can be released, there is a mechanism for it to happen and there is a development plan process and we do explain that to people…You explain to them that they don't have a right over a view, which tends to be quite an incendiary thing to say, but I don't care! They will say there are 'slugs and bugs and unicorns and fairies living on the site you know'! But honestly, we have to be super robust with all of that. But their argument, 'Well, it's just Green Belt', **even people say a site is Green Belt when it isn't Green Belt because, again, perception of Green Belt is that, if it isn't built on, it is Green Belt**' (Private Sector Planning Director (West Midlands) (1)).

The Principle of Protecting the Green Belt

Other planners underlined popular support for the policy as a *principle*, rather just an oppositional strategy although there was disagreement on whether the Green Belt or countryside was more important as a motivation. For example:

'CPRE are particularly active…because **Green Belt has always been such a national narrative that everybody is sort of in with it and it is easy to pick that up as part of their representation. I think people are very canny nowadays.** *Most people know how to object to a planning application - what to say,* **what are reasonable planning reasons. Because Green Belt sits at the top of that list, it is always what people talk about***…People will object on transport but it is very opaque...*[and] *difficult for a local person to actually understand and therefore challenge effectively…The Green Belt policy is there in black and white, fairly short, it's pretty accessible and all* **you need to write on your letter of objection is 'It's in the Green Belt and therefore it is inappropriate'. And that makes it a really easy mechanism for people to object to development.** [Green Belt] *is where they walk their dog every day or they ride their horse or just like being in the countryside and they don't want to feel like they are going to lose out on it or that the village services are going to be overwhelmed by* **lots of people who don't have this particular attachment to the Green Belt as a principle***...***That differentiates it from any other person that lives next to a part of the countryside.** *The opposition is greater in Green Belt areas.'* (Planner from housebuilder (2)).

These quotes show that normative opposition is often driven by the interrelated, interlocking principles and values of the countryside *and* Green Belt which are *both* important, inseparable factors as often conflated and confused (Mace, 2018). In a sense, it is more challenging for public policy to respond to general values and popular imagination, especially emotional support for the countryside, than direct economic motivations with this chapter recommending a national Green Belt 'conversation' (Mace, 2018; Inch *et al.*, 2020).

Place Arguments: Protecting One's Local Place

These general principles intersected and crystallised with place specific concerns, both 'materialistic' *and* 'normative', regarding people's vision of place underscoring the importance of place attachment

and environmental psychology (Woodcock *et al*, 2012; van den Nouwelant *et al.*, 2015; Mace, 2018, p. 13). Materialistic concerns pose poignant questions for public policy because, according to what planners say about campaigners, infrastructure and the effect of development on local services features prominently as a motivation:

> '***The majority*** [of objections to a Green Belt site] ***are related to infrastructure actually…the most frequent ones that came up...loss of Green Belt did feature but surprisingly not as high as the very kind of tangible, real things that would have to be faced day by day***. *People talk about the clogging up of roads - 'How can we take another 15,000 cars?' so transport, education, the lack of schools and health facilities. Some of them did mention ecology and the loss of trees and habitat but **the majority were related to physical infrastructure*** ' (Policy Planner (1) (West Midlands Council)).

This was not just a concern to the West Midlands but appeared across the country as a major issue with planner from housebuilder (2) arguing that it partly related to 'unplanned development':

> '*It's not just because it is Green Belt…the reason why is often, **I think everywhere you go…people say about the services…That is a constant refrain**. People oppose development for a number of reasons but largely the same reasons…**development would severely impact their ability to continue working, travelling, going to school and accessing their services as they do now. Therefore, it is not necessarily the Green Belt that creates more opposition - it is just a different stick to beat you with in terms of opposing development. Most people would complain about traffic or access to their GP regardless of whether they are in the Green Belt***…If you get this restriction on development and you have to chip away at it, if development isn't planned in a large scale and comprehensive manner…most people have had experience in the past of development that has come forward often speculatively…on the back of sets of appeals and then they get housing that is not required or hasn't provided necessary school places, GP surgeries, roads…**it's the strategy point rather than a principle point because it doesn't matter to Joe Blogs from number 42 whether the field outside the back of his house is Green Belt or not…It's just that the Green Belt becomes a really effective way of opposing something'***.

These quotes raise many issues with planning that are beyond the Green Belt, including the fragmentation of different layers of local government and separation of land-use planning from transport and healthcare planning (see Chapter 9) (Riddell, 2020a). A young planner from a national housebuilder invoked Abercrombie and new town principles in support of large scale developments, which she partly blamed the Green Belt for preventing.

However, these materialistic, specific concerns interwove with normative concerns and principles in

the fear of change, although this was wider than just planning:

> '*Even if it were a non-Green Belt site,* **they** [campaigners] **will still come up, trot out the usual objections because everyone is a self-appointed activist when it comes to trip generation, for instance,**[77]*…they will over-exaggerate. I mean it is all utter, utter nonsense…They will object on the fact that they can't get access to their doctor at the surgery…They will suggest, and I have had this suggested to my face, that 'It's these immigrants that are causing the problem and that is why I can't get in and see my doctor'. And it is entirely baseless and quite often verging on racism as well as xenophobia. They will talk about how they can't get into the schools…It is almost an age-old conversation that I repeat regularly, people know about the Green Belt and they will use that as an argument* **but they will also trot out some standard -**' (Private Sector Planning Director (West Midlands) (2)).

In line with place attachment theory and environmental psychology (Devine-Wright, 2005, 2009;

Gross, 2007), people are often afraid of their area changing in character, which is particularly

poignant in the WMGB with often highly desirable, rural/semi-rural places to live, such as the

Meriden Gap, juxtaposed to 'industrial' conurbations (Harrison and Clifford, 2016; Goode, 2019a).

Concerns seemed not so much *direct* house prices but protecting one's residential and wider area's

rural 'exclusivity', character and way of life (Short *et al*, 1987, p. 36):

> '*There is a clear kind of disparity created in and from the fact that there are very nice areas because they are Green Belt and nice countryside with an idyllic kind of lifestyle. It is a very British kind of thing to have that and I think that is synonymous (nice countryside) with the Green Belt, especially in those* [West Midlands] *villages'.* (Private Sector Young Planner (West Midlands))

> '*They* [some campaigners] *are taking a socially exclusive view. If I live on the edge of a city and I have paid a lot of money for my house, got a nice view of the countryside and access to very good schools for my children* [then], *frankly, I don't want these kind of people moving in and spoiling my view and taking my school places and so on and so forth. So, it can be very socially divisive this whole debate around the Green Belt and housing.'* (Private Sector Planning Director (West Midlands) (2)).

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[77] She continued: '*Everyone is a civil engineer because they drive a car and will come in and say: 'Well, this is already a congested area and the road system is going to break'. And they will not proffer any evidence, they will just apply their opinion and say, 'Well, I have to sit at that junction for more than 10 seconds'…of course, they won't look at the fact that the Government they voted in has cut public spending on the NHS to the bone.'*

These quotes show that, certainly in the WMGB, planners gave primacy to desires to protect and preserve one's local area as a motivation, again chiming with the place attachment and cultural geography literature (Dear, 1992; Thrift, 2004).

Uniting the Place and Principle Arguments: Fear of Change
These normative and materialistic concerns can be grouped under the broader motivation of the fear of change. Firstly, this relates to powerful binaries and the potential for one change to sequentially lead to another so relaxing the Green Belt being a pre-cursor to abolishing it which intertwines with the 'politics of affect' and generic fears about the countryside being 'concreted over' (Thrift, 2004, p. 57; Warren and Clifford, 2005, p. 361). Secondly, fear of change relates to development changing a place's character including fears of different people moving in, local infrastructure/facilities and the impact of construction work (Bailey *et al*, 2016). For example:

> '***The prime thing is people don't like change. You could almost put a full stop there, because then they start looking for reasons why***. *So, it doesn't always work out* [house prices reducing upon development] *but there is probably a fear about that…**a worry, about noise, traffic, safety and there is very definitely a fear of crime.***' (Retired Strategic Planner (4)).

> '***People don't like change. There is almost something in our DNA***. *So, it can be change of work, home and place where we know people. So, normally, and there are exceptions, but generally people are resistant to change. So, it is almost an instinctive approach.*' (Private Sector Planning Director (South East) (2)).

> '***There is quite often a valid concern around what it is going to do to a place…a lot of it is just NIMBYism***. *I think there are certainly genuine concerns around sort of infrastructure whether it is schools, healthcare, roads and public transport - that sort of stuff. But what has always been a struggle to get across is that, actually, those things all get considered*' (Public Sector Planner (3), West Midlands).

This probably reflects the lack of control people feel that they have over their communities and the built environment, maybe reflected in the Brexit vote (Inch and Shepherd, 2019). Whilst the Private Sector Planning Director (South East) (2) did not explicitly establish a 'conceptual binary' of campaigners and the public being universally resistant to change by highlighting a general, instinctively cautious attitude (Gibson, 2005, p. 383), other planners, such as this LPA planner (South East), challenged the 'public deficit explanation' narrative (Welsh and Wynne, 2013, p. 552) of the

fear of change. He argued that opposition is more about wanting to stop change, especially

development, from happening whilst still accusing the public of 'rash' thoughts:

> '*I wouldn't say fear of change… people know exactly what to expect. It is not as though it is an unknown concept out there but I am sure it is the consequences. They know what to expect and just don't like it - 'we don't want this' is the answer…The Green Belt sort of solidifies those areas of contest in some kind of specific frame of rash thought for people to attach to'*.

Whilst this is a valid point about people not *liking* change, this section has raised the important issue

that people are often *resistant* to change and, notwithstanding different possible motives, this raises

poignant questions which are addressed in the recommendations. Firstly, how best does public and

planning policy respond to the normative concerns people have, whether at a principle or place

level? Secondly, given people's material concerns, whether in the Green Belt or not, how can

planning better address concerns about infrastructure and facilities?

The Property Argument

Some planners located popular concern about property prices as being the important motivation for

campaigners, especially when development *directly* affects a person's property. However, it was

highlighted that even developments adjoining a person's home rarely leads to a *significant and long-*

term falls in house prices as Retired Strategic Planner (4) explained (see Chapter 3):

> '***The house price would come in for a very small percentage of people who are more or less directly affected, for example, the end of your back garden*** *although perceptions of these are very difficult.*'

However, some planners highlighted the popular *perception* that development reduces house prices

as a key motivation:

> '***The majority of people are objecting on the basis of things that result in loss of value of their property.****'* (Former LPA Director, West Midlands).

> '*Quite often, people have bought their house or moved to an area, wherever that might be, because of the Green Belt and they think they are 'safe' (and they are not). **And, particularly people who are on the edge of Green Belts and have paid a premium for their view, they are probably more unsafe than anyone else***…***There is certainly a view that quite often it falls around - 'Well, you are taking my view away, reducing my house price***. So, I have paid a premium to live here, how dare you reduce that premium and value by building houses and are you going to*

compensate me for it?' I mean I have been asked that question many, many times over the years and you just think sorry: 'Well, that's not the way this works'.' (Public Sector Planner (3), West Midlands).

Nonetheless, the consensus seemed that place and principle concerns were more important as motivations for campaigners.

Strategic or localist approaches by campaigners?
Bradley (2019a, p. 166, 2019b, p. 695) argued that campaigners largely view the (North West) Green Belt (NWGB) as a coherent whole or entity and within the concept of the 'commons' with the history in the North of recreational countryside access. However, in Greater Manchester, the presence of *one* Combined Authority means that there is one sub-regional Green Belt Review so it is easier for campaigners to unite, form opposition/campaign groups and raise awareness whereas, in other parts of the country, particularly the West Midlands, there is more fragmented strategic planning (Bradley, 2019a, p. 694; see Chapter 9). Whilst there was strategic concern among professional campaigners, the general view among planners of *everyday* campaigners seemed that they largely took a localist perspective (deepened by the localism agenda) (Goode, 2019a):

> *'At the moment, it is more of a Duty to undermine and confiscate than to Cooperate…Every single one of the responses on our consultation, well most of them, will be on the Green Belt, and…use the phrase, 'We don't want our Green Belt to be plundered. I don't mind the next borough's Green Belt, fine for them, it doesn't matter, but our Green Belt will always remain untouchable'. Well, it is not our Green Belt really so it is not for us - our community. **It is to stop the urban sprawl and it is the Metropolitan Green Belt and so it is a regional issue.**'* (Local authority planner (South East))

Conclusions from what planners say about campaigners
This section has found that planners argue that most people are more concerned about principle and place factors rather than property prices thus resonating with the place attachment and culture geography literature (Devine-Wright, 2005; DeVerteuil, 2013). This suggests, in terms of public policy, that planners and policymakers need to pay greater attention to people's emotional attachment to place, alongside material factors, such as improving facilities, rather than *purely* focusing on economic self-interest (Inch *et al.*, 2020).

7.3.   Conceptualising Why Communities Oppose Development: What Campaigners Say About Their Motivations for Opposing Development

Introduction

There is sometimes a gap between what people say and believe in interviews meaning that

motivations are often difficult to establish, especially as campaigners can be a self-selecting group

(Lloyd, 2006, p. 10; Taylor, 2007). Consequently, quantitative datasets are explored to triangulate

and analyse a wider, potentially more objective sample, due to the anonymity of questionnaires

(Saunders *et al*, 2016).

Quantitative Data

The datasets directly relating to the Green Belt are analysed before exploring broader datasets on

people's attitudes to housebuilding.

Popular Attitudes Towards Green Belt

CPRE Green Belt Questionnaire 2015

Table 23 - Responses to the statement that the Green Belt should be retained and not built on:

	Agree
Gender	
Male	63%
Female	66%
% Difference	3%
Social Class	
AB	72%
DE	54%
% Difference	18%
Age	
25-34	57%
65+	73%
% Difference	16%
Property Type	
Owner-occupier	72%
Mortgage	65%
Socially rented	58%
Privately rented	57%
% Difference(Highest-lowest)	15%
Geographical Area	
South	72%
Midlands	61%
% Difference	11%
Qualification	
No Formal	57%

Degree	68%
% Difference	11%
Type of Area	
Semi-rural	83%
Urban	62%
Rural	72%
% Difference	21%
Total	64%

Source: Constructed with data from Ipsos MORI (2015, pp. 4–8).

Table 23 shows that the policy commands widespread popular support across different regions and social groups, albeit that it has less support in urban areas and among lower social classes and renters (see Appendix for the full dataset). However, these differences were not as significant as predicted by the house price hypothesis suggesting that the public support the Green Belt and countryside as a matter of principle (Harrison and Clifford, 2016; Mace, 2018), rather than *just* homeowners for direct amenity or economic reasons. However, there has been a significant temporal change in attitudes because, in the 2005 CPRE questionnaire (p. 1) which asked a similar question, 84% of people supported the Green Belt compared to 64% in 2015. It remains to be seen how far it commanded *particular* support among the inter-/post-war, baby-boomer generation with CPRE (2015) arguing that the housing crisis has caused the erosion in popular support. Nonetheless, the policy continues to command widespread public support.

However, despite being England's most well-known planning policy, it is also widely misunderstood with just 28% of respondents saying that they know a 'great deal' about it whilst 72% say that they know 'just a little/(have) never heard of /heard of but know nothing' about it (Table 24). This demonstrates the qualitative point made by planners about the public not understanding the policy and makes a strong case for more popular planning education.

There are even more significant differences among different ages and class groups with a 33% difference between those aged 65+ and 25-34 year olds claiming to know a great deal (41%-8%) and little about it (92%-59%) about it. This lack of knowledge among 25-34 year olds again highlights the

need for more planning education with knowledge of it greatest among the 'baby-boomers'[78].

Additionally, there was a large disparity (26%) among social class *suggesting that it is particularly*

well-known and well-supported among higher social groups, perhaps as preserving semi-rural

'residential exclusivity' (Short *et al*, 1987, p. 36), where these people are most likely to live (83% of

respondents in 'rural-urban' areas supported it compared to 62% in urban areas). Knowledge was

significantly higher (26%) among owner-occupiers than those privately renting and there was a

knowledge gap (17%) based on educational qualification and income (13%). Nonetheless, whilst

there is *a* class and economic dimension in support for, and knowledge of, the policy, it remains

widely supported but poorly understood among a *range* of social and economic groups.

Table 24 - How much do you know about the Green Belt?

	A great deal:	Just a little/never heard of/heard of but know nothing:
Gender		
Male	5%	23%
Female	6%	28%
% Difference	1%	5%
Social Class		
AB	42%	58%
DE	16%	84%
% Difference	26%	26%
Age		
25-34	41%	92%
65+	8%	59%
% Difference	33%	33%
Property Type		
Owner-occupier	39%	61%
Mortgage	35%	66%
Socially rented	21%	79%
Privately rented	13%	87%
% Difference (Highest-lowest)	26%	26%
Geographical Area		
South	68%	70%
Midlands	70%	68%
% Difference	2%	2%
Qualification		
GCSE Level	20%	80%
Degree	37%	63%
% Difference	17%	17%

[78] It would need to be tested in the future to see whether knowledge of the Green Belt 'naturally' increases with age or if it were more *pronounced* among the baby-boomers who had more public planning education.

Type of Area		
Semi-rural	27%	56%
Urban	44%	73%
Rural	33%	67%
% Difference	17%	17%
Income		
Above £25,000	8%	64%
Below £24,999	4%	77%
% Difference	4%	13%
Average % difference	28%	71%

Source: Constructed with data from Ipsos MORI (2015, pp. 1–3).

CPRE Green Belt Questionnaire 2005

The detailed breakdown of data is unavailable for the 2005 questionnaire although the amount of

people saying that they knew 'little to nothing' about Green Belt was almost identical at 72%. The

proportion of people *disagreeing* that it should be protected increased from 5% to 17% from 2005-

2015 suggesting that there is greater scepticism of the policy now.

Social Attitudes Survey - Understanding Society

This a longitudinal dataset although identical questions were not asked annually on the policy and

housing. Notwithstanding the critique of CPRE's questionnaire being partially self-selecting (Hope,

2015), the proportion of people agreeing with the statement '*Keep Green Belt, do not build there*',

76.2% (1997), 72.7% (1998) and 79.8% (1999), was similar to the 84% in CPRE's 2005 Questionnaire.

If these slight differences are down to surveying a different group of people each year, it *suggests* the

key trigger for decline in support for Green Belt is increasing awareness of the housing crisis since

2005 rather than a sampling bias.

ComRes (2018b) Questionnaire

This is a useful poll given that it was conducted recently and it appears that attitudes towards the

Green Belt have become more critical even since CPRE's 2015 Questionnaire (Table 25):

Table 25 - Green Belt should be loosened for least attractive land

	Agree	Disagree	Don't know	Difference Between Agree and Disagree
Total	32%	42%	26%	10%
Age				
18-24	30%	35%	35%	5%
65+	40%	45%	15%	5%
% Difference	10%	10%	20%	0%
Gender				
Male	35%	44%	21%	9%
Female	30%	40%	30%	10%
% Difference	5%	4%	9%	1%
Social Grade				
AB	36%	43%	22%	7%
DE	29%	39%	32%	10%
% Difference	7%	4%	10%	3%
General Region				
Midlands	32%	43%	25%	11%
North	32%	41%	25%	9%
South	31%	42%	27%	11%
% Difference	1%	2%	2%	2%
Specific Region				
South East	27%	49%	24%	22%
West Midlands	31%	42%	28%	11%
% Difference	4%	7%	4%	11%
Political Party				
Labour	46%	41%	29%	5%
Conservative	38%	46%	16%	8%
% Difference	8%	5%	13%	3%
Type of Area				
Urban	33%	41%	27%	8%
Rural	31%	47%	22%	16%
% Difference	2%	6%	5%	8%

Source: Constructed with data from the ComRes Questionnaire (2018, pp. 5, 12–15).

This deals with views in *principle* rather than a specific development in one's *local* area which, drawing on place attachment theory (Devine-Wright, 2005, 2009), often drives opposition and the questionnaire is people's views specifically on land which is *least attractive*. Nevertheless, given the support that it is popularly perceived to have, there was only a 10% difference overall between those agreeing (32%) and disagreeing (42%) with the statement. This does not fundamentally undermine the argument of it being widely supported as a *matter of principle* but suggests that a significant number of people are willing to see *particular parts of it, especially the least attractive land, released in particular circumstances*. There was also a significant proportion who 'do not know' (26%) but, compared to CPRE's questionnaire, the differences between social groups are not so significant.

Particularly surprising is that, although more of 65+ age group (45%) than the 18-24 group (35%)
disagree with the statement, the same margin (10%) agree with the statement (40% among 65+
compared to 30% among 18-24) suggesting that there is greater knowledge now of the housing crisis
across generations.

The next question focused on TOD in the Green Belt (Table 26):

Table 26 - Green Belt restrictions should be relaxed around train stations				
	Agree	Disagree	Don't know	Difference Between Agree and Disagree
Total	31%	41%	29%	10%
Age				
18-24	31%	33%	36%	2%
65+	37%	46%	17%	9%
% Difference	6%	13%	19%	7%
Gender				
Male	35%	27%	24%	8%
Female	27%	40%	33%	13%
% Difference	8%	13%	9%	5%
Social Grade				
AB	38%	38%	24%	0%
DE	25%	38%	25%	13%
% Difference	13%	0%	1%	13%
General Region				
Midlands	32%	39%	29%	7%
North	29%	42%	30%	13%
South	31%	42%	27%	11%
% Difference	3%	3%	3%	0%
Specific Region				
South East	27%	49%	24%	22%
West Midlands	31%	42%	28%	11%
% Difference	4%	7%	4%	3%
Political Party				
Labour	30%	45%	30%	15%
Conservative	35%	40%	20%	5%
% Difference	5%	5%	10%	0%
Type of Area				
Urban	30%	39%	30%	9%
Rural	32%	46%	22%	14%
% Difference	2%	7%	8%	5%

Source: Constructed with data from the ComRes Questionnaire (ComRes, 2018, pp. 5, 14-15).

There was only a 10% gap between agree (31%) and disagree (41%) again suggesting that a
significant proportion of people are willing to see *particular parts of the Green Belt released where
there is supporting infrastructure*. Similarly, there were not significant differences across social

groups although the amount of people agreeing in the AB category (38%) being significantly more than the DE category (25%) was surprising given the popular perception of the policy as supported by the wealthy (although both groups have a significant segment who 'do not know' 24% (AB) and (25% (DE)). The same point could be made regarding slightly more Conservative voters agreeing (35%) than Labour ones (30%) with the Conservative Party often associated with protecting the policy (Tait and Inch, 2016). Nonetheless, proportionately more Conservative voters (45%) disagreed with the statement compared to Labour ones (40%) whilst there was a significant proportion of 'do not knows' 30% (Labour) and 20% (Conservative). This suggests that, whilst there is still widespread support for the Green Belt, this support is *decreasing* due to the deepening housing crisis.

Other Questionnaires

Broadway Malyan

This questionnaire, carried out by YouGov (2015, p. 3), helpfully asked a 'principle' question on whether the public supported building in the Green Belt (Table 27):

Table 27 - To what extent would you support or oppose new housing being built on Green Belt land?

	Support	Oppose
Total	17%	67%
Age		
25-39	20%	61%
60+	15%	75%
% Difference	5%	14%
Gender		
Male	20%	63%
Female	14%	70%
% Difference	6%	7%
Social Grade		
ABC1	17%	70%
C2DE	17%	63%
% Difference	0%	7%
Specific Region		
South East	15%	71%
West Midlands	14%	72%
London	27%	55%
% Difference	13%	17%
Political Party		
Labour	21%	60%
Conservative	16%	74%
% Difference	5%	14%
From: YouGov (2015, p. 3)		

As this questionnaire was also conducted in 2015, there were similar results to CPRE's one with widespread public support for the policy, 67% opposition compared to 17% support, compared to brownfield development (83% support and 3% opposition). Levels of support are slightly higher (10%) in support of greenfield than Green belt development and *significantly* lower in opposition (19%). This suggests that the Green Belt as a *principle* commands more support than greenfield land despite both being largely about the loss of countryside. This questionnaire had a bigger sample (4510), compared to CPRE's (845), with some popular perceptions of social differences emerging more clearly. Most prominently, 14% more Conservative voters supported the Green Belt than Labour ones resonating with popular image of the Conservatives as the 'natural' supporters of the policy (Inch *et al.*, 2020). Social differences between classes are not pronounced (7%) but classes have been grouped together (ABC1 and C2DE are compared to AB and DE in other questionnaires). Generational differences stand out more with a 14% difference between opposition to Green Belt development among those 60+ and between 25-39. Information on property tenure was not gathered but, again, the trend is that the Green Belt's supporters *tend* to be older, Conservative voters, but that it still retains *widespread public support*[79]. The South East and West Midlands are almost identical in their support of it reflecting the South East having the highest levels of homeownership and development pressure alongside the WMGB's popularity.

Home Owners Alliance (HOA) (2015a, 2015b)
The HOA (2015, p. 11) commissioned a YouGov survey of homeowner attitudes (2184 adults) to various housing and planning policies before the 2015 Election permitting useful cross-comparison with the CPRE and Broadway Malyan Questionnaires (also conducted in 2015). Although the HOA (2015b) runs an annual Survey, questions on planning policies, including the Green Belt, were a one-

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[79] Support varies among superficially similar surveys so it difficult to exactly quantify and ecaudate motivations.

off so the data does not permit longitudinal analysis and the raw data is unavailable but it has been

helpfully segmented (see Table 28).

Table 28 - Support for building on Green Belt land with little environmental or amenity value and Garden Cities

	Green Belt			Garden Cities	
	Support	Oppose	Neither agree/ disagree	Support	Oppose
Total	27%	56%	13%	50%	
Aspiring Homeowners		37%		59%	
Regions					
London	39%			57%	
West Midlands	19%			42%	
Gender					
Male	32%			55%	
Female	22%			45%	

Source: from the HOA (2015a, pp. 14–17)

Again, as the question is specifically on *poor quality land* in the Green Belt rather than as a *principle*,

there is less opposition (56%) and more support (27%) for releasing land (compared to 67%

opposition and 17% support in the Broadway Malyan Questionnaire). Opposition falls to 37% among

prospective homeowners whilst support for Green Belt development is highest in London (39%),

probably due to its housing crisis. This further supports the conclusion that, whilst the policy

commands significant support in *principle*, in *practise* a significant proportion of people are willing to

see a *limited* release of land *under particular circumstances* to help address the housing crisis.

Surprisingly, the West Midlands was the region with the most opposition to Green Belt release, again

reflecting the way that the WMGB is popular as containing the 'industrial' conurbation (Goode,

2019a). Gender was not expected to be a significant factor, but this questionnaire shows a 10%

difference in support for the policy. Although most people had clear views on the policy, a minority

of people (13%) neither agreed/disagreed with the statement. Finally, support for garden cities and

new towns, 50% compared to 27%, is higher than releasing Green Belt land highlighting another

potential solution to the crisis (although questions remain as to the *location* of new towns) (HOA,

2015a, p. 6).

Green Belt release and building new homes remain unpopular compared to demand side policies with 80% supporting a policy of marketing homes to UK buyers first, 70% higher council tax on unoccupied homes and 65% extending Help to Buy. Nonetheless, 70% acknowledged that the availability of housing *is* an issue showing widespread societal concern about the crisis (HOA, 2015a, p. 6-8).

Federation of Master Builders (FMB) (2018)
This questionnaire of 2000 homeowners explored potential solutions to the crisis and, again, found societal preference for demand side and smaller-scale policies with 33% supporting co-living developments and 31% micro homes (Edgar, 2018; FMB, 2018, p. 1). It was similar to other 'principle' questions, like YouGov's (2015) one, with only 17% supporting Green Belt development. However, this survey was of homeowners and a choice of policy 'options' were given.

Hatton Parish Plan (2013)
This questionnaire of an affluent rural parish on the edge of Meriden Gap showed that 60% of respondents opposed development in the countryside whilst 70% argued that development in the Green Belt should be resisted (although 25% thought that the boundaries should be reviewed) (Hatton Parish Plan Steering Group, 2013, pp. 12–13). This shows the inseparability of popular support for the countryside and Green Belt although interestingly, *even in an affluent parish*, a significant minority take a pragmatic view of the policy.

Popular attitudes towards housing development
Popular attitudes on housebuilding more broadly are explored through the quantitative datasets to further triangulate and generalise the study.

Social Attitudes Survey - Understanding Society
Social Attitudes Surveys Since 1990s
This dataset is particularly useful given its longitudinal nature although questions on housing are not asked annually neither are the same questions asked (Table 29) - questions were asked in 1997-1999, 2010, 2013-2014 and 2016-2018 but not in the other years (Park *et al.*, 2012).

Table 29 - Questions in Social Attitudes Survey	1997	1998	1999
Where should Great Britain build new housing?	54.8% outskirts 31.1% in cities	49.5% outskirts 33.1% cities	Not asked
Would you like new housing in neighbourhood?	61.4% area built up enough	70.7% area built up enough	Not asked
A shortage of housing will be one of the most serious problems for Britain in 20 years?	64.5% agree	62.9% agree	64.5% agree
New housing in cities not countryside?	81.1%	77.4%	73.4%
Relax planning laws in countryside?	42.2%	40.4%	38.2%
Would you be concerned by a new housing development in your area?	80.9%	78.9%	80.9%

Constructed with data from the Social Attitudes Survey (1997, 1998, 1999) (Social and Community Planning Research, 2000; National Centre for Social Research, 2001b, 2001a).

Whilst this data is over 20 years old, it provides a fascinating historical snapshot of societal attitudes with a significant number of people recognising a potential housing crisis although there were high(er) levels of popular opposition to new housebuilding. There was still a prevailing preference towards suburban development being at the beginning of New Labour's Urban Renaissance (Holyoak, 2009).

Social Attitudes Surveys Since 2010

There has been a significant reduction in opposition to development, probably as public awareness and the political importance of housing has increased. Although opposition has levelled out recently (figure 29), this has been a significant change in attitudes in a short timeframe (Gallent, 2019a).

Figure 29 - Support and opposition to more homes being built in one's local area.
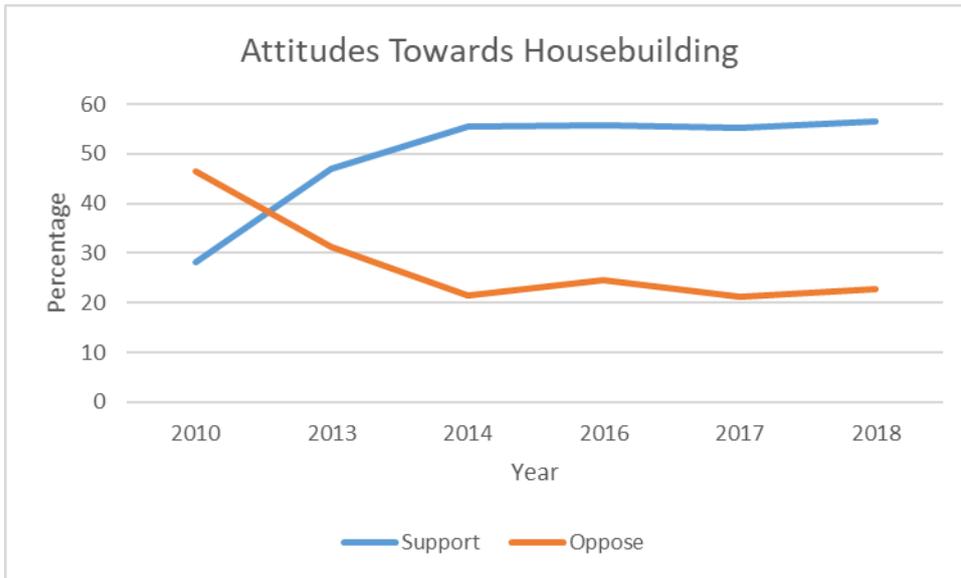
Source: Constructed with data from Figure 1.1, Ministry of Housing Dataset - Chapter 1: Figures and Annex Tables (2018)

The *likelihood* of opposing development has also reduced again reflecting greater societal concern about housing (figure 30):

Figure 30 - Likelihood of actively opposing new homes being built in one's local area
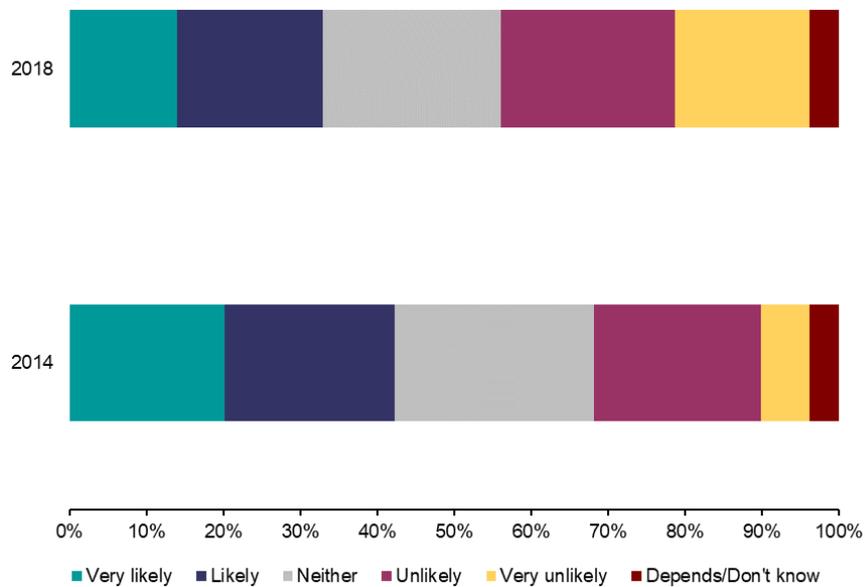
(Figure 1.3, Ministry of Housing Dataset- Chapter 1: Figures and Annex Tables (2018))

Social Attitudes Survey, 2018

The most recent statistics on attitudes towards housebuilding are very illuminating:

Profile of those opposing development

It shows the groups most likely to oppose development in principle and practice (figures 31 and 32):

Figure 31 - Groups with above baseline opposition to more homes being built in one's local area
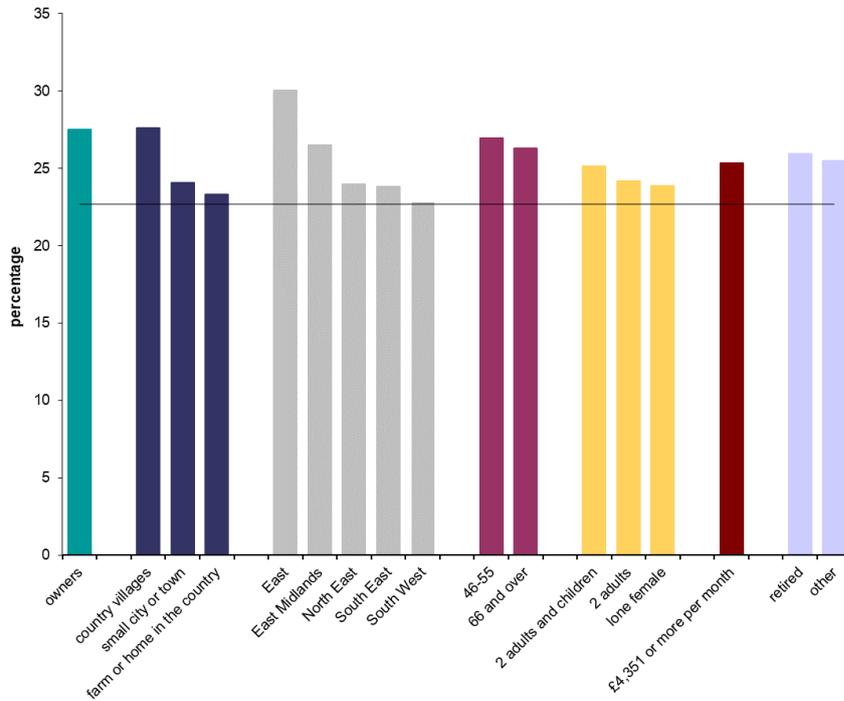
((Figure 1.3, Ministry of Housing Dataset- Chapter 1: Figures and Annex Tables (2018))

Figure 32 - Groups with above baseline likelihood of *actively* opposing the building of a housing development in the local area
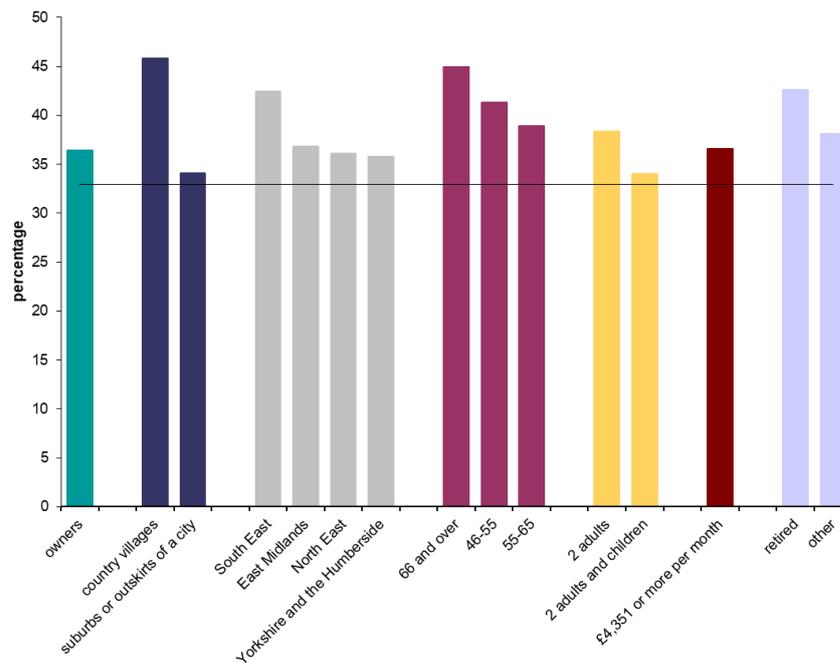
((Figure 1.7, Ministry of Housing Dataset- Chapter 1: Figures and Annex Tables (2018))

These results clearly show that those *most likely to oppose development generally* tend to be owner-occupiers, older, wealthy and live in rural/semi-rural areas. People aged 46-55 have the highest *likelihood* of opposing development maybe because they are likely to be completing mortgage payments. This general profile resonates with the literature on opposition to housebuilding (Sturzaker and Shucksmith, 2011; Wills, 2016). Nevertheless, opposition to housebuilding is clearly wider than *solely* Green Belt reasons although the data does not highlight the *group(s) specifically* campaigning on the policy.

Strategies for opposing development

There are a mixture of traditional and more modern oppositional techniques (figure 33; see Chapter 8). Signing a petition is the most popular, probably because it can be done online and is the easiest way for campaigners to garner support but it is often viewed sceptically by planners, especially when a questionnaire does not include the signees postcode[80]. Interestingly, attending a public meeting remained popular, despite being time-consuming, perhaps relating to the sociability, comradery and drama involved. Submitting a formal objection about development was more popular than writing to one's local councillor. Finally, given its potentially time-consuming nature, joining an action group was the least popular technique. There is a significant *gap* between *attitudes,* in terms of *wanting* to oppose development, and *actions,* so a relatively small group of people *are actively involved in campaigning*.

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[80] As explored in the interview with Policy Planner (1) (West Midlands Council).

Figure 33 - Actions likely to take and actions taken to actively oppose the building of a housing development in the local area
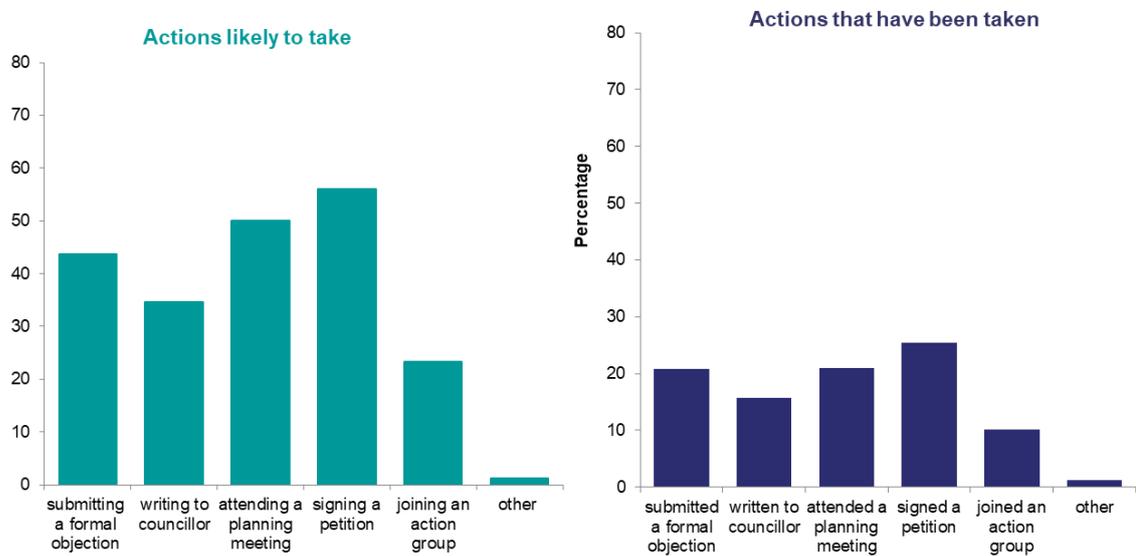
(Figure 1.8, Ministry of Housing Dataset- Chapter 1: Figures and Annex Tables (2018))

Motivations for Opposing Development and Improving the Public Acceptability of Housing
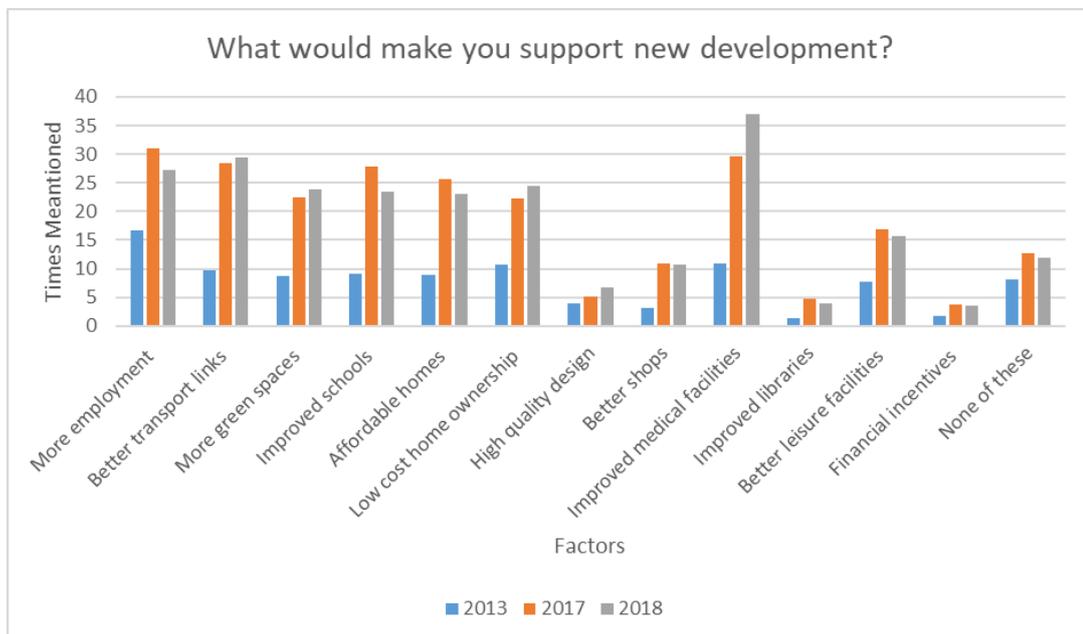
Figure 34 - Advantages to local residents to make them support homes being built in the local area (Annex Table 1:9, Ministry of Housing Dataset- Chapter 1: Figures and Annex Tables (2018)

Unfortunately, this dataset (figure 34) does not contain the *direct* motivations for people opposing

development although this can be partly derived from the factors people identify as lessening their

opposition[81]. Factors increasing in importance recently relate to infrastructure and facilities. Medical

facilities are now the most important factor by a significant margin, probably more so since

Coronavirus (see: Greenwood and Whittaker, 2020), although better transport links, schools and

greenspace all feature as important. Employment opportunities also appear and affordable housing

has been increasing in importance reflecting greater societal concern about housing. A number of

respondents (12% in 2018), said that none of the above factors would make them more likely to

support development suggesting that there is a (minority) of people who oppose development in

every circumstance thus resonating with the 'normatives' described by Mace (2018, p. 1).

Indeed, financial incentives are not a significant factor as demonstrated in the Government dropping

the proposal of direct financial incentives to homeowners to reduce opposition to local development

(due to the lack of popular support) (Dunning *et al.*, 2014; Inch *et al.*, 2020)[82]. Conversely, the

expense of newly built housing *was* a big concern (with CPRE (2018) frequently highlighting the cost

of new housing built in the Green Belt) (see figure 35)[83]. This could be conceptualised as a cynical

attempt by campaigners to discredit new housebuilding as too expensive to serve their underlying

objective of preventing development but, with this large dataset, it encompasses a larger group than

just campaigners so is reflective of wider societal concerns[84] (Amati, 2007). Moreover, it perhaps

suggests that most people tacitly accept new housebuilding does *not* lower house prices but still

recognise the need for new housebuilding. Nonetheless, there are higher levels of support for

affordable housing - in the 2016 Survey, 72% said that they would support more housebuilding

locally *if it was affordable* whilst 53% mentioned social/housing association housing as the most

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[81] An imperfect proxy for this study as not including factors like attachment to the countryside or Green Belt.
[82] When asked whether financial incentives would make one more supportive of development, 66% said there would be no change and 16.9% said that they would be *more likely to oppose* (Figure 1.4, Chapter 1: Attitudes towards building new homes; MHCLG (2019, p. 16)).
[83] 55% of respondents said that new housing built is *more expensive than existing house prices with only 14% saying that they were cheaper* (MHCLG, 2019c, p. 40).
[84] The benefits of development, wider than the impact on house prices, will be returned to in the qualitative data but clearly affordability is a big issue among campaigners (Bramley and Watkins, 2016; Bradley, 2019a). Nonetheless, housebuilders/planners interviewed often said that their aim was not to *lower* local house prices.

needed tenure locally compared to 11% referring to rent from private landlords (NatCen Social

Research, 2017). This reflects the broader softening in societal attitudes towards social housing with

71.6% of people saying that they support financial assistance to people on low incomes renting

(NatCen Social Research, 2017b; Dickson and Armfield, 2018; Ministry of Housing, 2019). Overall,

these results show that opposition to housebuilding is not *solely* about material, economic concerns,

as the house price hypothesis presumes, but includes a mixture of place attachment and principled

concerns (Anton and Lawrence, 2014; Inch *et al.*, 2020).
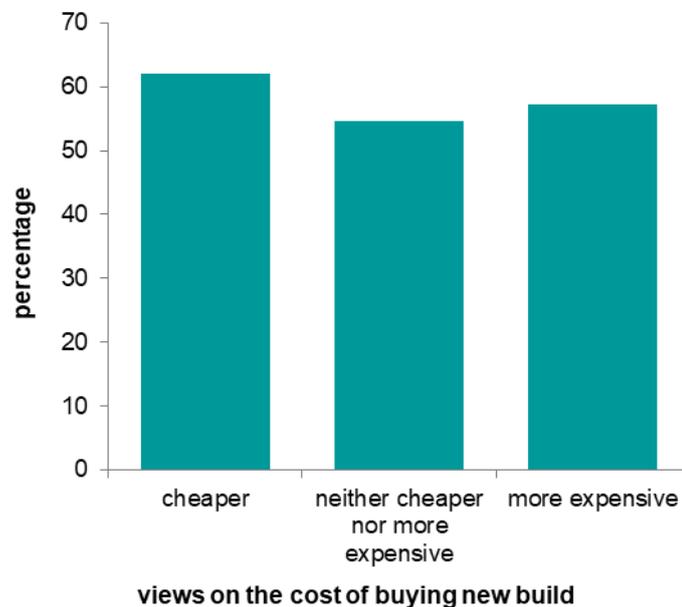
Figure 35 - Support for more homes being built in the local area, by cost of buying new build homes (Figure 2.16, Ministry of Housing Dataset- Chapter 2: Figures and Annex Tables (2018))

Other Aspects of Housing and the Housing Crisis

The overwhelming *cultural preference* towards homeownership can be seen quantitatively in figure

36 and has marginally increased in recent years with the deepening housing crisis and problems

associated with private renting (Christophers, 2018, 2019).
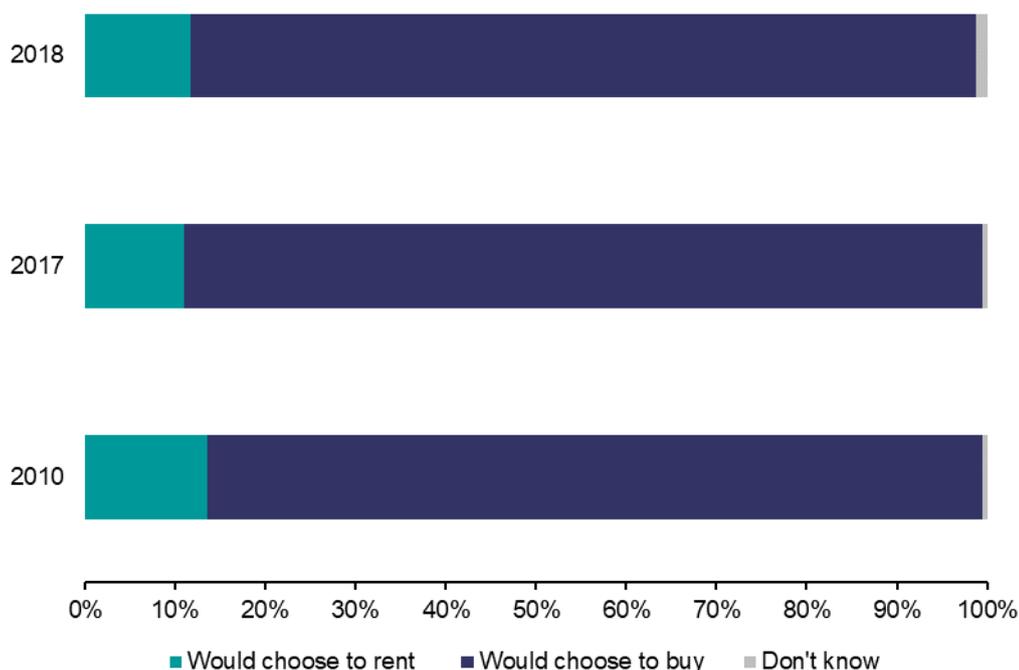
Figure 36 - Preferences for renting or buying, 2010, 2017 and 2018 (Figure 3.1, Ministry of Housing Dataset - Chapter 3: Figures and Annex Tables (2018))

In 2013, most people agreed that there was a shortage of new homes *nationally* (81.7%) and in their *locality* (70.9%) with 83.4% agreeing that it was easier to buy a house 20 years ago[85]. Again, there is more public support for *demand side policies* with 36% of people mentioning financial assistance to first-time buyers, such as Help to Buy, compared to 3.6% who mentioned making it easier for housebuilders to get planning permission. The central challenge for planners is still that, whilst people now agree that there is a crisis *in principle*, specific, local housing developments are often very unpopular whilst the Green Belt *largely* retains its popularity (Hoghton, 2019; Lane, 2019). Additionally, 56.3% agreed with the statement that 'housing will remain unaffordable in my area, even if there is new housebuilding' showing widespread public scepticism about new housebuilding so affordability needs to be a key factor in addressing the crisis.

Malyan Broadway/YouGov Questionnaire (2015)
This questionnaire asked some helpful questions (Table 30).

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[85] Statistics in this section all come from the Social Attitudes Survey 2013 (ScotCen Social Research., 2015).

Table 30 - Malyan Broadway Questionnaire Results		
How easy or difficult is it for the following groups to buy and rent in your local area?		
	Easy	Difficult
Local People	21%	51%
First time buyers	11%	68%
Should the number of homes built increase or decrease in your local area?		
	Increase	Decrease
	67%	8%
Data from YouGov (2015, p. 2)		

This shows the extent of public concern about housing, especially for first-time buyers, and there is recognition of more homes needing to be built locally (67% acceptance). Whilst this shows the contradictory nature of polling data on popular attitudes towards housebuilding, it again calls into question the primacy of the house price hypothesis.

The ComRes and YouGov Polls (2018)

YouGov Questionnaire - Table 31

	Support	Oppose	Difference in Support Between National/Local
National Level			
To what extent would you support the Government attempting to…			
Build a large number of new homes	60%	30%	17%
Build a moderate number of new homes	68%	21%	12%
Build a small number of new homes	41%	46%	-11%
Stop any new homes from being built	9%	79%	-6%
Local Area			
To what extent would you support the Government attempting to…			
Build a large number of new homes	43%	44%	
Build a moderate number of new homes	56%	32%	
Build a small number of new homes	52%	35%	
Stop any new homes from being built	15%	71%	
National Level			
To what extent would you support the Government attempting to…			
Bring house prices down a lot	52%	33%	3%
Bring house prices down a moderate amount	59%	25%	7%
Bring house prices down a little	52%	32%	3%
Keep house prices about the same	31%	51%	-5%
Push house prices up a little	13%	70%	-4%
Push house prices up a moderate amount	10%	74%	-1%
Push house prices up a lot	6%	79%	-2%
Local Level			
To what extent would you support the Government attempting to…			
Bring house prices down a lot	49%	36%	
Bring house prices down a moderate amount	52%	31%	
Bring house prices down a little	49%	34%	
Keep house prices about the same	36%	45%	
Push house prices up a little	17%	66%	

Push house prices up a moderate amount	11%	71%	
Push house prices up a lot	8%	75%	
National Level			
Which option would you prefer?			
More houses are built and house prices go down	63%		8%
House prices remain the same and no houses are built	18%		-10%
Local Level			
Which option would you prefer?			
More houses are built and house prices go down	55%		
House prices remain the same and no houses are built	28%		
Data from: YouGov (2018, pp. 1–6)			

Again, this reveals extensive societal concern about housing and a desire to build *moderate* levels of new housing (68% nationally/59% locally) and bring house prices down *moderately* (59% nationally/52% locally) (Table 31; figure 37/38). Once more, this calls into question the *primacy* of the house price hypothesis (Inch *et al.*, 2020). Nonetheless, there are significantly less levels of support for *large-scale* housebuilding nationally than locally, a 17% differential, and less for bringing house prices down moderately (a 7% differential). To some extent there are 'NIMBY' attitudes, or an acknowledgement of the need for *more* housebuilding nationally but not so much locally (DeVerteuil, 2013) but the majority of people in this questionnaire, nationally *and* locally, *do* support a moderate level of housebuilding *and* a moderate reduction in house prices.

Figure 37 – Support for bringing house prices down (local). Source: from YouGov (Smith, 2018, p. 1)
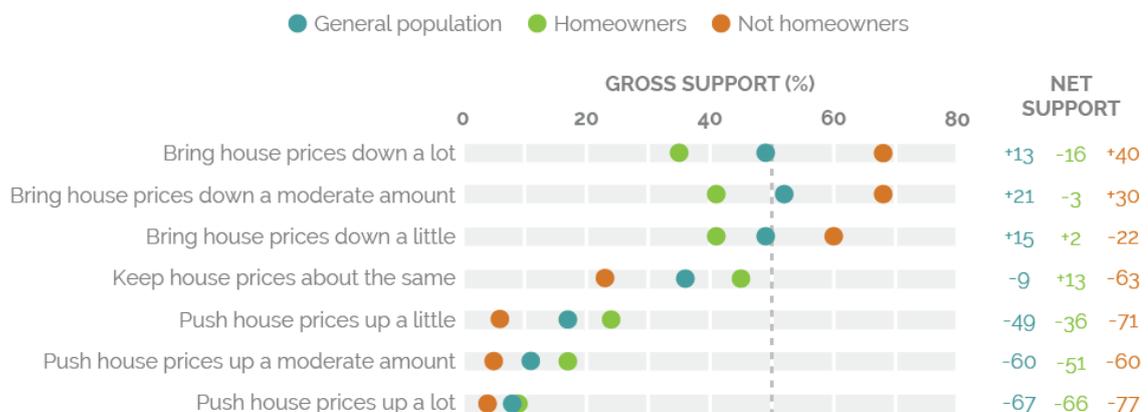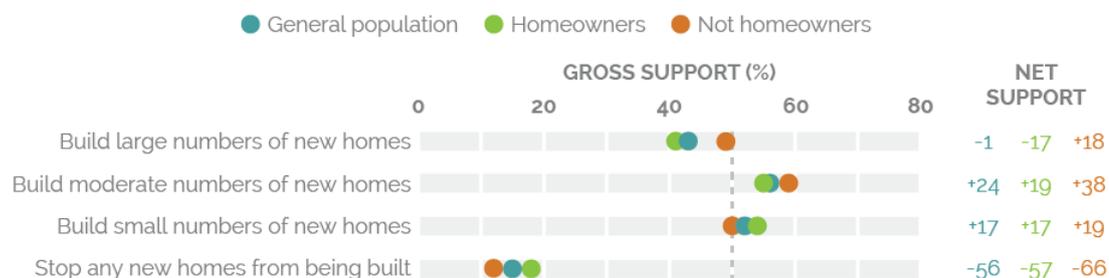
Figure 38 - Support for more homes being built in one's local area Source: from YouGov (Smith, 2018, p. 2)

The ComRes Poll (2018) - Table 32

Table 32 - ComRes Poll (2018)	Agree	Disagree	Don't Know
I would support more homes being built in local area	48%	33%	19%
While most of the land around England's towns and cities should be protected, some should be used for development	47%	32%	21%
Protecting the countryside around England's large towns and cities prevents affordable housing from being built	31%	45%	23%
Property prices in my area have become too high	63%	19%	19%
I would be more likely to support development if there were more community benefits	63%	16%	21%
I would be more likely to support development if the quality of old buildings matched the new	59%	18%	24%
I would advise a newly married couple to buy a house rather than rent	61%	15%	24%
Average			22%
Information from: ComRes (2018, pp. 5, 22–23)			

The ComRes poll had a large sample (2036) and showed widespread societal concern about housing

with 63% compared to 19% acknowledging that house prices are too high locally and 61% compared

to 15% recommending that a newly married couple buying a house over renting (Table 32). Whilst

there are still significant levels of opposition, there is overall support for new housebuilding in *local*

areas (48%) and for some land to be used around towns and cities (47%) for development showing

that most people support housebuilding *in certain circumstances.* There is a minority, again

resonating with Mace's (2018, p. 15) characterisation of 'normatives', who oppose development in

most circumstances. Even when asked *specifically* about affordable housing, more people (45%

compared to 31%) *disagreed* that protecting the countryside prevented affordable housing from

being built showing widespread popular support for the countryside. A majority (61%) agreed that

higher quality housing would lessen their opposition which, although higher than the other

questionnaires, can maybe be explained by the fact that this questionnaire asked *specifically* about

design rather than as a list of options. 63% agreed that more community benefits would make them

more likely to support development, showing their importance, although the questionnaire did not

ask specifically about *what* these benefits would be. Finally, the lack of public knowledge about

planning is obviously wider than the Green Belt with 22% answering on average 'don't know' in

response to statements highlighting the need for greater public planning education.

Churchill Home Insurance (CHI) Poll (2019)

A questionnaire exploring motivations and NIMBYism was conducted by Opinium (commissioned by

CHI) (all data from: Morris, 2019, p. 1). Its usefulness is limited as the raw data is not publicly

available so it cannot be analysed according to social groups etc. and it examines domestic planning

applications, such as home extensions, alongside larger housing developments. Nevertheless, there

are some fascinating findings including that there were 1.9 million objections between 2017-2019[86].

The second joint highest reason for objection was loss of view (50%), the third the impact of

development on property prices (43%) and fourth was the impact of construction works (39%).

Whilst this clearly incorporates those who are *directly* affected by development, it shows that

emotional attachment to place, loss of view, is an important motivation (Anton and Lawrence, 2014).

An article in *Property Investor Today* (Lane, 2019, p. 2) argued that the poll showed that NIMBYism

was 'on the rise' again although 54% of respondents reported feeling powerless with councils not

listening to them.

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[86] Or 2.2 objections per application, 893 objections daily and 37 objections hourly (Morris, 2019, p. 1).

Conclusions on Quantitative Data on the Green Belt and the Housing Crisis

Although *campaigns* against development generally are dominated by wealthy, older people with high levels of social capital, there is insufficient *quantitative* data to firmly demonstrate that these campaigns *materially affect planning outcomes* and that the planning system *itself* leads to *significant* power imbalances (see Chapter 8) (Inch *et al.*, 2020). The neo-Marxian framework has limited utility nationally as this chapter's findings have problematised the house price hypothesis whilst only a *minority* of homeowners are actively involved in campaigns (Matthews *et al*, 2015)**.** The Green Belt appears to command widespread public support for emotional, reasons of principle, as popularly perceived as protecting England's 'green and pleasant' land, alongside place attachment (Mace, 2018). However, as the *status quo*, support for it is arguably more muted than if it was popularly perceived to be 'under attack' with, say, the Government proposing its abolition (Amati and Taylor, 2010, p. 143). Nevertheless, the data suggests that there are *certain* circumstances in which people support Green Belt release for housing thereby suggesting policy possibilities of improving the public acceptability of new housebuilding. Overall, these findings confirm Cherry's (1982, pp. 116–117) critique of Marxian theory: 'The reality is much more muddied…the enforced superimposition of the simple on the complex is just not convincing.'

Qualitative Data

Exploring the data on what campaigners say about themselves is important to understand how and why specific, regional Green Belt campaigns can often be so passionate although this section is largely on the views of *professional* campaigners[87]. As with planners, campaigners and politicians may have vested interests, i.e. protecting their local area, ensuring political support etc, and often represent a particular demographic but they still play a vital role in planning[88]. To try to capture the

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[87] Getting a representative sample of everyday campaigners is challenging as campaigns are often a temporary response to local Green Belt 'threats' whereas professional campaigners are the easiest to interview.
[88] 7/8 of campaigners interviewed were aged over 60. Arguments about the representativeness of councillors are beyond this project's scope but for critical discussion see: Landmark Chambers (2020).

views of everyday campaigners, 3 active groups were engaged with (Save Stourbridge Green Belt

(SSGB), South Solihull Community Group (SSCG) and Project Fields (PF) (see Chapter 5; figure 39)).
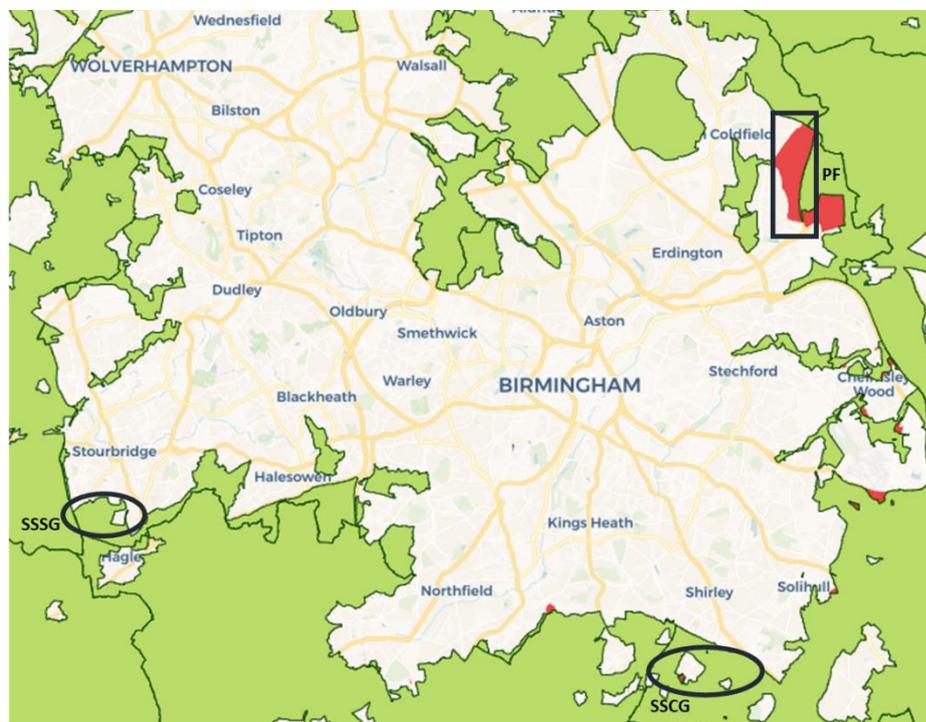
Figure 39 - Approximate locations in which the campaign groups are operating (adapted from: https://bit.ly/3pQUZdv).

Matters of Principle, Place and Property

A key feature of professional campaigners was their desire to demonstrate that they were not

'NIMBYs', recognised the housing crisis and understood how planning and the Green Belt 'worked',

like the distinction between greenfield and Green Belt (all 7 had planning backgrounds). Although

property values were mentioned as *a* factor in opposition to development, campaigners stressed

other factors, particularly 'legitimate' planning reasons, especially concerns about infrastructure and

the Green Belt's strategic purpose. The views of professional campaigners can also be grouped into

three broad themes: 'principle', 'place' and 'property' arguments. Similar points were made by

everyday campaigners although, unsurprisingly, they described their concerns in more direct,

everyday language but the substance of their views was similar to 'professional' campaigners.

Politicians tended to use more sophisticated language than everyday campaigners although, again,

focused on more emotional arguments (see Chapter 8).

Matters of Principle: Support for the Green Belt and Countryside

Firstly, campaigners underlined the importance of general, popular planning principles as, in many ways, a popular battle rages over hearts and minds as to which group, campaigners or developers, represent the public interest (see Chapter 8; Bradley, 2019a). Although it was difficult disentangling whether support for the Green Belt arose from support for *the policy* or broader countryside, generally professional campaigners supported the principle whilst everyday campaigners largely wanted to prevent development in the countryside with the Green Belt employed as a oppositional strategy or 'tool'. For example, regarding the Green Belt:

> '*Most importantly, I think people do hold the ideology of the Green Belt in high esteem. I certainly do*' (Planner (2), CPRE West Midlands).

> '*I have never seen policies as successful as the Green Belt for a small country so I very strongly support Green Belt. **I think the name is an awkward one because people say - 'Well, you know, it's Green Belt, it's about greenfields (and it's about prevention of coalescence, preventing sprawl and the openness of the countryside). But the Green Belt policy is primarily a good one…**the West Midlands is a very diverse region…you need a firm commitment to protect the Green Belt and ensure that, **before you allow greenfields and Green Belt to go, you have tackled as many brownfields as you can**.*' (Local councillor, Solihull (individual views)).

Then, in relation to the principle of protecting the countryside:

> '*The balance between things will differ from area to area[89]…Green Belt provides what most people see as a high degree of certainty that an area that is currently open and free from development will remain so. **I don't think there are very many people, laypeople say, who understand the nuances of exceptional circumstances and very special circumstances...All that is just to them a detail of Government policy that they needn't concern themselves with. They are interested in the Green Belt at a much more basic level and 'Is that greenfield over there going to stay a greenfield?'** I like the view and chance to walk across that footpath over the area because it is a beautiful area and I see lambs and cattle and all the rest of it and those are the things that matter to people.*' (Planner (1), CPRE West Midlands).

Often support for the Green Belt and countryside was interwoven as became apparent in the SSGB responses:

> '*Green Belt is countryside - the two are not exclusive.*'

> '*There is so much opposition to development of Green Belt around Stourbridge and England in general because people realise it is valuable resource that could be very easily lost forever. **I do in**

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[89] The extent to which people either support the principle of the Green Belt or the countryside.

principle object to development in open countryside but I am particularly concerned that the Green Belt is preserved to prevent urban sprawl and to protect the integrity of existing towns'

'*Whether the land proposed for development is Green Belt or open countryside **is largely immaterial from the point of view of the effects of development**. Green Belt status until now has given a measure of protection to our countryside but, as we are now seeing, Government policies are rendering this protection virtually meaningless.*'

The importance of the countryside in the WMGB is poignant as resonating with the quantitative data

and the historic antipathy of the shires towards encroachment by the 'industrial' conurbation

(Goode, 2019a).

Place: Protecting One's Local Area

The concrete effects of development upon one's local area, especially infrastructure and services,

featured prominently alongside the interconnected, more abstract fear of change, especially about

an area's 'character' changing. Again, this featured strongly in SSGB's responses:

'*a) More pressure on local infrastructure, which is already under huge pressure in most areas.
b) Traffic increased on local roads, journey times taking longer, increased pollution from higher traffic volumes and pollution levels.
c) Local leisure facilities more difficult to access because of the pressure of local population increases.*'

'*There is a lack of vision in the building on greenspaces, take the scheme outside Hagley. No thought was given to the infrastructure, so there is now congestion, pressure on schools, doctors, local shops and (the) hospital. Profit comes first with little attention being paid to the afterwards.*'

Congestion and infrastructure were also highlighted by the PF Campaigner:

'*Everyone drives around Walmley…* (the development will have a) *very negative impact on Sutton (traffic-wise).*'

These points were raised more generally by professional campaigners and politicians:

'*Lack of facilities…putting in the infrastructure first, then…the houses will be coming, would be better*' (Local politician, Staffordshire).

'*The roads in Green Belt locations - rural locations - are often not fit for purpose for the volume of traffic associated with putting a new settlement into the countryside because, inevitably, the family will require a car, especially if the public transport service is inadequate for meeting their needs to get to school and work. Quite often a couple will have two cars so you suddenly find there are a lot more cars on what is really a single-track road. Dickens Heath is a case in point…the roads around it are the same width as were originally intended for a settlement of a third that*

size…so that shows how very quickly you get unsustainable development.' (Former West Midlands Conservative MP)

The more subtle concerns about the effects of development upon an area's (often) exclusive, semi-rural 'character' were not so clearly voiced but could be detected, especially in the West Midlands:

'*If you have new housing…**you will fundamentally change the character of this area and it topples over. So, you no longer have got an attractive area to attract investment…actually, you need, what I call some 'Rolls Royce areas'**…The premium sites should be premium sites. They should only be able to provide what you cannot provide elsewhere and make this area special to be able to attract that sort of investment. And the great danger is that it will become an 'anywhere place'. So, sensible planning would try to manage this to make sure it is more sustainable.* [Housing] *is proposed on a very large scale in Knowle…if you look at the car parking and road situation it is difficult now already…it's dangerous etc. and you are changing the character of the place, quite fundamentally…you are extending urban development into the rural area, rural scene…it will be very damaging*' (Retired Strategic Planner, West Midlands).

These quotes suggest that campaigners opposition is strongly shaped by the local environment and environmental psychology with high levels of place attachment (Cowell *et al*, 2011; Bailey *et al*, 2016).

The Property Argument

In many ways, an area's semi-rural character is bound up with property prices (Rydin, 1985) but, as with private sector planners, campaigners did not locate property prices as the *primary* factor in campaigner and wider popular support of the Green Belt:

'*A lot of urban people are concerned about the loss of Green Belt...the people who object to housing nearby to them usually feel they are protecting their own countryside. Some of it maybe the house prices but I get the impression, quite often, that they have moved there…and their main concern is loss of their countryside, amenities and values*' (Policy and Campaign Advisor, West Midlands).

Notwithstanding the challenges of establishing motivations for opposing development, the evidence *suggests* that property prices are not the *primary* motivation and that popular planning principles and place attachment appear more important resonating with the cultural geography and place attachment literature more than the neo-Marxian theory (Devine-Wright, 2005, 2009; Davison *et al*, 2017).

Localist or Strategic Views of the Green Belt?

This quote demonstrates the strategic concerns of professional campaigners' (see also Chapter 9):

> '*A strategic approach…I can only speak from this region - we would do very well with that. The trouble now is we don't have that management…in terms of governance. Is there sufficient cooperation in strategic planning which enables authorities to manage and allocate the* [BDP] *shortfall? Well, no…it has engaged in fudging and fixing. In the past…the counties* [were] *doing Structure Plans and all getting together with the Government Office and either the county or city authorities. We have now got…a situation where one authority leads in saying to another - Will you take 2,000 houses? It is a sort of political fix. There was an element of that, probably 40/50 years ago, but it has now become really pretty obvious that it has not been done by strategic planning. So, I don't think there is regional cooperation or strategic planning to allow these allocations to take place and we are getting bad forms of decision-making.*' (Planner (2), CPRE West Midlands).

However, more local, parochial concern and ownership of the policy became apparent among

everyday campaigners posing challenges regarding the rebuilding of strategic planning. Again, the

antipathy of semi-rural areas in the WMGB to the 'industrial' conurbation emerged strongly:

> '(Langley) *is being forced on Sutton by the* **Labour Council**!...*The truth is this is completely political - the Conservatives would never dream of doing this! They have far too many votes in Sutton!...Langley is a leafy, nice part of Birmingham…near the countryside*.' (Campaigner, PF)

Nonetheless, the Conservative politician from Sutton Coalfield had become more favourable towards

strategic planning when interviewed in 2020 than in 2016 and he envisaged a 'Black Country Garden

Village' accommodating 40,000 homes. The PF campaigner argued that the scale of the West

Midlands' housing need meant that planners needed to 'start again' through reviving the 'new

towns' policy with settlements far enough away from Birmingham to be self-sufficient such as

Tamworth (Walker, 2016). Whilst these could be conceptualised as NIMBY strategies to legitimatise

opposition to Green Belt release and move housing 'need' elsewhere, they show that strategic

consideration is sometimes given by campaigners and politicians. Nevertheless, antipathy towards

strategic planning in the West Midlands became apparent amongst everyday campaigners as these

SSGB campaigner quotes make clear:

> '*Keep planning under local control. Otherwise, I think we would be pressurised to develop by larger authorities who want access to our areas of Green Belt and countryside*'.

'A regional approach to meeting housing needs would be unfair…Councils and residents with Green Belt land would be penalised by having to meet the targets of those boroughs that had not met their brownfield sites targets as well as their own'.

'It would allow the larger areas to dominate the smaller. In this case, Birmingham could very quickly envelope the whole area. The Black Country would lose its distinctive character and an amorphous urban sprawl would result. The Green Belt would also be in greater danger as Birmingham would have less interest in preserving it'.

Further research is required to explore how far strategic views of the Green Belt are held by everyday campaigners in different regions and campaign groups and whether opposition to Green Belt development varies significantly in character to greenfield development. However, there is a divergence in this data between everyday and professional campaigners in the West Midlands. Chapter 9 establishes certain safeguards for strategic planning regarding the Green Belt to build public confidence.

7.4.   Interactions Between Planners and Campaigners

As outlined in Chapter 4, tension between planners and campaigners is partly inevitable given that they have different, often competing interests and priorities, whilst planning is inherently conflictual and confrontational as intimately bound up with place, especially people's lived experiences (Kiernan, 1983). However, the *depth* of mutual distrust between campaigners and planners was troubling because an effective and well-functioning planning system ultimately relies upon public confidence that planners act with professional integrity (Raynsford Review, 2018b; Parker and Street, 2019; Goode, 2020g). Whilst this may be an idealised 'compact' or 'contract' between planners and the public (Raynsford Review, 2018b, p. 117), how planning is popularly *perceived* is very important (Goode, 2020c). In terms of broader issues explaining the public's lack of trust in planners, which are beyond this study's scope, a common theme emerged among planners of the wider distrust of 'experts' and planning is often targeted for things that it is not directly responsible for, i.e. school and GP places or traffic congestion. This has been exacerbated by the localism agenda and two tier system of local government (see Chapters 6/9). As LPA Director (West Midlands) reflected:

'***The planning system is an easy target but it is a mechanism for decision-making***…*this is **where we need to be more joined up**…*[it] *needs to link in more carefully with the healthcare planning system…there is a necessity for us to be far more strategic in our approach and bring these bodies and mechanisms closer together so that **you don't have a situation where you are seeing housing growth but you are not seeing the commensurate service facilities. That is where planning gets criticised - we are very good at planning for housing and jobs but not very good at planning and delivering the essential service and infrastructure that are needed to support the community***'.

This returns to the lack of control that people feel they have over their lives and local places with planning often blamed by people in their fear of change. Of many quotes, the planner from the TCPA probably spoke most passionately:

'*House prices are just a thing. It is a metaphor for how they manifest their actual concern…people are generally really, really p****d off that people are making vast profits out of housing and building crap design and the quality of design is appalling… So there is an issue about people's needs and people are then, we could keep going on this, really p****d off that the transport, social and medical infrastructure is not there to support that development…*[people of] *the deregulation kind of don't understand that all of these concerns are actually legitimate…where we ended with Raynsford*[90] *is a fundamental breach of trust. The 'social contract' in planning that existed…*[during] *the post-war era was one where people had a voice in planning and where they elected people in planning who they thought had a voice in planning…*[Now] *I don't think they trust planning or planners. They certainly think it is a development-led approach. So, what are you going to do without core trust? It is a very difficult process...we went so far in Raynsford to talk about community rights because, what we were trying to do was to say to those in the development sector and the planning profession who don't listen to this because it is inconvenient - 'you are going to have to work very hard to bring trust back into the system'.*

Planners also highlighted how the frequency of ideological 'attacks' on planning alongside austerity, deregulation and the stripping away of its responsibilities to an (essentially) regulatory service, has reduced its effectiveness in delivering successful place-making and its ability to bring together different bodies to coordinate things, such as the infrastructure and healthcare needed alongside development (Adams and Watkins, 2014; Kenny, 2019a, 2019c).

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[90] A comprehensive Review of the planning system undertaken by the TCPA (Raynsford Review, 2018a, 2018b).

7.5. Rebuilding Trust in Planning: Education, Engagement and A National/Strategic Green Belt 'Conservation'

This section develops recommendations articulated by planners regarding community education and engagement in planning which sit alongside recommendations in Chapter 6 regarding more effective funding of local services and in Chapter 9 about the need for strategic planning. Based upon the data, there is a strong case for increasing public planning education before engagement, especially on the Green Belt as the most well-known but also misunderstood planning policy. Additionally, consultation needs to include a wider range of people. These two ideas are woven together in the recommendation of a national Green Belt debate.

Engaging a Wider Range of People and Planning Education
This quote by Private Sector Planning Director (South East) (2) highlights the importance of engaging a diverse population:

> '*One positive thing that local authorities could do is change the way they engage with local communities…my colleagues in Scotland…rather than just reacting when they are promoting development, go out in a more positive way.* **So, for example, they will go to schools and, something anecdotally, the response from schoolchildren who know they will need somewhere to live, play and work, is very different from the stereotypical angry pensioner who is actually quite fine, 'Thank you very much, just leave me alone'**! *And so, typically, at consultation events, probably 90% of the people who turn up are retired people and, one of the rather depressing things is that, generally, relatively few younger people come along to those events, even though they are advertised quite widely.* **And so, inevitably, the responses you get reflect the people who have turned up…local authorities need to be a bit more proactive and, rather than just waiting for the angry brigade to turn up, actually need to go out and start speaking to the other groups in society who aren't retired.'** (Private Sector Planning Director (South East) (2))

Although their potential use is not yet fully clear, technology presents innovative opportunities to engage populations, including VR, AI and apps as set out in the White Paper (Harris, 2017, 2019; Wilson *et al*, 2019; Manuel and Vigar, 2020; MHCLG, 2020a). Perhaps one of the main reasons why the baby-boomer generation support the Green Belt the most is because there used to be more planning education as this planner from the TCPA highlighted:

'Because there is a breach of trust, there is also no point of dialogue plus people used to understand planning better. I suppose there were much wider conversations about it 30-50 years ago. More films, bits of civil society debate, education. You won't find any planning in the curriculum. **So why shouldn't somebody who has grown up with the Green Belt feel outraged? How would we expect them to understand what on earth is going on?...consultation is appalling in this country. It is just dreadful**[91]*'.*

To increase public planning education, a basic but consistent level of education, covering the Green Belt, is required in the national curriculum, perhaps in Geography or Citizenship, alongside an A-Level in planning to ensure that younger people can effectively engage with the system (Close, 2018, 2020; Kraftl *et al*, 2018). As a pedagogy, it would be a great way to engage children and young people as learning about a relevant and current process shaping their local community (Derr and Tarantini, 2016; Olesen, 2018). Educating the generations between the baby boomers and children would be challenging but a public education programme, similar to that after WWII, but incorporating the latest technology could be incorporated into a national Green Belt 'debate/conversation', in turn as part of a national plan or Royal Commission on land use.

Other planners argued that local/national politicians should have training in planning as a minimum.

'Education is a key one because a lot of people may perceive any greenfield land as Green Belt and would be immediately objecting - 'You can't go there, it's Green Belt!' It's like - 'Fair enough, good point but, actually, you have got a problem [a housing shortfall] *and this piece of Green Belt isn't serving the five purposes.'…If people understood that, why we have got a Green Belt or what it does, there might be a better understanding of why or why it doesn't or can't be released. So, yes, I think education would be beneficial, even if it's not educating everybody but, really, it's educating councillors in their dealings and, who may understand planning to some extent, but maybe their role is more business or education etc.'* (Private Sector Young Planner (West Midlands) (2)).

However, Retired Private Sector Planner (2) argued that mass participation would be very difficult to achieve, unrealistic and unreasonable:

'If you are a single parent, working 8-9 hours a day, trying to look after your family to keep a roof over your head…are you seriously going to be interested in spatial planning and how things are done? **The answer is going to be no - it's ridiculous! You wouldn't even consider that. Real, true**

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[91] In 2018, the researcher visited the International Garden Cities Exhibition (Letchworth) and saw several public information videos on planning and new towns thus confirming the point about the 'baby boomer' generation.

mass participation is incredibly difficult. I am sorry to be such a soothsayer of doom but nevertheless it is what I believe!'.

The validity of this arguments is acknowledged which is partly why embedding planning education in the National Curriculum is so important. Nevertheless, in the absence of leaving planning to the 'experts' with the attendant problems of democratic accountability (Parker and Street, 2019), without wider public engagement it is difficult to see how it can become more representative of society whilst planning deeply affect people's lives (Fainstein, 2014b). Additionally, through Apps such as on whether people 'like' planning applications and which allow 3D visualisation, wider engagement that is more interactive and less time-consuming than traditional methods is potentially possible (Broderick, 2018; Crivellaro *et al.*, 2019; MHCLG, 2020a; Weise *et al*, 2020)**.** Likewise, the *Land For The Many* Report (Monbiot *et al.*, 2019) and *Raynsford Review* (2018b) made similar arguments regarding having 'Citizens Juries' for planning decisions including a wide range of people and other potential options include a Royal Commission, citizen assemblies, like the UK Climate Assembly, or people's panels. Indeed, education and engagement are particularly important for the Green Belt which remains widely misunderstood yet has 'capacity' to more effectively engage people in planning (Bradley, 2019a, p. 181).

A National Green Belt Debate

The Brexit Referendum highlighted the importance of education when giving the public a 'say' on key matters but a national Green Belt debate would be a more open ended 'conversation' on the Green Belt's overall purpose and broad geographical extent rather than 'yes/ no' question (Harris, 2019). It would aim to steer the broader, national debate away from its currently polarised, adversarial nature and, at the local level, from the often narrow focus on specific sites. It would allow the public to think more imaginatively and feel passionate about planning issues with a more positive, abstract, and fundamental debate on broad development patterns in England. The debate could positively incorporate the public's experiential, 'community' knowledge into planning (Bradley, 2018, p. 24), especially as vision is so important in how one views the Green Belt (see Chapter 8). The debate

would consider the costs and benefits of the policy allowing people to see its implications and other

policies, such as new towns, available as its 'decoupling' from regional policy and new towns has

resulted in many people seeing it as a 'shibboleth' on its own and not appreciating its impacts (Mace,

2018, p. 3). For example, if the MGB is to remain, there needs to be significant (further) densification

of inner and outer London Boroughs but the 'voices' of inner/outer city areas are often not as 'loud'

as those in the Green Belt (Haughton, 2017, p. 2; Mace, 2017)[92]. For example:

> '*It has become a shibboleth of various ideologues on both sides - those who want to keep it come what may and those who just want to get rid of it. There has been very little careful analytical debate amongst the political classes.* There has been a reasonable amount of debate amongst professional planners, even among CPRE. Some of that debate has been pretty good actually, but unfortunately there are no votes, especially in this day and age, **in people understanding what they are doing and having an appreciation of policy**' (Retired Private Sector Planner (2)).

> '*In principle…***I am very happy for the Green Belt to remain entirely untouched if there is a very public open debate about the price we pay for having a Green Belt***…if in London we are happy to say we wish to keep 22% of London as Green Belt and the rest of the Green Belt around London but the price of that is permanently inflated house prices and the need to build very high densities on land available; everyone has a voice, in principle, I have got no problem with that **but we have never had that conversation**. However, Green Belt wouldn't survive a very open discussion along those lines…so, again, having a conversation about costs and benefits of the Green Belt as a whole and **definitely not as a series of atomised local decisions -** that would be my idealised way of arriving at a new Green Belt policy.*' (Planning academic (1))

Consequently, the debate would not solely focus on the policy but include the public's views on their

preferred pattern of development, the countryside, economic development and transport

infrastructure etc. to 'open up' discussion (Parker and Street, 2015, p. 794; Parker *et al*, 2015, p.

519). Some decisions would have to be arrived at regarding its purpose and overall spatial extent but

this debate could allow the public to feel more engaged and included in planning in the spirit of

'deliberative democracy' (Mouffe, 2000a, p. 745; Broadway Malyan, 2015; Inch, 2015). Indeed,

although there are contrasting viewpoints, visions and values on the Green Belt, a recent 'Citizen's

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[92] See submissions to the London Plan from Bromley (2019) (an outer Borough) and the Telegraph Hill Society (2018) (a conservation charity in Lewisham (an inner Borough)). Telegraph Hill highlighted that the Green Belt is putting huge development pressure on the inner Boroughs, especially its greenspaces, whilst Bromley argued that the distinction between inner and outer London is becoming 'meaningless' due to development pressure.

Jury' run by London First, a business organisation, involved giving the jury lots of evidence on the Green Belt and housing crisis then allowed them to arrive at decisions (Morphet, 2011, p. 112; Community Research, 2019, p. 37; Greater Cambridge Partnership, 2019). 10/11 of the panel supported housebuilding on low value land in the Green Belt echoing the findings from the quantitative data that most people take a pragmatic view of it (Mace, 2018; Young, 2019c, p. 2). In a national debate, the 'silent majority', who support the Green Belt in principle but also limited release of land for housing in particular circumstances, may then emerge allowing a more nuanced Green Belt debate to inform a purpose fit for the 21st century. Once the Green Belt's overall purpose and spatial extent have been established through a high-level national plan, strategic plans could explore various spatial blueprints for regional development with the public, i.e. new towns or urban extensions, and establish locations for development and restraint alongside Green Belt boundaries for the long(er)-term (see Chapter 9). As Planning Academic (1) helpfully argued:

'If the political will were there in Central Government to review the Green Belt, I think making it a strategic review has the benefit that you can secure people's trust against reasonable fears that once you start you are not going to stop. You can say - 'Well, this is a one-off review, generationally a one-off review' - then hopefully that will allay some fears'.

7.6.   Conclusions

This chapter has explored why people oppose housebuilding generally and support the Green Belt in particular through critically exploring place, property and principle arguments. It has concluded that, popular planning principles intertwined with place attachment, are probably more important as a motivation than property prices. It has underlined the limitations of the materialistic house price hypothesis, especially neo-Marxian theoretical framework (see Chapter 4), and explored the usefulness of the place attachment, environmental psychology and cultural geography literature, which underlines popular, emotional attachment to place and the countryside (Short *et al*, 1986; Davison *et al.*, 2013, 2016; Anton and Lawrence, 2014). The chapter also outlined the lack of trust between campaigners and planners and problems with locally led planning, especially issues with the

effective delivery of infrastructure and facilities alongside development, thereby laying the empirical groundwork for the recommendation of rebuilding strategic planning in Chapter 9. It explored the difference between professional and everyday campaigners in terms of their spatial perspective of the Green Belt. It concluded with recommendations based upon the views of planners and campaigners revolving around more planning education, both for politicians and the public, and a national, public and principled Green Belt debate (Inch, 2015).

Chapter 8 further explores the power of vision and imagination in planning through Lukes (2004) *three dimensions of power* but the Green Belt, as such a renowned planning policy and the strongest protection against development, is arguably the ultimate 'principle' campaigners lay claim to although support for it maybe driven by the deeper, intertwined popular desire to protect the countryside. Alongside place attachment, these planning principles bring out the 'normative' aspects of support for the policy, especially as it commands wider public support than those living next to/in it (Mace, 2018, p. 13). Conversely, the chapter has underlined the importance of place attachment through arguing that 'rationalistic', concerns about the concrete, material effects of development spatially coalesce with normative concerns about a place's character changing in character. At both a principle and place level, it has stressed the importance of the fear of change to campaigners. These findings, therefore, have more resonance with the cultural geography and place attachment literature and concept of 'Homo Democraticus' than that on the house price hypothesis (premised upon 'Homo Economicus') (Devine-Wright, 2005, 2009; Matthews *et al*, 2015, p. 28). Indeed, this suggests that public deliberation is probably more effective in leading people to reconsider solutions to the housing crisis than direct economic incentives so the politics of planning is explored in Chapter 8 (Sturzaker, 2011; Inch *et al.*, 2020).

Chapter 8: Power, Politics and Planning

8.1.   Introduction

This chapter explores the political nature of the Green Belt and planning system by synthesising the preceding empirical Chapters and drawing out wider theoretical implications. It explores campaigners' tactics in opposing development in the Green Belt and housebuilding generally as elucidated by planners/planning stakeholders and viewed through the theoretical lens of Lukes (2004) *Three Dimensions of Power* (introduced in Chapter 4). This is a critical governance and political challenge given the deepening housing crisis as explored in Chapter 6. Chapter 7 focused on *why* campaigners opposed development, this chapter examines *how* they seek to exercise power whilst Chapter 9 addresses these themes by proposing recommendations grounded in strategic planning. This is vital for exploring the *political* feasibility of Green Belt reform (Cherry, 1982; Breheny, 1997, p. 209) with the previous chapters focusing on *practical/economic* feasibility (6) and *social* acceptability (7). The importance of 'imagination' and 'vision' in shaping how planners and the public view the Green Belt, which is related to Luke's third dimension of power (discourse), is explored in this chapter before returning to address the central research question about *how* different groups exercise power in planning and *which* have the most power (Parker and Street, 2015; Valler and Phelps, 2018; Wargent and Parker, 2018). It again finds that the cultural geography and institutional literature has more utility than the materialistic, neo-Marxian literature when analysing power in planning, especially the complexity of the relationship between the *attempted* and *effective* exercise of power (Mace, 2018).

8.2.   Tactics: Campaigners Protests and the Politics of Green Belt

The 'Politics' and 'politics' of Planning (Sims and Bossetti, 2016, p. 37)
In focusing on campaigners' 'strategies', Sims and Bosetti's (2016, p. 37) framework of 'Politics' (formal politics) and 'politics' (informal politics) is helpful although spatial interconnectedness is very

important with *local* 'Politics'/'politics' leading to the Green Belt being a prescient political issue *nationally*. Most planners accepted there would inevitably be *local* opposition to development in the Green Belt with campaigning ('politics') and councillors getting involved ('Politics'). However, they were concerned by the wider political ramifications of this blaming *national* politicians ('Politics') and the media/CPRE ('politics') for *escalating local* Green Belt opposition so that it was on the *national* political agenda.

Firstly, they highlighted MPs getting involved with Green Belt campaigns as particularly problematic through translating often neighbourhood campaigns into national ones[93] (Brassington, 2019). This appearance of the Green Belt commanding widespread, national popular political support regularly leads to election campaigns pledges, such as the 'Green Belt is safe under us', alongside hardening political attitudes towards potential reform (Brassington, 2019; London Green Belt Council, 2019). Secondly, the regular confusion between Green Belt and greenfield land, the policy's popular emotional appeal and campaigns often being well-supported by certain groups and politicians clearly affects and emboldens the tactics of campaigners. For example:

> '*Because Green Belt is so politically charged, it does energise people more in Green Belt areas to oppose and then they are quite ably assisted by their local politicians who will also say - 'Yeah, Green Belt is sacrosanct!' Their local communities feel - 'Well, if it is sacrosanct, then we can oppose development and they shouldn't build there!' Then, CPRE comes in with what, at times, are some disingenuous statistics, which we regularly challenge because you can always use statistics in a way which kind of supports your case.*' (Private Sector Planning Director (West Midlands) (2)).

Alongside the interaction between 'Politics' and 'politics' locally, campaigners are increasingly resorting to legal action against councils releasing land from the Green Belt, such as South Oxfordshire and the failed litigation regarding Guildford's Local Plan (Young, 2019b; Lowe, 2020). As planner from housebuilder (2) argued, this requires significant financial resource and is often concentrated in what she called the 'barrister zone':

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[93] For example, raising the issue in Parliament or lobbying the Secretary of State (Carpenter, 2016b).

'*The difference when you are in a Green Belt authority* (is (litigation)). *That obviously gets thrown at you…**more wealthy people tend to live in the Green Belt who have got more monetary and professional resources available to them…ammunition that perhaps isn't available to the 'normal' public. So, when we are looking at Green Belt in certain parts of the country particularly, you will say, 'Well, look, this is a barrister zone'!** So, the protection of views - nobody is entitled to a view - but everyone thinks they are and so **will use things like Green Belt as a tool to hit you with**.*'

Alongside the social capital campaigners often possess (Wills, 2015, 2016) and professionalisation of campaigning, campaigners also use more traditional tactics of appealing to people's emotions and employing the 'politics of affect' surrounding popular attachment to the countryside (Thrift, 2004, p. 59). This is often intertwined with support for the policy:

'*I would take* [the Green Belt] *out of the local authorities purview and back to national or a regional government because it has become a political football…that local authorities and elected councillors have used to remain in power…residents conflict Green Belt with greenfield and therefore one thing I would do…is change the word 'Green Belt' to 'development belt'. Because, then, the perception and use of the word 'green' would fall away from…if you do that, when it comes to councillors changing and removing land from the Green Belt for housing, then you would not come up against as hard as an opposition as you have now.*' (Private Sector Young Planner (West Midlands) (3))

'*If* (a site) *is in the Green Belt, **clearly people probably have a stronger argument to put forward, unless it is a specific allocation in a local plan**. So, they probably feel, I suppose, in a stronger position…if it is a planning application, it will be advertised and those who feel strongly about it, i.e. those people who will object, will get involved in the process. Those people who don't feel strongly about it and don't really care about it one way or the other, won't get involved in the process **so, you always will get an unrepresentative view, whatever you are proposing, because the only people who really get involved are the people who will object to it**…typically, you put a notice on a lamp post, something on the website or an advert in the paper and somebody will get hold of it and there will be a picture in the paper of people with crossed arms and placards, you have got an Action Group **and then a local member feels they need to get on board to support them**.*' (Private Sector Planning Director (South East) (2)).

These quotes explore the similar dynamics of opposition to both the Local Plan process and planning applications which could be summarised as 'DAD', 'Decide Announce Defend', and this form the basis of Table 33 (Rydin, 2011, p. 95; Sturzaker, 2011, pp. 559, 560).

Table 33 - Regular Sequence of Local Opposition to Proposals to Release Land from the Green Belt	
1.	A proposal to release land from the Green Belt for housing is announced in a Local Plan Review or speculative planning application.
2.	It is then widely publicised by local campaigners or the media.
3.	An opposition group organising petitions, protest marches and placards is formed and publicised through the local press or social media.
4.	A local councillor or MP joins in support of the opposition group.
5.	This puts pressure on the LPA/developer and, if the proposal is withdrawn, the Group typically disbands claiming 'victory' (unless there is an appeal). If it is accepted, opposition often continues through the Examination or appeal process.
Author's Own Based on Interviews	

Tactics surrounding opposition to Green Belt and greenfield development are similar in dynamics but campaigners are perhaps bolder and more passionate opposing developments in the Green Belt because, firstly, they have a (more) legitimate planning 'reason' and, secondly, can probably draw more support because of the name's emotional appeal. However, other planners, such as Private Sector Planning Director (South East) (1), recognised that this political process is not only inevitable but a legitimate aspect of planning:

*'There is a lot of politics at the national level. I know there maybe (some) at the local level as well. It is inevitable really because planning is about people and policy. It is about places…And, really, whilst one could be critical of the role of politics within planning, I still think that it is a fundamental part of the planning system because it can bring into play checks and balances. And it is only right that we, as humans, have a desire to protect where we live or agendas that we wish to put forward. Where you have politicians, whether it be Westminster MPs or local/town/parish councillors, whether they are formally elected or sort of put themselves forward, they often have a view as to what their sort of local area is right for them and, by and large, the politicians try and represent that view. **I don't always agree with them but that is not the point. The point is that people need to feel they have got representation within the planning system and they are able to express their own views directly through responses to plan-making consultation and applications**. So, I think there is a lot of interference…the politics can play out at the very highest level when it is a Secretary of State decision...you have had a Planning Inspector who tends to be a very experienced, learned person who has heard all the evidence and recommends one outcome and yet the…Secretary of State takes a different decision. It is sometimes quite difficult to reconcile what went on between the recommendation and decision. But there are still checks and balances in place because, even in that situation, there is recourse to a legal challenge.'*

This last quote is poignant because there was widespread agreement about planning's political nature although differences emerge in planners' attitudes towards it. The close nexus between the local and national and distinctiveness of the policy means that *local* Green Belt campaigns can escalate quickly into *national* ones whilst the Secretary of State and Housing Ministers have

significant scope to intervene in local politics. Indeed, with the Planning Inspectorate taking an increasingly strategic role regarding housing numbers and the Green Belt, it has been the target of increasing political attack as Boddy and Hickman (2018; 2020) argue although Young (2019c, 2019b) highlighted that Ministers have been dissuaded from intervening in lots of appeals/local plans by civil servants in the Ministry of Housing (Landmark Chambers, 2020a). This underlines the importance of space in researching the Green Belt as a crucial interface where local, regional and national politics and protests intersect.

Lukes' Three Dimensions of Power

Although Lukes' (2005) framework is another useful way to conceptualise how campaigners oppose development and how power is exercised in planning, it is difficult to establish empirically that these *attempts* at exercising power *translate* into actual planning outcomes, despite these *assumptions* often being embedded in academic literature (Rydin, 1985; Sturzaker, 2010). Although the Green Belt's political nature *has* been firmly established in this study alongside that of planning generally in other studies (Cherry, 1982; Lord and Tewdwr-Jones, 2018), evaluating how *effectively* power is exercised and which groups have the *most* power was more challenging than expected in the neo-Marxian theoretical frame in Chapter 4. This vital philosophical question of what power 'is' a central criticism of Lukes' framework, especially difficulties in establishing causal links between the dimensions and their impact on policy (Robinson, 2006). Secondly, operationally, how does the researcher distinguish between the decision and non-decision-making process (Dowding, 2006)? Reflecting these critiques, Lukes (2005, p. 150) highlighted the importance of evidence and that assessments of power are necessarily 'partial and limited'. Notwithstanding these critiques, researching how power is *attempted* to be exercised through a critical realist framework is still crucially important, especially as opposition by campaigners locally/nationally and wider public opinion clearly affects planning outcomes and probably results in less housing being built than without opposition (Sturzaker, 2010; Coelho *et al*, 2017). However, the utility of Lukes's and other

frameworks, such as Fox-Rogers and Murphy's (2014, p. 244) 'informal strategies of power', is the way that they reveal how power is often attempted to be exercised by campaigners in more subtle, obscure ways. The study adopts the standard definition of power being the 'ability to get things done' (Mace and Tewdwr-Jones, 2017, p. 5).

First and Second Dimensions: Who Makes Decisions and The Decision and Non-Decision-Making Process

These dimensions identify key decision-making actors regarding the Green Belt and evaluates how decisions are made. As they are so bound up together, they are explored here together in relation to key actors and actants.

Decision Making Process I: Locally Led Planning

Since 2010, apart from areas with strategic planning powers (see Chapter 9), LPAs largely manage and make decisions on the Green Belt through local plan reviews and planning applications (see Chapter 4). Although the public do not *directly* vote on planning decisions locally, Green Belt campaigners still regularly engage directly with the consultation process and, ultimately, councillors are elected by the local population (Goode, 2020g; Landmark Chambers, 2020b)[94]. Local plans are examined by the quasi-judicial Planning Inspectorate and there is the appeals system putting significant pressure on LPAs to not make *purely* political decisions regarding development locations (Young, 2019b, 2019c). Nevertheless, as the quote by Private Sector Planning Director (South East) (1) alluded to, the Secretary of State sometimes intervenes in local plan-making through 'holding directions' and often determines appeals ('call-ins') (Boddy and Hickman, 2018, 2020, p. 31).

The abolition of RSSs has arguably increased the political nature of planning decision-making with *local* councillors largely responsible for Green Belt release (see Chapter 9) (Goode, 2019a). Invariably,

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[94] Local plans are often developed by planning officers in collaboration with councillors and, like planning applications, go out to public consultation (Yarwood, 2002; Brock, 2018; Goode, 2019d, 2020g). At the LPA level, there is not a direct vote on planning policy as is often the case with zoning ordinances in the US (Daniels, 2010). Communities can 'make' Neighbourhood Plans which can propose *minor* alterations to Green Belt boundaries - these go to a public Referendum (Wargent and Parker, 2018, p. 390; MHCLG, 2019b, p. 40).

this leads to campaigners *attempting* to exercise power locally both directly through campaigns and indirectly through elections. This mechanism is elucidated by Private Sector Planning Director (South East) (2) who also referred to the 2019 Local Elections:

> '*Strategic planning is something the system needs…inevitably, when you are making big controversial decisions, if as members you are going back to the politics…in that district, you are going to be affected to a greater or lesser extent by that decision and lobbied by people who live in the district, it is very difficult to make difficult decisions…If, however, those decisions are taken at a higher level, for example, county level, a County Councillor who lives in Banbury or Witney isn't as emotionally involved with the issue of Green Belt release on the edge of Oxford. So it is easier for those councillors to make more difficult decisions because they are not being rung up, written to or emailed by the local people in their community…that* [is a] *sort of parochial approach to planning because, essentially, local members clearly want to do the best for their community but also want to be re-elected and, if you have got lots of people in your ward saying…'You have got to object and oppose because we can't have this'…The easy option is just to jump on the band wagon.*'

There is now pressure on LPAs by national Government to produce up-to-date local plans so several Conservative councils recently adopted plans with significant Green Belt release in order to be found 'sound' by the Inspectorate (Wilding, 2018b). Although these were arguably politically brave decisions, a significant political backlash has resulted in the Conservatives losing control of councils in places, such as Tandridge, South Oxfordshire and Guildford, primarily due to opposition to local plans by Resident Groups and the Liberal Democrats (Branson, 2019b). This clearly demonstrates the effectiveness of the 'Politics' and 'politics' of campaigners in exercising power through seeking to change *who* makes decisions via electoral pressure and campaigning.

A planner in Focus Group I also highlighted the age of councillors making decisions:

> '*Our decision-making strategies are skewed very badly. The representation of people who make the decisions tends to be around the age of 60 rather than representatives of those who at the time of their life when they are probably most open to change and new ideas (aged 20-35). Well, people of 20-35 are not the ones sitting on councils making decisions and generally not the ones wearing the T-shirts!*'

Finally, the following quotes explore the increasingly politicised nature of decision-making in the era of localism in the West of England:

'Probably the lowest moment was when the famous Eric Pickles [Communities Secretary] *indicated the intention to abolish regional planning…there was research* [Tetlow King Planning (2012, p. 9)] *looking at authorities that slashed their housing requirement and all of the four West of England authorities were in the top ten. So, I think there has been a desire to protect the Green Belt…I don't think anybody could accuse the West of England authorities now of not working together. They are working to prepare a Joint Plan[95]. You could accuse the authorities of not working together effectively…the biggest input into those strategies was probably what is politically the most acceptable or politically least unacceptable. So, in Bath and North East Somerset, the politically acceptable has resulted in a Green Belt allocation, adjacent to Bristol, not near Bath...In North Somerset, the politically acceptable words were 'leapfrogging' the Green Belt because the Administration some time ago had said 'No Green Belt Review over our dead bodies! We are not meeting the needs of Bristol - we are North Somerset!'...So,* **in the increasingly politicised planning system, it seems to be the easiest political thing to latch on to was the most well-known planning designation***...Any planning system can stop new homes if there is a political will to do that!'* (Private Sector Planning Director (Bristol) (1))

'Some of these hard choices [regarding Green Belt] *were made because they were made at a regional level* [the RSS] *which wasn't interfering with local politics…*[North Somerset] **now have to grasp the nettle and just can't stomach it***. So, at least it* [RSS] *was being foisted on North Somerset. South Gloucestershire, because it contains part city, maybe better than some but even then they have their own identity.'* (Private Sector Planning Director (Bristol) (2))

'**It is almost political suicide for any local authority to revisit Green Belt unless they are dictated to do it***…North Somerset didn't join the West of England Combined Authority for that very reason - they were struggling with the challenges on their release of Green Belt*' (National Private Sector Planning Director (2))

These quotes encapsulate the politicised nature of decision-*makers* and the decision-making

processes regarding the Green Belt. Whilst the policy is a *general* political issue, it appears that it is

refracted or intensified by place specific circumstances, reflecting the importance of geographical

variation in how LPAs manage 'their' Green Belt, including their institutional culture, as evident in the

West Midlands and West of England[96] (Amati and Yokohari, 2006).

Decision Making Process II: National Planning Policy, Planning Inspectorate and 'Planning by Appeal'

Whilst the *attempted* exercise of power by campaigners is evident, there are important limitations or

counterbalances on how effectively politics and campaigner pressure can determine planning

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[95] The Plan ran into difficulties at Examination and is now being disbanded (Lainton, 2019) (see key terms).

[96] Interviewees identified North Somerset's rural character, its historical antagonism towards Bristol and tradition of growth restraint as explaining its protective attitude, reflecting historical institutionalism and path dependency (Sorensen, 2015; Valler and Phelps, 2018). South Gloucestershire's less defensive attitude relates to it being a more mixed authority as rural *and* urban and how the Green Belt boundaries were initially drawn (see Chapter 9), despite also being historically dominated by the Conservatives.

outcomes, especially with growing popular calls to 'solve' the housing crisis exemplified in the YIMBY

movement (Myers, 2017).

Firstly, where an LPA lacks an up-to-date local plan, does not have a 5YHLS, fails the HDT or a

planning committee refuses an application against officer advice, there is the possibility of

developers 'appealing' against the decision, which is often successful on greenfield and, increasingly,

Green Belt land (Young, 2019b, 2019c). A planner from a West Midlands land promoter, previously

an LPA planner, explained:

> '*I have sat in many planning committees with placards being waved at the back of the room and you see how that impacts the decision being taken and, you know, the amount of times I have seen recommendations for sites being overturned by the Committee and then granted on appeal - it is part of a political game! And, ultimately, whilst the planning system retains a largely political element in terms of that decision-making, it is very difficult to see how you arrive at a solution where we actually build the amount of houses we need to in this country because you are putting decisions into the hands of, yes, democratically elected people, but that's at the heart of the challenge… We had a recent refusal in an LPA where the emerging local plan says it needs 40 homes in this settlement. We put an application for 59 - members refused it despite recommendation for approval. We went back in again for 40 and got recommendation for approval and it has been refused again by the members. So, those applications are now in the appeal process and we are confident of a positive outcome*'.

Similar points were made by a planner in Focus Group II:

> '*You wonder if this lack of governance at the regional level is going to lead to more speculative applications and appeals coming forward in the Birmingham area from developers who are getting fed-up with waiting. They have got options on land or maybe even own land in the Green Belt but they are willing to take a punt on it because, in this way Birmingham and the surrounding authorities aren't really going to be able to demonstrate a 5YHLS. There seems to be slight change in national policy that, if you are delivering affordable housing, could you maybe try and get through the door that way*?'

However, Private Sector Planning Director (South East) (2) offered some more balanced reflections:

> '*We know from appeal decisions and High Court judgements as well, that housing land supply itself is not a justification for development in the Green Belt. But Green Belt release for development is justified if it comes through the local plan process…by devolving that responsibility, firstly, to local politicians and their officers. Then, obviously, it has got to go through a local plan examination where you have an Inspector who has to go through the same balancing exercise… Ministers generally are reluctant to get involved in a development plan system. They get involved in appeals all the time…*[however] '*planning by appeal'* - *there maybe some promoters who would look forward to that but most planners wouldn't.*'

As this quote and Private Sector Planning Director (South East) (1) highlighted, the Secretary of State

can overturn appeals (Edgar, 2015; Johnston, 2017b). Nonetheless, the appeal mechanism and 5YHLS

exerts significant pressure on councillors *against* community opposition and is an important way that

the development industry exercises power. Indeed, perhaps power in planning could be better

conceptualised as *fluid and contested* in a temporal and geographical sense in that housebuilders *and*

homeowners attempt to exercise power but it is difficult to define *who* exercises power most

effectively with the planning system being where these conflicts work out and are resolved.

Decision-Making Process III: The Plan-Led System and the Consultation Process: Agonist Planning

The requirement for local plans to be in accord with national policy forms another important

counterbalance to community opposition with the NPPF being widely criticised as benefitting

housebuilders, especially 5YHLS (Boddy and Hickman, 2018, p. 209, 2020, p. 20; Bradley, 2020b).

Nonetheless, campaigners still often respond strongly to the consultation process in local plans

alongside campaigning directly as LPA planner (South East) observed:

> '*The high level of, shall we say, engagement with the local plan process, I think has been brought on by the fact that, broadly speaking, it is one of the wealthiest areas of the country and very much on that Green Belt fringe…perhaps not unsurprisingly, areas that are most affected by…Green Belt release, have been the most vociferous and early represented individuals in the consultation process, including attending the examination etc. and in person themselves!...there is an affected group of villagers, so to speak, that are particularly concerned because their lovely twee house in the countryside is about to be destroyed by housing nearby…The Green Belt allows people to kind of attach…their negative attitude towards something concrete…'We don't want anything around us because we like our nice countryside walks and view from the back of my house' which is something that is a legitimate part of national discourse'.*

This reflects the intensity of place attachment and shows how the consultation process of decision-

making is dominated by particular groups, i.e. housebuilders and campaigners. However, the quote

also demonstrates how these attempts to exercise power are often viewed sceptically by planners

undermining how far campaigners can influence material planning outcomes. Moreover, even

councillors making decisions on Planning Committees arguably have limited scope to be *overtly*

political with the decision-making process being laced with the threat of appeals and circumscribed

by national policy (Tait and Campbell, 2000; Barnett, 2020; Goode, 2020g).

These direct campaigns alongside broader electoral campaigns against development can be fruitfully

conceptualised as 'agonist' resistance with councillors and campaigners sometimes working against

the 'system' but still aiming to secure concessions from it (see Chapter 8) (Parker and Street, 2015, p.

794; Vigar *et al*, 2017, p. 426). LPAs are often 'sandwiched' between community opposition and

housing targets. Indeed, whilst Green Belt campaigns *attempt* to exercise power through seeking to

influence politicians, there is also the agonistic 'shutting down', 'silencing' or circumscribing of these

dissenting voices with LPAs blaming national Government when justifying very unpopular Green Belt

release, such as in Solihull, Tandridge and Guildford (Parker *et al*, 2015, p. 519; Goode, 2019c)[97].

Indeed, LPAs which have tried to reduce Green Belt release in local plans following the voting out of

local Conservatives, like South Oxfordshire, or where Conservative LPAs have tried to limit Green Belt

release, like Sevenoaks, difficulties have arisen with the Inspectorate or they have been forced into

adopting plans by national Government (like South Oxfordshire) (Donnelly, 2020b; Kahn, 2020)[98]. The

quotes above show the lack of power and disenchantment campaigners often say they feel with clear

circumscription on *how far* campaigners and politicians can *effectively* exercise power with the

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[97] I.e. councillors saying that they *personally* do not approve of decisions but have no alternative. In relation to Solihull's Local Plan (2020, p. 1), Cllr. Andy Mackiewicz, Cabinet Member for Planning, claimed that 'I know 15,000 homes may seem a lot, but we have legal duty…to meet Solihull's housing needs and this number is determined by national methodology. We do understand the concerns of residents but will keep Solihull as a great place to live'. In the Planning Committee approving Tandridge's controversial Plan, *Surrey Live* recorded: 'Committee Chair urged members that the council would be forced by Government to take thousands more homes if the Plan was not submitted before January 24th (2019)' (Seymour, 2018, p. 2; Branson, 2019b).

[98] Cllr. Sue Cooper, Leader of South Oxfordshire Council, complained that the Housing Secretary's pressure to adopt the Plan or expect the County Council or Ministry of Housing to take control, was: '*An unacceptable intervention into local democracy…the Secretary of State removed the democratic right of South Oxfordshire's councillors and residents…*[we] **have now been unfairly silenced'** (Marrs, 2019b; Henley Standard, 2020, p. 1). The letter by Cllr. Peter Fleming, Leader of Sevenoaks Council, to the Planning Inspectorate, who 'failed' its Plan due to issues with DtC and housing numbers, was equally strong describing: '*The double down and attempt to bully us into withdrawing our plan. Well, we won't gamble on the future of our District or its environment and* **we certainly won't be bullied into withdrawing our plan**' (Flemming, 2019, p. 1). The Council's High Court challenge against the Inspectorate failed (Kahn, 2020).

Government heavily, and increasingly, involved in the decision-making process with more

centralisation proposed in the Planning White Paper and Standard Method (Goode, 2020g; Landmark

Chambers, 2020b; MHCLG, 2020a). Conversely, since 2010, the blame for controversial decisions on

the Green Belt have been deflected, dissipated and redirected by national to local government with

the policy arguably being increasingly used by politicians locally and nationally as a form of statecraft

and a tool to gain, maintain and retain power (Lord *et al.*, 2017; Mace, 2018, p. 5).

Decision-Making Process IV: The Local and National: National Policy and Local Autonomy

The local plan examination process and the pressure and representation by housebuilders

throughout also places important limitations on the *effective power* of campaigners. Professional

campaigners regularly argued that the system was skewed in favour of developers:

> '*Basically, the planning system is open to the market...You have a rule book, the NPPF, and have to play by the rules so in effect your hands are tied.*' (Retired Strategic Planner (1), West Midlands)

> '*Since the NPPF...we are getting development completely throwing out the Green Belt policies. An example of that is Solihull Council in their Local Plan Review - they started suggesting new housing developments before they had done the Green Belt analysis. Now that was completely wrong*.' (Planner (3), CPRE West Midlands)

More broadly, the knowledge and expertise of professional planners in advising on, and writing,

planning policy and influencing outcomes was referred to (Tait and Campbell, 2000; Goode, 2020g).

Other planners referred to legal tests and the 'test of soundness' in the examination process which

scrutinises plans (Boddy and Hickman, 2020, p. 38). Finally, the close nexus between the national and

local in the exercise of power by housebuilders was highlighted although this is a fluid situation:

> '*The Government probably, 1 or 2 years ago, after being the best friends of the volume housebuilders...are supporting smaller builders, self-build and other things because the volume housebuilders have let them down...housebuilders have had more freedoms than they ever have had...if you asked me who runs housing policy in this country, I would say it is run in a couple of boardrooms of volume housebuilders. That can't be right.*' (Retired LPA Director, West Midlands)

The housebuilding lobby is therefore another significant counterbalance against community

opposition with planning as the contested arena where this conflict is played out (Short *et al*, 1987).

Some planners argued that the system could more effectively counterbalance campaigner opposition with Private Sector Planning Director (Bristol) (1) highlighting:

> *'Through the independent role of the Planning Inspectorate,…the soft and hard power of the Secretary of State in MHCLG…you could…see a way to recognise the housing crisis as they do now, but also recognise that the Green Belt is a constraint on building new homes - not just the amount of new homes but new homes where they need to be dotted around our economic powerhouses.'*

Nonetheless, whilst planning's political nature is evident and frustrated planners, especially *national* politics, politics in planning is probably inevitable and perhaps to some extent desirable as a way or outlet to maintain public confidence in the system as this insightful remark by Private Sector Planning Director (South East) (1) shows (Wannop and Cherry, 1994; Goode, 2020g):

> '*Politics is very important…There are some who would say that politics just intervenes and doesn't necessarily add any value to the process, especially if you have just finished a planning committee at 10 o'clock at night. You are recommended for approval but councillors have voted it down…you can feel quite sore. But I think when you rise above that and look more generally - there is a lot of value that sort of representation can add to the planning process and it is right at the national level there is a* [Green Belt] *policy as well.'*

Although some planners suggested abolishing planning committees, especially for planning applications with more delegated powers for planning officers (a similar proposal to what is in the Planning *White Paper*), they are vitally important for giving planning democratic accountability and the public confidence that applications are properly scrutinised (Tait and Campbell, 2000; Yarwood, 2002; Goode, 2020g; MHCLG, 2020a, p. 37)[99]. Nonetheless, whilst the presence of politics in planning is recognised and inevitable, the *amount* of politics could arguably be reduced so Chapter 9 considers how the system could become *less politicised* through strategic planning.

The Third Dimension - Discourse, Vision and Evidence

Discourse is more abstract and subtle but can still be a powerful strategy that planners and campaigners utilise to seek to exercise power (Lukes, 2004; Sturzaker and Shucksmith, 2011). This section explores the professionalisation of discourse by campaigners before turning to its more

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[99] This is based upon the researcher regularly attending planning committees in Worcester (Goode, 2020g).

traditional, emotional aspects which is still vital to how campaigners, the public and planners frame

the Green Belt.

Discourse and the Strategy of the Professionalisation of Campaigning
Professional Campaigners

Even before planning became increasingly technical and evidenced-based as part of the 'calculative

turn' in planning since 2010 (McAllister *et al*, 2016, p. 2363), Amati (2007, pp. 585-591) highlighted

that the majority of objectors to Green Belt development were 'experienced' as able to use

planning's technical language to assert 'technical kinship' with planners to try to persuade them of

the legitimacy of their concerns. However, campaigners are now commissioning their own

increasingly technical household projection studies etc. trying to empirically 'disprove' 'inflated'

official household figures locally and nationally. Additionally, campaigners regularly challenge

estimates of much housing can be accommodated on brownfield sites as too 'low' thereby arguing

that the need for Green Belt release can be significantly reduced or eliminated[100].

For example, Planner (1), CPRE West Midlands argued:

> '[You need to be] *careful of how you assess housing needs...we* [CPRE] *are pretty critical of the GL Hearn Study*[101]*...**it contains a lot of arbitrary assumptions**...Some of the problems though are about Government policy on assessing housing need rather than being specific to the GL Hearn...CPRE nationally has expressed its views on the NPPF/PPG...*[I have pointed out] *the absurdity of the Government's position on this*[102]. *I don't think we should take the claimed scale of housing need as a given, whether nationally or in a particular area. We should be prepared to assess it. What CPRE would like to do is what we used to, work with the local authorities in that process'.*

Similar critiques were levelled by this Policy and Campaign Advisor, West Midlands, who explored the

relationship between housing figures and the Green Belt before criticising the BDP's for its unmet

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[100] The accuracy of assessing housing 'need' and household projections is also beyond this study's scope but the aim here is portray the views and strategies of campaigners on the subject.

[101] The GL Hearn Greater Birmingham HMA Strategic Growth Study (see Key Terms).

[102] In an unpublished article for CPRE Warwickshire (2019), he wrote that the 'housing numbers game' had taken an 'ugly turn'. The Government is 'moving the goalposts...any pretence that housing need will be objectively assessed using the latest available information has gone out the window...(it) is a political target pure and simple'. (Quoted with permission from a copy of the article given to the researcher).

housing 'need' figure of 38,000 and underestimation of potential from 'windfall' sites (Birmingham

City Council, 2017, p. 144):

> '*The 2016 ONS* [figures]*…have changed. People aren't living as long as we expected…but, most importantly, the size of household isn't decreasing as much as we expected…It is to do with when young people leave home and all those kind of issues. The ONS's latest figures dramatically reduce urban need as a result of that change. The Government…have said 'never mind it being the newest evidence' which they have never said before. They have always said it when it goes up and now they say you can't take that evidence on face value…So this whole housing shortfall is the creation of figures that now are pretty well-inflated and,* **there maybe a shortfall, but it is not nearly as big as they say and, the trouble with having too much of a shortfall, is you then allow the exceptional circumstances route to be used and release too much land in the Green Belt***…The claim of the shortfall of 38,000 houses is not one I agree with...that was based on the Public Enquiry of 3 years ago so it is actually out of date and that is the problem with it. Secondly, and I argued this case at the Birmingham Enquiry, they hugely underestimated their windfall allowance*[103]*'.*

In a similar vein, Planner (3), CPRE West Midlands, argued:

> '*There isn't quite enough* [brownfield] *land* [to meet Birmingham's shortfall] *although I think the figures that have been analysed by Alan Wenban-Smith* [a planning expert] *for example showed that it can be reduced and that is as important.*'

Unsurprisingly, professional campaigners interviewed did not criticise population growth or

immigration *per se,* probably to focus on legitimate 'planning reasons' (Hubbard, 2005; Sturzaker,

2010). In fact, the only mention of migration was in passing about population projections by Retired

Strategic Planner (1).

Everyday Campaigners
However, these arguments came up among everyday campaigners, especially the SSGB responses:

> '*You should start with the root cause and pressures for housing, that is Population Growth and a subset of this is the breakdown of society and the family unit putting greater pressure on precious land, be it labelled Green Belt or otherwise'*.

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[103] On a technical note: '*They took the view…that windfalls would stay at the rate they were during the recession. So they claimed that everything else in Birmingham would benefit from an economic uplift except for windfall. I argued, on behalf of CPRE, that the windfall rate of 600 a year should rise to 1000. It had been up at 1600 during the boom but, even allowing it just at 1000, would have counted for another 10,000 homes. You have got rid of a quarter of your overspill. Your problem went just on windfall! All the evidence so far, it is only 4 years, is that Birmingham has already produced a huge number of windfalls beyond what it said'.*

> *'We are only limited by 'our' imagination when it comes to accommodation issues. The Town and City Centre needs to be reinvented and we have to cap, reduce the population. This is an economic necessity as resources are by their very nature finite. The so-called housing crisis is man-made.'*
>
> *'Social housing…that's what is so desperately needed. Controlled immigration, sensible use of existing stock'.*

The complicated, highly controversial question of how far migration is responsible for population growth and the feasibility and impact of policies, such as 'capping' population and 'controlling' migration, are beyond this study's scope but it clearly features with some largely everyday campaigners opposing Green Belt development. This resonates with Sturzaker's (2010, p. 1014) work on snobbery and the 'exclusionary preferences' of the wealthy in rural areas. Although SSGB is only one campaign group, it is perhaps a more widely held position with Private Sector Planning Director (West Midlands) (2) explaining:

> *'Some people want to leave the EU but, when you press them, they don't know why...Sometimes that is the same attitude towards development which is - development is a bad thing…it might be even immigration based. I have heard people opposing new development on the basis (this was in Coventry) - 'There are too many Poles and Romanians in this city already and the only reason we are having to build more houses is to accommodate them'. And I don't know quite how to react to that. Is that just purely racist or equally, turning it on its head, can you understand people's concerns about migration and the impact it has differentially on cities and towns?'.*

These sentiments are often drawn from, and echoed, nationally by politicians with the then Housing Minister, Dominic Raab, stating in 2018 that fewer houses would need to be built in the Green Belt if migration was effectively controlled post-Brexit (Geoghegan, 2018a). Immigration and population growth are often easy scapegoats for the housing crisis but, arguably, the *underlying* reason for campaigners opposing development is fear of change, especially the lack of control people feel that they have about their local area changing in character.

Reflections on Campaigners' Strategies and Tactics

The reflexive move of professional campaigners towards technical evidence shows their flexibility and how they constantly evolve to stay 'relevant' in different planning contexts (Amati, 2007; Bradley, 2019b). CPRE has been particularly successful as a campaigning organisation in fighting a 'ceaseless war' against development and in favour of the Green Belt (Amati and Yokohari, 2003, p.

321; Manns, 2014, p. 8). This resonates with the flexibility of the policy itself with justifications for it varying temporally in different economic and political contexts, i.e. urban regeneration being added as an objective in the 1980s (Amati and Yokohari, 2003, p. 321; Manns, 2014, p. 8; Mace, 2017). Another example of campaigners flexibility and alacrity is the increased emphasis recently on climate change, air pollution and the importance of greenspace and the Green Belt following the Coronavirus lockdowns (Goode, 2019b; Gordon, 2020; Harris, 2020; Manns, 2020)[104]. Of many examples, campaigners against the Guildford Local Plan argued that Green Belt development would 'impact on the already poor air quality around Compton' (Curley, 2019). Indeed, the enduring relevance and influence of campaigners alongside the evolution of professional campaigning techniques strongly supports this study's finding in Chapter 7 of planning/planners needing to more effectively engage with them rather than hoping that campaigners and the public will one day 'come round' to wholeheartedly support development (Parker and Street, 2019; Goode, 2020d, 2020c).

More broadly, the increasingly technical nature and discourse of planning must be bewildering, off-putting, and alienating for everyday campaigners and the public when engaging with the system. This again resonates with the conflict between 'planning' knowledge, associated with technical and objective knowledge, such as household projections and 5YHLS, and more emotional, experiential and tacit 'community' knowledge (Bradley, 2018, p. 24). It appears that a lot of time, energy and concentration is spent on debating housing figures rather than focusing on equally important issues, especially strategic development locations and their design, facilities, and infrastructure etc. (Young, 2021). Although RSSs were criticised for 'forcing' housing numbers on LPAs, there is a clear case for

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[104] This Chapter does not evaluate the contentious and complex issue of how far these were campaigners 'real' concerns but focuses on their *techniques*. The interviews were largely conducted before the Extinction Rebellion (XR) protests in April 2019 so it was difficult to capture its relevance in campaigning (Gordon, 2020; Harris, 2020). XR started getting involved with planning pre-Covid, like opposing Green Belt release in the Spelthorne Plan (Curley, 2020).

National Government setting regional targets to remove local wrangling, as proposed in the White

Paper, with this being the case for most of the post-war era (Best, 2019; MHCLG, 2020a)[105].

'Framing the Future': Conceptualising Alternative Visions for Rural and Urban England
The more traditional campaigning approach of appealing to popular emotions and planning vision

also featured as a key factor in discourse as an exercise of power. Valler and Phelps (2018, p. 1) have

written about the importance of institutional memory and planning culture in 'framing' the future,

Mace (2018) about the Green Belt's institutionalism and Warren and Clifford (2005), Sturzaker (2010)

and Harrison and Clifford (2016, p. 585) on rural exclusivity and how the 'urban' and 'development'

has been and is often popularly portrayed as 'bad', 'evil' and 'dirty' juxtaposed to the rural as 'pure',

'good' and 'clean'. However, arguably popular planning vision and imagination are not acknowledged

enough in the literature with this thesis finding that how one views the Green Belt is ultimately

shaped, formed, and framed by the vision one takes of the 'rural' and 'urban' and what one's country

and community should be. This is based on the numerous quotes in Chapter 7, but one stood out as

exemplifying the importance of vision in planning:

> '*The original purposes of the Green Belt are about beauty and the sense of communities as meaningful places rather than sprawl without an identity. People can object to development on the Green Belt even though they don't live in or anywhere near that Green Belt. That is for kind of reasons of policy and principle - we want to be a country in which our towns, cities and villages have an individual identity, are distinct from each other and there is greenery between them - you can favour that living in the centre of a city.*' (National Conservative Politician)

Indeed, for campaigners and politicians, the *general* view was of the intrinsic beauty of the English

countryside, protected by the Green Belt, which should be guarded as a principle, with the corollary

of this being that most development should be in existing cities with an idealised view of urban living.

Many planners still valued the intrinsic beauty of the countryside (and Green Belt) but often had

more dystopian visions of it causing 'town cramming' and 'rabbit hutch homes' and had an

alternative vision of more 'sustainable' urban extensions rather than 'leapfrogging' so that people

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[105] How housing targets are calculated/allocated is beyond the project's scope but, although challenging, a robust, transparent and trustworthy method is clearly needed (Lowe and Pollard, 2018; Donnelly, 2019a).

can live closer to their workplace (Evans, 1991, p. 853; Madeddu *et al*, 2015, p. 73). Although most

planners recognised the value of urban living and a brownfield-first policy, they took the more

nuanced view that there is not 'enough' brownfield land in cities and that it struggles to

accommodate 'family' homes with gardens (Barnes, 2019; Best, 2019). Consequently, most planners

argued that the Green Belt should become a more flexible policy (see Chapter 6). Of course,

planners, protestors and politicians had varying views but general paradigms, metanarratives or

interconnected frames of visions emerged of development, the countryside and Green Belt (Ruming

et al, 2012; Parker *et al*, 2017; Valler and Phelps, 2018). This was explored by a planner from the

TCPA:

> '[With Green Belts] *from Thomas Moore onwards, the notion of garden is embedded in the
> cultural fabric of this country so don't mess with it. Go and look somewhere else is the answer*.'

Indeed, it appears that the Green Belt is a titanic *battle of ideas or discourse* between campaigners

and planners or a clash between the 'head' and 'heart', i.e. campaigners advocating for the

countryside and Green Belt ranged against planners/housebuilders arguments for 'solving' the

housing crisis, albeit that there are material, vested interests wrapped in both competing

knowledges. Both these groups deploy discourse reflecting these very powerful affective

metanarratives as ultimately attempting to persuade the 'court of public opinion' locally and

nationally (Crosby and Bryson, 1993, p. 187; Bradley, 2018, p. 24). In many ways, this third dimension

is the most subtle but perhaps also the most powerful way of exercising power (Rydin, 1985; Lukes,

2004; Dowding, 2006). The tension between development and conservation ideas has arguably

always existed in England but planning policy aimed to reconcile it through meeting housing growth

via new towns/regional policy/brownfield-first and the Green Belt protecting the countryside

(Papworth, 2015). However, with the deepening housing crisis and localism agenda, these competing

visions recently have been more vigorously fought out and reconciled at the local level (Boddy and

Hickman, 2018). A national and regional Green Belt debate would aim to explore these two

competing metanarratives with the public to more profitably utilise people's 'imagination' whilst, arguably, planning needs to recover its capacity for articulating spatial visions as this was the driving force behind Abercrombie's and Unwin's plans (see Chapters 2/9) (Amati and Freestone, 2015; Raynsford Review, 2018a).

'Framing the Past': Retired Planners Views

Finally, the power of discourse can be seen in the nostalgic view that older, retired planners often took of planning policy and practice, especially of the Green Belt. Of course, there are important lessons to be learned from the past, for example, about regional planning and new towns, but, as Valler and Phelps (2018) argued, the dominant, often powerful, planning ideals about development patterns can also restrict future vision. For example, as a Retired Planner (South West) pointed out regarding the West of England Joint Spatial Strategy:

> '*Well, the new spatial plan, is exactly the area of Avon...And you get the two documents out and it is just rewritten*!'

Many planners most supportive of the Green Belt and regional planning were retired with planning experience *before* the era of 'growth dependent planning', which began during the 1980s and continues to the present day (Rydin, 2013, p. 3; Lord and Tewdwr-Jones, 2014). They are also part of the baby-boomer generation among which the Green Belt commands particularly high levels of support (see Chapter 7). Indeed, the Green Belt, as associated so closely with the post-war planning system, almost seemed interwoven with their professional identity[106]. Many of them spent most of their working lives in the public sector and were driven by an ethos of public service (Bates *et al.*, 2020; Schoneboom and Slade, 2020; Tait *et al*, 2020).

Many of the middle-aged planners, typically in their 40s and 50s, were particularly critical of the Green Belt. Their professional experience has only been of growth-dependent planning in which they

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[106] In some cases, it was a policy that they implemented with one planner interviewed drawing and extending the WMGB boundary in Warwickshire. Another planner joined Avon County Council shortly after its boundaries had been approved in 1964 (Crossman, 1975).

have been acculturated, typically working largely in the private sector, and they had more awareness of the housing crisis, often through its effects on their children (Clifford, 2016; Grange, 2017; Raco and Savini, 2018). Young planners in their 20s and 30s tended to be not so outspoken in criticising the Green Belt, perhaps reflecting the fact they were earlier in their careers and not so confident of expressing their professional 'voice' (Slade *et al*, 2019, p. 33). Clear generational differences can, therefore, be seen among planners in their direct attitudes towards it and the potential impact of age, professional identity, sector of work and wider societal attitudes upon these views alongside personal/professional values is fascinating (although beyond this project's scope) (Kenny, 2019c). Nevertheless, a range of views was still expressed even among planners of similar ages and there was not uniform, linear progression in support of the Green Belt according to age as this quote by a young planner in Focus Group II illustrates:

> '*The Green Belt is always seen as sacrosanct and people will always value it in that way - that is a generational thing. I really think the Green Belt is something to be proud of as it is so well regarded, renowned and replicated across the world in different forms.*'

This shows the power of nostalgia, vision and imagination and discourse in planning although, clearly, there is the broader challenge of *learning* from the past whilst not allowing to prevent vision of an innovative future (Connell, 2009).

8.3.   Conclusion: Who has power in planning?

The chapter has weaved together the various frameworks by which power and politics in planning has been conceptualised and now returns to the crucial, overarching research question of planning in power in relation to the Green Belt.

Which Groups Have the Most Power in Planning?

Whilst campaigners and some homeowners *attempt* to exercise power via the dimensions through planning's political nature, arguably a direct correlation cannot be drawn between these *attempts* and the *effectiv*e wielding of power, with these agonist *attempts* regularly being circumscribed, modulated and 'shut down' by national government/planning policy and the Planning Inspectorate

(Parker *et al*, 2015, p. 519). Indeed, the power of campaigners is often fiercely contested by housebuilders and planners, sometimes through overt exercises of power, such as the appeals system, and other times more subtly by trying to sway public opinion on the grounds of sustainability or solving the housing crisis (Rydin, 1985; Lukes, 2004). More theoretically, whilst the Green Belt is *a* cause of the crisis, reality is more nuanced than it being, along neo-Marxian lines (Foglesong, 1986; Lake, 1993), the main weapon in home-owning capitalist armoury to defend high house prices. Arguably, even if the policy was abolished, there would still be opposition to development, high land/property prices and persisting, wider significant societal and generational inequalities regarding housing (which the Green Belt may *exacerbate* but is not the *root or primary cause* of) (Ryan-Collins *et al*, 2017; Christophers, 2018, 2019). Indeed, whilst planning is the *arena* in which competing groups, especially homeowners and housebuilders, *attempt* to exercise power and where conflicts are resolved (Short *et al*, 1987), it cannot be said, as some authors have implied (Airey and Doughty, 2020, p. 33), that the system generally or Green Belt in particular is 'rigged' or *disproportionately biased* in favour of one, 'rent-seeking' group, i.e. homeowners, as power is *fiercely contested* (see Figure 40). In this vein, the system as a whole probably does not need *radical* reform as proposed by the White Paper neither does the Green Belt need abolition (Inch *et al*, 2020; MHCLG, 2020a).

Key Actors/Actants in the Planning System
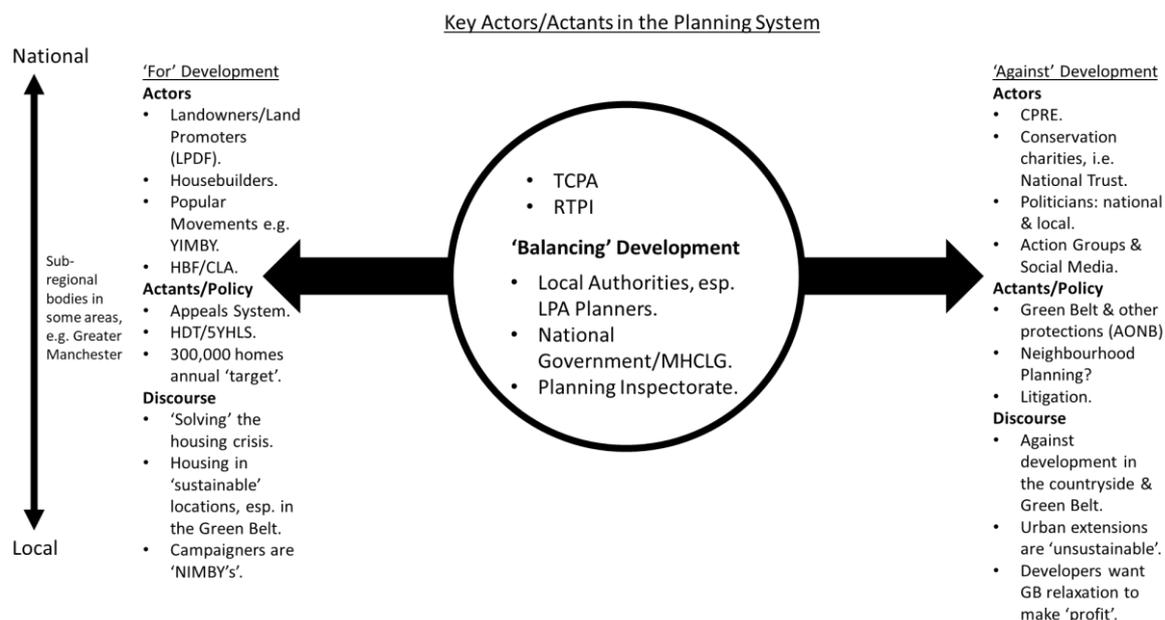
Figure 40 - Conceptual Diagram of Key Actors in the Planning System

How is Power Exercised?

Lukes' (2004) *three dimensions* and the 'Politics' and 'politics' framework (Sims and Bossetti, 2016, p. 37), has illuminated overt attempts by campaigns to exercise power, such as a protest march around a proposed development site boundary in the Green Belt, alongside more subtle, discoursal attempts, like the 'politics of affect' associated with CPRE's campaigns about the countryside being 'concreted over' (Harrison and Clifford, 2016, p. 585).

The difficulties of empirically establishing the *effective exercise of power* by campaigners in this study probably reflects the central difficulty of defining what power 'is' and how effectively its exercise can be measured, which is particularly prescient given planning's conflicted and contested nature (Flyvbjerg, 1998; Dowding, 2006; Robinson, 2006). Operationally, a key limitation to Lukes' is the importance of space in the exercise of power and politics both in the decision-making process and power of discourse (Massey, 1994; Taylor, 2000; Allmendinger and Haughton, 2012). Indeed, superficially similar places or LPAs can take different approaches towards Green Belt management and release, such as South Gloucestershire and North Somerset or Tandridge and Sevenoaks, due to *place specific factors and institutional culture* (Amati and Yokohari, 2006). This does not mean that

Lukes' *Three Dimensions* cannot be used as a *basis* for theorising power in planning but suggests that multi-scalar factors are crucial with place-based empirical studies being vital for critically analysing how and why different actors and actants attempt to exercise power (Sturzaker, 2010).

On balance, the politicised nature of planning is perhaps inevitable and necessary to ensure that it has public transparency, democratic accountability and legitimacy (Raynsford Review, 2018b; Parker and Street, 2019; Goode, 2020g). However, societal needs from planning or it more effectively serving the 'public interest', especially through addressing climate change and more affordable housing, has to be balanced against this need for democratic legitimacy (Tait, 2016, p. 335; Slade *et al*, 2019, p. 11; Lennon, 2020, p. 1). Arguably, its too politicised governance structure associated with localism needs overhauling (hence the 'recommendations' Chapter (9) following this 'problematising' one).

In closing, alongside the calculative turn in planning with the reflexive professionalisation of campaigning (Bradley, 2018, p. 24, 2020b, p. 8), vision, nostalgia and imagination in planning continue to be vital for campaigners and planners. Clearly, planning involves evidence *and* vision but the system could begin to move away from some of its technical, numbers-driven nature to better harness popular vision and more productively involve the public in planning.

Chapter 9: The Geography and Governance of the Green Belt

9.1.   Introduction: Structures and Processes

This final empirical chapter draws together the preceding ones into recommendations and bridges the findings and conclusion. Many of the issues associated with the Green Belt in the data are governance related so this chapter examines recommendations by focusing the policy's geography *and* governance at the strategic, regional/sub-regional scale. This is critically important because the Green Belt is an inherently *regional* growth management policy and strategic governance was a key area of consensus between campaigners and planners. The chapter begins with theorising the policy as a regionalising concept which often contests and conflicts with its conceptualisation as a highly political, territorial and 'rationalistic' governance issue intensified during the era of localism (Mace, 2018, p. 4). It then evaluates the political 'feasibility' (Breheny, 1997, p. 210) of alternative governance arrangements for its strategic management through developing a broader, transferrable analytical framework of strategic planning which is cognisant of the current political context. The chapter highlights the importance of strategic *structures* for effective decision-making throughout whilst acknowledging Harrison *et al's* (2020) argument that formal, statutory 'Regional' planning covering a fixed geographical area, like the RSSs, is unlikely to be revived due to a vastly changed political context and difficulties with predicting the future. It therefore focuses on *strategic* rather than 'Regional' planning in governance terms whilst contending that the *concept* of the 'region' is still important in planning with widespread consensus among planners/planning stakeholders on the need for some *form* of strategic planning of the Green Belt and housing numbers.

9.2.   Conceptualising Governance and the Green Belt

Green Belts as a Regionalising Concept

There is arguably a juxtaposition between the Green Belt being a regionalising, coordinating concept in the popular mind, policy terms and by planners/campaigners, and the fierce territoriality often displayed in the county system of governance in (attempts) to resolve the central planning or governance 'dilemma' of protecting the Green Belt *and* meeting housing need (Wannop and Cherry, 1994, p. 52; Colomb and Tomaney, 2016; Riddell, 2020b).

Building on the literature and data, the Green Belt can be conceptualised as a regionalising concept in normative terms among planners and *professional* campaigners (often retired planners), with the concepts of the 'region' and 'strategic', firmly embedded in their strategic vision and spatial imagination, especially from training at planning school (Valler and Phelps, 2018). As the preeminent *regional* growth management policy in England, the Green Belt is a prime example of strategic thinking associated with Abercrombie and other planning 'heroes', such as Howard and Unwin (Amati and Yokohari, 2007, p. 312). It can also be conceptualised as a regionalising concept in the *popular* mind with Bradley's work (2019a, p. 181) drawing attention to the broader, regionalising vision that campaigners often have of the policy as an entity or object which connects a region together, like the M25/M60. The chapter argues therefore that planners *and* campaigners often begin with the similar conceptual starting point or spatial imaginary of the need to view the Green Belt, housing and planning generally from a strategic perspective. This forms the empirical cornerstone on which recommendations for strategic governance are built.

The Politics of Planning - The Green Belt as a Territorial Issue
However, the policy is also often politically and popularly conceptualised as a more political, rationalistic issue with competing theorisations of it as a regionalising *and* territorial concept

converging and competing in its governance[107]. For example, the rural shires, especially in the West Midlands like 'fruitful' Worcestershire and 'leafy' Warwickshire, often laying claim and ownership to 'their' Green Belt to contain 'industrial' conurbations (Hall, 1973b; Harrison and Clifford, 2016)[108]. Many of these governance issues are associated with the structure of local government, especially administrative boundaries, which has resulted in often large, (mainly) Labour cities, like Birmingham, with limited room to 'grow' within their own boundaries surrounded by (Conservative) rural 'shires' covered by the Green Belt (see key terms; Hall *et al.*, 1973a, pp. 617–622; Wannop and Cherry, 1994, p. 167). The institutions of the countryside, counties and Green Belt clearly intersect but the regular construction of the Green Belt as a territorial issue has made and make building an enduring system of strategic Green Belt management in England a perpetual challenge.

However, as Chapter 2 outlined, the conjunction of RSSs being abolished, deepening housing crisis and diminishing supply of suitable brownfield land for housing has resulted in the Green Belt becoming increasingly political and intensified conflicts over the policy's governance since 2010 (Inch and Shepherd, 2019). Although governance challenges and continual tension between cities and the counties has existed since the Green Belt was introduced, such as the Wythall Inquiry (1958), previously there were strategic *mechanisms* in place trying to resolve the planning 'dilemma', like new towns (Lord and Tewdwr-Jones, 2018). Nonetheless, the dilemma has been particularly intensified since 2010 in areas *without* statutory strategic planning, especially the West Midlands.

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[107] 'Rationalistic' is used here in a political sense with politicians often using the policy as a tool to gain and retain power (see Chapter 7; Mace, 2018, p. 4).

[108] The Herbert Commission (1960, p. 186) referred to Surrey County Council extending the MGB to ensure that: *'If London's population overlaps the Green Belt, as it's clearly doing, the emigrants shall alight, say in Hampshire or Sussex, rather than in Surrey'*. Self (1962, p. xx), reflected after the Wythall Inquiry that: *'The Government warmly recommended the implementation of restrictive Green Belts but held aloof from the complex problems of urban dispersal which must be solved if Green Belts are workable'.* This is a particular issue in the West Midlands with the historic antipathy of the counties towards Birmingham due to its rapid historic growth and worries about the City Council's boundaries expanding with its territorial 'assertiveness' (surrounding settlements were 'annexed' in 1909/1911/1928/1932/1965/1974) (see Chapter 2; Cherry, 1996, p. 152).

9.3.   Current Issues in the Governance and Geography of Green Belt – The Views of Planners and Campaigners

The Green Belt as a whole or strategic *entity* alongside historically being regional growth

management *policy* was explored by the planner interviewed from the RTPI:

> *'For most of the Green Belt's existence, there were satisfactorily strategic mechanisms in place so **it's only since 2010 there has been no strategic planning mechanism**...So it's the London Green Belt, not the Brentwood Green Belt...**If there is a need to reconsider Green Belt boundaries, it must happen at the level of the entire Green Belt, whether it is London or the West Midlands.'***

Moreover, the lack of a strategic approach caused professional campaigners widespread concern

regarding the Green Belt's spatial integrity because they viewed it as being released incrementally in

a piecemeal way and 'nibbled away'. This was a particular concern in the WMGB where, without

strategic planning, land from the Green Belt has been released for housing with campaigners giving

examples of the BDP, Warwick Local Plan (1470 hectares (of land)), Coventry Local Plan (1550

hectares accommodating 7000 homes) and the Draft Solihull Local Plan (Agbonlahor, 2017; Wilding,

2018b)[109]. For example, Planner (1), CPRE West Midlands, argued:

> *'The original policy has become **seriously undermined**...really government policy now is driving a **coach and horses through the definition of what are exceptional circumstances**...It is not supposed to be ossified and last forever, which is not to say that you should go to the other extreme and feel you can change it at the drop of a hat, anytime you choose. There is a middle way which says, 'Let's have a strong Green Belt policy but let's be prepared to review the extent of the Green Belt every, I don't like to put a figure on it**, but say every thirty years'**. But we are so far away from that now.'*

Concerns were raised about the Green Belt's temporal permanence as this is nominally enshrined in

national planning policy which underlines the need to '*keep land permanently open*' (MHCLG, 2019b,

p. 40). Nonetheless, the requirement to review local plans every 5 years fuelled campaigners'

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[109] A retired planner interviewed from Avon County Council highlighted 'pink areas' in the AGB's map from the 1975 Cribbs Causeway Public Enquiry. These were 'safeguarded for future use' and subsequently used. The researcher explored the Diaries of Richard Crossman (1975, p. 65), the Housing Minister, and the entry on 19th February 1965 read: 'I approved my Local Government Boundary Order for Bath and Bristol, the first really controversial decision I have taken'. Due to the Minister's foresight in insisting on 'pink' areas, there has been less development pressure on the AGB than the WMGB with its tightly drawn boundaries. Private Sector Planning Director (2) argued that, as most of the 'pink areas' have been developed, it is time for a AGB review.

concerns about releasing land from the Green Belt for housing becoming the 'norm' and driven by short-termism in policy, especially meeting housing numbers. Again, there was a chronic lack of trust with campaigners being anxious about Green Belt reviews being conducted largely by private consultants, which they viewed as 'biased' and 'incorrect' through assessing individual land parcels against the five purposes, such as GL Hearn's Study (2018), rather than viewing the Green Belt as a whole geographical 'entity'. Planner (2), CPRE West Midlands argued:

> '*There should be a whole strategic review of it* [WMGB] *and not by these consultants employed by individual councils to review it and rank bits of parcels of land. They never consult the public and just bung it on a website!...it needs to be a really major public participation exercise and consultants wouldn't like that, because they are getting away with it.*'

Most private sector planners were also concerned and frustrated with the lack of strategic vision or management of the Green Belt. Their concerns centred on the failure of the Duty to Cooperate (DtC) to produce successful joint working between LPAs. They also (largely) viewed locally led planning as fuelling parochialism among campaigners and reactive or defensive behaviour among LPAs as 'attempting' to lower housing numbers to minimise Green Belt release rather than proactively and positively planning for housing 'need', as planner from housebuilder (1) argued:

> '*Bigger than local planning in the West Midlands is atrocious...there is a shortage in Birmingham of 38,000 homes and I see absolutely no evidence whatsoever of them (Councils) resolving the problem...it is very political and, when you had the regional agencies* (RSSs), **the councils would say 'Well, you know, the figure has been imposed on us'.** *That is why they were dissolved...But having now got a bottom-up system, we find that it is very politically uncomfortable for the local councillors...you are now in a situation of trying to deal with issues that are bigger than local but there is not necessarily any organisation to do it...reviewing Green Belt is difficult because you are starting to see reviews come through but, again, they are doing it in a very bitty, piecemeal way so it might be just one local authority looking at the Green Belt that is in their part/administrative area and, again, the whole thing is very political. So there should be an overview of Green Belt and that might need to be done on a national or regional scale. It can't necessarily be done locally.*'

This quote is interesting because, although it shows a different perspective to campaigners regarding the necessity of Green Belt release, there is a united overall perspective of the Green Belt as a regionalising *concept*. Likewise, the HBF Planner argued:

'In an old, old Plan [1964 South East Study]*…They split the hinterland of London into areas and had various growth areas. The most famous one was Area 6* [see key terms]*…massive growth areas…because we knew that London was going to continue to grow economically and therefore we wanted to provide houses for people who had to move out of London because we were constrained* [with the Green Belt]. *There is* [now] *no regional planning…a strategic, (blanket) policy, like Green Belt, should surely be sorted out at a strategic level and **yet we don't have a strategic level of planning with which to do it**. So, it is left to people, like Birmingham City, to talk to Solihull, Bromsgrove and all the other surrounding authorities saying - 'Would you like to take some of our housing needs?' rather than saying - 'We have got a 60,000 figure to distribute, you are going to take 10,000 in a coherent sub-national plan'.*

Popular, normative support for the policy as a principle seemed inextricably and reflexively linked,

regionally and nationally, with rationalistic, political support for it as the HBF Planner continued:

'Green Belt is a very emotive subject and, because it is emotive, politicians are very nervous about it…so it is much easier for politicians to go - 'Oh, it's Green Belt, it's sacrosanct. We don't even need to think about it because we have had a policy for nearly ninety years, and it has worked'.

The lack of strategic planning further politicising decision-making, especially contradictions in

national policy and political interventions, like the BDP, were highlighted whilst Private Sector

Planning Director (South East) (2) argued:

*'You have a political choice, and which is more important - **protecting the Green Belt or putting development in the most sustainable place**? Strategic planning is something that the system needs…because, inevitably when you are making big controversial decisions, as members going back to the politics in that district, you are all going to be affected to a greater or lesser extent by that decision and going to be lobbied by people who live in the district. It is very difficult to make difficult decisions. **Planning is as much about politics as it is about anything else**'.*

The pressing need for strategic planning was also highlighted by National Private Sector Planner (2):

'What we need now are simple, strategic documents which look at the wider housing market areas and that aren't weighty, long-winded, and voluminous as the previous regional planning system was. It got too big. We need simple sub-regional and city-wide planning statements and there should be public participation at the level associated with that. Then, when we get to the local planning stage, we need to have a further layer of public participation, obviously, when allocations and boundary review start occurring - then that's an important point for the public to come in and have their say, especially if it affects them personally. So, with public participation, we have to be careful with consultation overload but I think there is a role for participation at every level targeted to the people that need to be involved and developers and pressure groups'.

Interestingly, a national Conservative politician interviewed, who was sceptical of strategic planning, still recognised the challenges regarding the Green Belt's governance but justified the locally led approach:

> 'It was never expected to be an easy ride [DtC] *and sometimes it is difficult but I think it is the right approach because the alternative is that you automatically revert to a kind of national or a very high level of regional planning by bodies that don't have the local knowledge that LPAs have. So, I think it is the right approach and, of course*, **the Green Belt is always one of the issues of greatest contention within that**'.

However, planners and professional campaigners mostly perceive the Green Belt as a regionalising, coordinating concept (Bradley, 2019a), forming the empirical foundation for conceptualising feasible geographical alternatives.

9.4.   Towards a Strategic Green Belt Approach and an Analytical Framework of Strategic Planning

Professional campaigners acknowledged that, *if* the policy is to be reviewed, they would prefer it to be as part of a longer-term, strategic review[110]. In the West Midlands, CPRE and the Futures Network are taking a proactive role in advocating for strategic planning with the campaigner Jean Walters MRTPI setting out criteria for a potential Green Belt review:

• 'It must be steered by a body without a vested interest in development.
• It must include representation by a wide range of interests – conservation and environmental bodies as well as developers.
• It must examine the strategic purpose of the Green Belt in question besides its geographical extent, for the two things go together.
• It must examine possible deletions from the Green Belt and possible additions to it on an equal footing. There must be equal potential for either change.
• A comprehensive review should not take place within 15-20 years of the previous review'.
    Letter to Andy Street, Mayor of the West Midlands Combined Authority (2018) (Quoted with permission).

Although there was not universal agreement on the specifics of Walters' criteria among planners and campaigners, the four broad principles that she identified for Green Belt Review - temporal and

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[110] At the London Plan Examination, which the researcher attended, Richard Knox-Johnston, Chairman of CPRE Kent, argued that, if a review took place, it should be of the *whole* MGB (Goode, 2019b).

spatial considerations, governance and legitimacy - strongly resonate with, and are grounded in the quotes above so form the basis of an analytical framework to evaluate the feasibility of strategic planning (Table 34):

Table 34 - Key criteria for strategic planning	
Geographical Scale	Decisions on strategic matters, such as Green Belts and locations of strategic housing allocations, need to be made at the 'larger-than-local' scale to enable strategic consideration of the *whole* Green Belt and allow *all* growth options, like additions/deletions and new towns, to be explored.
Timeframe	Long(er) term plans are vital to add certainty to planning, give more predictability to developers, more certainty to campaigners and reduce land speculation.
Governance	Ensure structures and decisions are beyond the *immediate* political cycle locally and nationally so they are not dismantled after not being allowed to 'bed-in', like RSSs, and to reduce the amount of decisions made for short-term political reasons giving more certainty to the public/developers.
Legitimacy	The body needs to be seen as transparent and 'neutral' alongside having some democratic legitimacy to gain the trust and confidence of campaigners and the public.

'Feasibility' is defined here as an institution's durability, with the RSSs being only short-lived, so this framework stresses the importance of governance and legitimacy, especially given planning's political nature (Breheny, 1997; Mace, 2018). The *process* of planning emerged in the data as vital alongside actual planning *outcomes* with public confidence in the system being key to its effective functioning (Parker *et al*, 2020). Moreover, most retired West Midlands planners highlighted the importance of professional *forums/networks* in which controversial issues, especially housing and Green Belt issues, can be discussed and seen *by the public* to be discussed (like Planning Committees or Regional Assemblies) (Goode, 2019a, 2021). Temporal and spatial considerations are very important and intertwined with Green Belt reviews having to cover a defined spatial area *and* particular timeframe hence the framework's recommendations regarding time and space. Certainty is also vital for housebuilders as the planner from housebuilder (2) argued:

> *'So, it is basically lift it* [the Green Belt] *and review what you want for a longer period. Fifteen or five years as now in local planning is not enough, not when you are imposing something of this magnitude. Do that - be really ambitious but realistic.'*

The framework is therefore empirically based on a *regional* case study but these broader principles have wider relevance and importance for strategic planning, with some participants calling for better dissemination of 'best practice' regarding joint local plans and Green Belt reviews (Goode, 2019c).

Applying the Analytical Framework: Considering Alternative Governance Arrangements
Four main governance possibilities emerged from the data:

1. Grant planning powers to all Combined Authorities/Strategic Planning Bodies to conduct Green Belt reviews, like Greater Manchester/London.
2. Return to County Structure Plans, such as the Oxfordshire Plan 2050.
3. Reassemble voluntary, professional networks, like the West Midlands Forum.
4. Create a new body or 'Commission' for each Green Belt, such as National Parks, to conduct a long(er) term Green Belt Review on behalf of LPAs. It would be composed of local or regional politicians alongside experts from developer, planner, and campaigner backgrounds. It could be part of a broader, strategic plan. The Commission would allocate areas of restraint/development and review Green Belt boundaries so would have a clear remit of planning the Green Belt's overall land-use for the long(er) term for each Green Belt. Strategic planning would focus on general strategic matters related to planning, such as transport and education, and cover the *whole* country.

Reviving RSSs was not included due to their abolition and probably not being feasible in governance or legitimacy terms, especially with the historic and current antipathy of the governing Conservative Party to regional planning (Allmendinger and Haughton, 2012). Each of these governance possibilities is now evaluated in turn based upon the data and analytical framework.

Combined Authorities
These are existing bodies and, being headed by a democratically elected Mayor, gives them democratic legitimacy. Crucially, they have political support with the Conservative Local Politician, Sutton Coldfield arguing:

> *'The Mayor…is the guardian now of the economic interests of the West Midlands…he should seek to nail down where the housing numbers should be. It should be managed at the regional and sub-regional level and is probably best to be explored by the Mayor with the planning powers. **I want to give him the strategy and the planning authority can have tactics**…we need to build a lot more homes, but the critical thing is that, they must be in the right place. So a Mayor is in a better place often to adjudicate where those places should be than the local authority.'*

However, there are still serious governance challenges because, where planning powers have been granted to Combined Authorities and strategic planning bodies, like Greater Manchester and the

West of England, Green Belt release has been very controversial and politicised, as subject to the electoral cycle, thereby undermining the longevity of Green Belt reviews (Bradley, 2019b; Branson, 2019a). Moreover, for some Combined Authorities, especially the West Midlands, getting planning powers is too politically sensitive as these bodies rely upon voluntary cooperation (Young, 2020). Most of these bodies do not encompass the *whole* Green Belt so would have limited strategic oversight (Goode, 2019c).

Return to County Structure Plans

Planner (2) from CPRE West Midlands advocated returning to (statutory) Structure Plans arguing that they allowed a more strategic perspective and gave the shires sufficient 'clout' to counterbalance, speak with one voice and 'stand up' to the cities. It is the preferred option of the Conservative MP, Richard Bacon (Goode, 2019a)[111], and was recently advocated by a County Councils Network Report (2020). However, due to austerity and difficulties in LPA resourcing, there is already an increase in 'joint' local plans within and across counties and currently some restructuring in local government towards unitary authorities, some along county lines[112] (Pike *et al.*, 2018; Goode, 2019c; Riddell, 2020b). In governance terms, counties have democratic legitimacy, command popular support and structure planning works well where the county covers the county town or largest settlement and the surrounding hinterland, such as Oxfordshire and Herefordshire (Goode, 2019c). Nonetheless, county boundaries are not contiguous with England's current social and economic geography of city-regions (Breheny and Rookwood, 1993). Furthermore, resurrecting them would potentially revive the perpetual tension and tussle between conurbations and counties over the Green Belt and be deeply enmeshed in the electoral system, potentially jeopardising the longevity of plans. Additionally, institutional memory, culture and path dependency can 'frame' the dominant future vision of place

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[111] At the 2018 Conservative Party Conference, Bacon recognised that 'larger-than-local' planning is needed although he thought that the RSSs were at an 'artificial' scale (Goode, 2019a, 2019b).
[112] For example, the Oxfordshire Plan 2050 covers the county (Private Sector Planning Director South East (2)).

in counties but this vision may not necessarily be the 'right' one in sustainability terms (Dühr, 2018;

Valler and Phelps, 2018, p. 699)[113].

Reassemble the voluntary, professional networks

Some retired planners advocated reviving strategic planning by voluntary networks and their

professional expertise, such as the Regional Planning Officers Group:

> '*Local authorities don't come together anymore...*(like) *the West Midlands Forum and this is before Regional Assemblies. The Forum came out of quite an early form of regional planning in the late 60s, early 70s and it was a non-statutory body, so it was a voluntary grouping, but they felt this was a way of mutually discussing the region's planning issues.*' (Retired Structure Planner (West Midlands)).

Reassembling voluntary networks would be more straightforward as being voluntary, not statutory,

some interviewees argued that more can be achieved when relying on mutual goodwill and trust.

However, this raises the question as to *why* the current Government has not reassembled them.

Additionally, there are issues with democratic legitimacy when experts are perceived to be making

decisions outside of the public's view and 'behind closed doors' (Allmendinger and Haughton, 2012).

Furthermore, as with the DtC, some governance issues, like the Green Belt and housing numbers, are

so controversial that they require statutory steer and underpinning, as a Private Sector Young

Planner (National) argued:

> **'*It's for national Government to make a change for the better…in terms of coming up with a structure, whatever that might be, for regionally working out what to do in the South East*…*it's not going to be local authorities or even the Mayor - it needs to be nationally*'.**

Creation of a Green Belt Commission

The proposal of a Green Belt 'Commission' was developed as a conceptual ideal by the researcher

based on the analytical framework and interview findings. As with National Parks (Maidment, 2016),

quasi-political and expert-led governance models can be effective, long-lasting and generally

command the confidence of campaigners, developers and the public. The Commission would give the

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[113] For example, Oxfordshire's dispersed growth/county towns policy where jobs have continued to grow and centralise in Oxford but there is insufficient or slow public transport, especially from Witney via the A40, resulting in notorious traffic congestion (Dorling, 2019; communication between Dorling and the author).

unique governance possibility of covering the *whole* Green Belt *and* taking strategic decisions for the long term, perhaps 25-30 years, on which land should be protected and developed as part of a strategic sub-regional/regional plan, like the South East Plan (see figure 41). Indeed, the idea of a Single Joint Expert Group to make decisions on the Green Belt has recently been advocated by Christopher Young (2019b), a leading planning QC. However, Young envisaged that this would be led by the private sector while this chapter argues for a more mixed or balanced body made up, like National Parks, of locally elected politicians alongside planning experts to help ensure democratic legitimacy (Table 35).

| Table 35 - Towards a Green Belt Commission – Initial Recommendations	
Geographical Scale	A Commission would be in each major Green Belt, sitting alongside a strategic plan, and would review the *whole* Green Belt, allocate areas of restraint/growth and draw boundaries. This would follow a National Plan which has reviewed the Green Belt's purpose and *overall* spatial extent.
Timeframe	Ideally 25-30 years, probably 15-20 years, to give long(er) term certainty around Green Belt boundaries to landowners, housebuilders and campaigners and build public confidence.
Governance	Formed of experts and locally elected politicians making decisions, like National Parks. A clear remit of a long term review rather than deciding individual planning applications.
Legitimacy	Being formed of local politicians alongside experts would potentially build public confidence surrounding its objectivity, compared to private planning consultants largely conducting Green Belt reviews as now. Like a Royal Commission, it would take representations and evidence from interested parties.
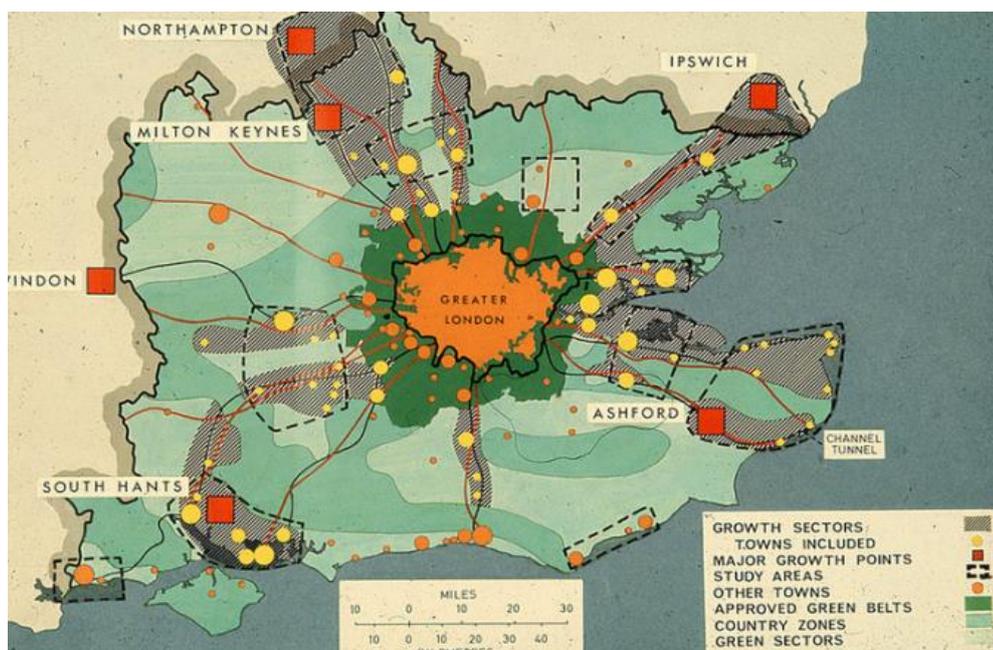
Figure 41 - The South East Study 1964 (From (Lainton, 2014, p. 1) – The Green Belt Commission would similarly allocate broad areas of growth and restraint.

Private Sector Young Planner (National) also underlined the importance of such a body covering the

whole Green Belt:

> *'There needs to be a body which reflects the area that needs to be reviewed…So, it is how you go about doing that when the Metropolitan Green Belt extends so far outside London. I think realistically (and also to be effective),* **any strategic body needs to take that really broad strategic view of the whole of the area that it could encompass'**.

Of course, such a body could be problematic, especially regarding democratic legitimacy, as Public

Sector Planner (3) West Midlands explained:

> *'If you had a Green Belt Council, I suppose the obvious issue with that is where does it get steer from? It is probably introducing more uncertainty.'*

Herein lies another central governance 'dilemma', especially the tension between democratic

legitimacy and the necessity of long-term strategic decision-making based on evidence (Wannop and

Cherry, 1994, p. 52; Sturzaker, 2017; Raynsford Review, 2018b). A Commission which is less

politicised as beyond the immediate electoral cycle but still including politicians in decision-making is

a balanced approach, especially as frequent changes in council control under the current system is

what often creates uncertainty and renders decision-making difficult, like South Oxfordshire (Goode,

2019a). Indeed, the inadequacy of localist, Combined Authorities and other approaches, such as

structure planning, mean that it is important to consider with more vision about whether strategic

planning and the policy could be managed more successfully through a Green Belt 'Commission' as

the approach most effectively incorporating various aspects of the framework. However, in the

short/medium term, granting planning powers to all Combined Authorities is probably the most

feasible way for strategic planning to be revived given that they are more likely to encompass city

regions than structure plans.

9.5.   Discussion and Conclusions

This chapter has addressed the fundamental issue in this thesis that planning is often conflictual, controversial, and contentious as balancing different, often competing, interests (Rydin, 2011, 2013). It has focused on the central governance 'dilemma' of meeting housing need *and* protecting the environment (Short *et al*, 1987, p. 40). As the strongest protection against development, this dilemma is often most challenging regarding the Green Belt with the chapter examining how the localism agenda has exacerbated the dilemma and exploring the governance *process* and *spatial scale* at which it should be resolved.

The chapter has addressed many of the issues raised in Chapter 2 about the importance of the Industrial Revolution, which has created an enduring dualism of town and country, especially in the West Midlands, with the Green Belt being popularly seen as personifying one of England's greatest institutions – the countryside (Mace, 2018). As Chapter 8 and this chapter has underlined, this has become inscribed in the country's political geography with the widespread territorial desire of often Conservative counties to preserve 'their' countryside and Green Belt from encroaching 'industrial', usually Labour, conurbations (Goode, 2019a). This shows how similar institutions, including the Green Belt and counties, can overlap, intersect or militate against each other although, more broadly, these institutions are tied up in nationalism with the popular contrasting of the *English* system of counties with the 'other' *technocratic* European approach of 'regions' (Colomb and Tomaney, 2016). The power of the normative, cultural and historical institutionalism can be seen in the durability of counties and the Green Belt notwithstanding the growing importance of the concept of city regions internationally, such as Grand Paris, alongside requirements of capital and neo-liberal logic for strategic planning (Dembski *et al.*, 2019).

Although the Green Belt has consistently been an inherently political issue and strategic planning has had a troubled history in England due to these deep historical factors, in a 'hyper' political era of the

localism agenda, Brexit and Trump (Barry *et al.*, 2018; Jessop, 2018), this chapter has argued that the Green Belt is becoming increasingly politicised, notwithstanding scholars' arguments on post-politics (Allmendinger and Haughton, 2011, p. 314). Indeed, the strategic planning 'agenda' has arguably suffered between the 'rock' of increased Government centralisation of planning (see Chapter 8) and the 'hard place' of the localism agenda (Boddy and Hickman, 2018, p. 198; Lord and Tewdwr-Jones, 2018). Furthermore, as outlined in Chapters 3, 4 and 7, this political geography is interwoven with a social geography in England of widespread opposition to housebuilding motivated by fear of change surrounding the popular planning principles of the countryside and Green Belt alongside place attachment.

However, whilst this historical and current context poses great challenges for planners and scholars in making the 'case' for strategic planning and the prospects of federal government may currently appear a theoretical ideal in England (Rae, 2016; Harrison, Galland and Tewdwr-Jones, 2020) [114], the demise of statutory regional planning has failed to 'solve' the pressing and deepening housing crisis, even if measured on the narrow metric of housing supply (as documented in Chapters 3 and 6) (Lund, 2017; Inch and Shepherd, 2019). However, the electoral success of political parties, especially the Conservatives, depends upon successfully 'solving' this housing crisis (Tait and Inch, 2016; Inch and Shepherd, 2019). Moreover, the discontent with locally led planning among planners and campaigners, which this chapter has documented, has arguably found a broader popular political backlash, especially against the frequent Green Belt releases of the localism era, as seen in the 2019 Local Elections. Wannop and Cherry (1994) argued that the consensus underpinning post-war strategic planning was that development locations need to be planned strategically and, crucially, because planning decisions are often difficult and controversial, local politicians needed to be able to deflect and redirect the 'blame' of strategic decisions to the regional or national level. Consequently,

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[114] The power of central government and lack of federalism, like Germany, means that regional layers of governance can be swiftly abolished, e.g. Greater London Council/RSSs (Allmendinger and Haughton, 2012).

given this governmental logic, it now appears that there *is* widespread political acceptance that some *form* of strategic planning is needed so it is vitally important for planners and scholars to critically consider alternative *forms* of strategic planning (as Wargent and Parker (2018) did for Neighbourhood Planning). This chapter has begun this process for the Green Belt but also for strategic planning more broadly by developing an analytical framework.

However, until recently, the Government appeared to have pinned its hopes on Devolution Deals, city-regions alongside joint local plans although the centralised nature of these 'deals', the power imbalances and 'strings' that they entail, the geographical unevenness in their take-up and the neo-liberal nature of their governmentality have all been critically outlined by academics (Davoudi and Madanipour, 2013; McGuinness and Mawson, 2017)[115]. The future of strategic planning is currently bleak as it is reported that comprehensive local government reorganisation towards county unitaries in the repeatedly delayed Devolution White Paper is unlikely to go ahead (County Councils Network, 2020a; Riddell, 2020b). Moreover, the abolition of the DtC is proposed in the Planning *White Paper* without offering any replacement (MHCLG, 2020a). It is reported that the expectation is that each LPA will meet its own housing numbers, set by national Government, although the feasibility of this proposal, especially in areas with strategic constraints like the Green Belt, has been widely criticised by practitioners (Young, 2020).

Nevertheless, the Green Belt is one of the few parts of the planning system that the Conservatives do not propose completely overhauling in the Planning *White Paper* and, whilst this chapter has underlined the importance of strategic planning in *governance* terms, it has also argued that the 'region' and 'strategic' is an enduring and prescient *concept* for planning and geographical theory and practice. The Green Belt is *the* preeminent example of this as a regional growth management policy

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[115] Devolution or City Deals are voluntary arrangements agreed between councils and the Government to work together in exchange for funding and increased devolved functions, sometimes including strategic planning (Lowndes and Gardner, 2016; Tomaney, 2016). They sometimes cover city-regions, like Greater Manchester.

and still conceptualised as a regionalising, coordinating concept by planners *and* professional campaigners. Based on this theorisation and the governmental logic for strategic planning, the chapter evaluated alternative governance arrangements for strategically managing the Green Belt, based on the case study of the West Midlands. Arguably, a Green Belt 'Commission' would permit longer-term, strategic planning to help address the governance dilemma by safeguarding the Green Belt's future to give more confidence to campaigners whilst aiming to solve the housing crisis by strategically planning and meeting housing need to give greater certainty to developers. However, a strategic Green Belt review would depend on being part of a broader strategic plan so the chapter has also focused on the importance of strategic planning generally. This would enable strategic consideration of the various spatial visions and growth/restraint options available, such as new towns, *alongside* the Commission's Review to try to more proactively and productively involve the public in planning (see Chapter 8). It would also sit within and follow a national plan reviewing the overall purpose and spatial extent of the Green Belt (see Chapter 6) and a national Green Belt conversation (Chapter 7).

Finally, this study's key aim has been not just to be critical of the current system but suggest viable alternatives (Fainstein, 2010; Campbell *et al*, 2014). The empirical Chapters have worked through the various aspects of Breheny's (1997, p. 210) 'feasibility test' with Chapter 6 dealing with the practical and economic feasibility of the extent to which the Green Belt needs reforming to solve the housing crisis, Chapter 7 exploring the social acceptability of Green Belt reform and Chapters 8 and 9 exploring and addressing the central premise of this thesis - the political nature of planning, especially the Green Belt. However, it is ultimately up to politicians to decide how they would like to manage the Green Belt although this chapter and thesis has sought to make a strong case for strategic planning.

Chapter 10: Conclusions

10.1.   Introduction

This conclusion chapter is the culmination of the empirical Chapters on Housing (6) ((on) policy), Community Opposition (7) (the public and protesters), Politics (8) (politicians) and Governance (9) (process) which, in turn, were based upon the Methodology (5), Theoretical Frame (4) and Literature Review (2 and 4). Although each Chapter drew out theoretical and policy implications, these are broadened out here as synthesising the study's wider implications for planning and geographical theory, policy and the planning profession. The chapter argues for more integrated, positive strategic planning and develops the study's overall theoretical implications, especially the central challenge of reconciling community opposition with strategic planning, the past and present with the future and public opinion with the 'public interest', particularly the national (or regional) interest with local interest(s) (Tait, 2016, p. 335). The role of the planning system and planners balancing a wide range of interests and different, often competing, knowledge's is stressed alongside making the case for the academy and practice to strengthen their mutual links (Allmendinger and Haughton, 2012, p. 90; McDowell, 2016, p. 2093; Raynsford Review, 2018b; Bicquelet-Lock, 2019a). Areas for further research are highlighted before offering final reflections.

Drawing upon a mixed methods approach, the thesis evaluated the extent of the Green Belt's contribution to the housing crisis and assessed how far it is needs to be reformed. It conceptualised the policy as a regionalising, coordinating concept alongside theorising more broadly about community opposition to housebuilding and politics in planning. In this way, the thesis directly addressed the research aim and objectives through focusing on both the applied and theoretical aspects of the policy and wider planning system. In this way, it examined both the process and outcomes of the planning system (Rydin, 1985).

10.2. Contributions to Theory and Understanding of the Changing Context for Planning Practice

The contribution of the theoretical framework developed in the thesis

Regarding the central theoretical question about power in planning, notwithstanding the usefulness of Lukes' *three dimensions* in highlighting overt and subtle attempts at exercising power, the thesis found that the concept and effective exercise of power difficult to define as often fluid and contested (see Chapters 4 and 8) (Dowding, 2006). There is arguably an important 'gap' between campaigners and housebuilders *attempting* to exercise power and the *effective exercise* of power, especially in terms of empirically *demonstrable* planning outcomes. The literature on power, especially power in planning, is probably not sufficiently nuanced (Hastings, 1999; Cameron and Gibson, 2005). This demonstrates Cherry's (1982, pp. 116, 117) observation about power in Marxian theory - 'explanations of town planning are much more difficult…more penetrating analysis suggests that the reality is much more muddied'. This then raises deeper philosophical questions about what power 'is' and makes theorising power in planning more challenging although this probably reflects reality in its complexity (Robinson, 2006).

However, the thesis still found that planning is inherently contested and conflictual with various groups, particularly campaigners and housebuilders, *attempting to exercise power nationally and locally through seeking to sway planning decisions* (Short *et al*, 1987; Lukes, 2004, p. 150). However, whilst some may assert that planning is too heavily weighted towards particular groups, especially housebuilders (Raynsford Review, 2018a; Ellis, 2020), the thesis also found that there *are* important constraints in planning which restrict, check and balance the degree to which power can be exercised. Indeed, power ebbs and flows temporally with different political administrations locally and nationally, such as the pro-housebuilder Thatcher era and more environmentally conscious Major era (Ball, 1994; Ward, 2005). It an imperfect system but its utility lies in how, in managing land, it seeks to *manage, balance and reconcile* competing demands, visions and interests, especially from pro-development and pro-restraint actors/actants nationally and locally (Short *et al*, 1987; Rydin,

2011). However, as the strongest protection against development, the Green Belt is often the most

important and fierce arena of contestation (Healey *et al.*, 1988; Ward, 2005).

Theorising the changing role of the Green Belt

A central juxtaposition can be seen in the Green Belt's continuing presence, popularity and

prescience as a planning policy notwithstanding the deepening deregulation of the planning system

and broader neoliberalisation of the English economy (Prior and Raemaekers, 2007; Mace, 2018).

The thesis has underlined how this can be explained both through the 'deep' historical factors of the

Industrial Revolution and popular romanticisation of the English countryside *and* the adaptability and

flexibility with which the Green Belt's primary purpose has evolved over time. For example, the

primary role popularly conceptualised for the policy in the inter-war period was for recreation

changing to preventing urban sprawl and protecting agricultural land in the post-war era and then

evolving to supporting the redevelopment of brownfield land for housing, urban regeneration and

ensuring compact, 'sustainable' development to help address climate change (Amati and Taylor,

2010, p. 143). The primary role of the Green Belt is arguably experiencing another evolution currently

with the importance of 'rewilding' and green infrastructure coming to the fore with the Environment

Bill and the post-Brexit subsidy regime (HM Government, 2018). Again, this underlines the Green

Belt's adaptability, durability and robustness as an institution as resonating with the popular desire

to protect the English countryside and reflecting how its primary purpose evolves to reflect the key

changing priorities of planning policy.

Theorising the changing multi-level politics of English planning

In many ways, therefore, the politics of the Green Belt, especially its governance, reflects the broader

shifts in the political landscape whilst it retains the timeless overall political and popular appeal of

preserving the countryside and preventing urban sprawl. Nevertheless, whilst the waxing and waning

of regional planning can clearly be seen historically before 2010 and there were clear ideological

attacks of planning, especially during the 1980s, with the dismantling of strategic planning,

dominance of the localism agenda and increasing central Government intervention in the planning system, the period since 2010 can be seen a distinctive planning 'moment' in politics (Inch and Shepherd, 2019, p. 2; Lord and Tewdwr-Jones, 2018). This has produced the central juxtaposition whereby the Green Belt remains a nominally strategic growth management policy yet lacks a strategic governance policy to effectively manage the policy. Whilst there are signs of increasing political backlash locally and nationally against the release of land in the Green Belt for housing, which characterises the era of localism, i.e. in Guildford and South Oxfordshire (see Chapters 8 and 9), and the broader planning reform agenda, i.e. the Amersham and Chesham by-election, the broader political landscape arguably has been significantly changed since 2010 as remaining hostile to planning, especially regional planning (Young, 2021; Goode, 2021). This reflects broader critiques of regional planning and Harrison *et al*'s (2020, p. 1) provocation that 'regional planning is dead' so this thesis has therefore explored the potentiality and feasibility of more 'intermediate' or 'softer' spaces of governance (see Chapter 9) (Valler and Phelps, 2018, p. 1).

Theorising the importance of space
The thesis has drawn extensively upon the planning and geographical literature both in initially theorising the Green Belt and subsequent data interpretation, especially on geographical and governance issues, showing the importance of these literatures interchanging and 'speaking' to each other (Allmendinger and Haughton, 2012, p. 90). In contrast to the aspatial nature of much of the economic literature and frequently 'place neutral' and 'policy blind' nature of national housing policy (McGuinness *et al*, 2018, p. 330), the Green Belt *is* a prescient, inherently *geographical issue* with a spatial purpose, preventing urban sprawl, so geographical considerations *must* be a vitally important component in any reform (Goode, 2019a).

A key debate in Geography is the relationship between the global and local and, in particular, how generalisable findings and theory are from qualitative approaches, such as ethnography, feminist geography and Participatory Action Research, when these approaches often stress the particularity

of place (Kindon *et al*, 2007; Nagar *et al.*, 2009; Peck, 2015; McDowell, 2016). Some scholars, like

Cahill (2004), have attempted to discuss global, megatrends at the local scale, such as gentrification

with women in New York's neighbourhoods, but the Green Belt is *a* poignant multi-scalar issue and

policy as a *national policy largely managed locally*. Consequently, it is a very fruitful, albeit under-

researched, topic to theorise the planning system and wider society as this thesis has sought to do.

For example, researching the Green Belt and its relationship with the housing crisis in this thesis has

opened up the possibility of exploring how it has shaped wider urban development patterns in

England whilst interrogating the multi-faceted, multi-scalar nature of the housing crisis has informed

recommendations on the Green Belt's reform, especially the importance of affordability (Chapter 6)

(Christophers, 2018, 2019; Munro, 2018). Focusing on why communities oppose development

opened a rich seam of national/local and principle/place attachment factors shaping and forming

campaigners' views (Chapter 7). Examining the politics and governance of the Green Belt reveals the

close nexus between national and local government in England, which is symptomatic of its

centralised state, and opens up the prescient questions about the constitution, federalism and local

government reform (Chapters 8 and 9) (Lord and Tewdwr-Jones, 2018). This shows the profound

importance of space as a very significant shaper of societal relations whilst these relations are

inscribed into and can be interpreted from the contours of space (Massey, 1994; Harvey, 2001;

Castree, 2008). Geographical theory is therefore very helpful in conceptualising the Green Belt whilst

this thesis has found that a great deal can be 'learnt' in theorising from the policy regarding broad

questions, such as power in planning and society.

The Green Belt and the housing crisis
The housing crisis as a multi-faceted, complex 'wicked' problem
In operationalising theory and answering the central research question about the housing crisis,

which helps to empirically elucidate power in planning, the study found the crisis to be a multi-

faceted, complex conjuncture of local, national and international trends rather than *purely* about the

Green Belt and planning regulation (Hudson, 2015; Wetzstein, 2017; O'Brien, 2020). This underlines the need for more inter-disciplinarity housing research but planning theory is ideally placed to utilise these various theories being at the confluence of multiple disciplines (Ormerod and MacLeod, 2019).

The relationship between the Green Belt and the housebuilding industry

Most planners, including in the private sector, being supportive of the concept of the Green Belt, suggests that the policy provides certainty and stability for the development industry by preventing the market from being 'flooded' with new housing and 'crashing' house prices. In turn, this suggests that a more complicated relationship exists between business, especially housebuilders, and regulation than the literature assumes (Raco *et al*, 2019).

The relationship between the Green Belt reform and the housing crisis

Nonetheless, the Green Belt still contributes towards the housing crisis and some reform is needed, especially as significant change in the broader economic structure of homeownership and volume housebuilders building most new housing is unlikely anytime soon. The Green Belt often *exacerbates the crisis in particular locations*, especially in conurbations, like Birmingham, with limited room to accommodate housing 'need' within their own boundaries on brownfield land, particularly 'family' homes with gardens. Notwithstanding initial researcher expectations of this being largely a MGB problem, it kept reoccurring as an issue around the country, both in fast-growing cities, such as Bristol and Oxford, *and* post-industrial cities, especially the West Midlands and Greater Manchester, thereby underlining the importance of geographical, case study-based research of the policy. The thesis has therefore proposed a national review of the Green Belt's overall purpose and spatial extent (Chapter 6).

Nonetheless, abolishing the policy of *itself* is unlikely to solve the crisis thereby further weakening the central research proposition that it *disproportionately* benefits, and is *primarily* supported by homeowners, as increasing house prices (Chapters 4, 5 and 6). This highlights the utility of using a social justice framework of analysing who 'gains' and 'loses' from the Green Belt as a way to evaluate

policy (Kiernan, 1983, p. 83; Fainstein, 2000, p. 468; Flyvbjerg, 2004, p. 292). Indeed, the study found

that its social impacts are more nuanced than Hall *et al's* arguments (1973b, p. 433) in *Containment*

and that it is *not* the *direct* result of effective 'rent seeking' by homeowners (Ball *et al.*, 2014, p.

3010). More fundamentally, this demonstrates the difficulty of empirically establishing that policy

directly benefits/dis-benefits particular groups, the importance of 'spatial nuance' and necessity of

theorisation based upon empirical data rather than just logical assumptions or ideology (Soja, 2010;

McKee *et al*, 2017, p. 60).

The Green Belt and addressing community opposition to greenfield housebuilding
Moreover, the data showing that opposition to development is shaped by multi-scalar fears of

change including place attachment, environmental psychology, planning principles and the 'politics

of affect' rather than *purely* economic reasons, suggests that the house price hypothesis literature

has privileged the economic too much compared to the emotional and culture (see Chapter 7, Thrift,

2004, p. 57; Harrison and Clifford, 2016). The critical importance of vision and imagination in

planning emerged as a key way that planners and campaigners 'frame' the future regarding the

Green Belt at multiple spatial scales (Valler and Phelps, 2018, p. 1). The thesis found that, ultimately,

these competing visions need to be put to the public in a national and regional Green Belt debate

and the broader system needs to better incorporate 'community' knowledge (Bradley, 2018, p. 27).

Indeed, public deliberation is probably a more effective way to lead people to consider anew

solutions to the housing crisis and the importance of popular vision and imagination need greater

recognition in research as a motivation for campaigners (Sturzaker, 2011; Inch *et al.*, 2020).

The Green Belt and the politics of planning
The importance of politics in planning emerged particularly strongly regarding the Green Belt.

Although the politics of planning has long been recognised in research (Cherry, 1982; Albrechts,

2020), this study sought to go further than other studies, especially economic models, by seeking to

practically address the 'political' (Mace, 2018). However, there is a tension between ensuring that

planning has democratic legitimacy through politics but, crucially and more philosophically, that it also serves the 'public' interest, especially solving the housing crisis and climate change, when the system is so politicised as often marked by short-termism, partisanship and lobbying (Maidment, 2016; Tait, 2016; Inch, 2018; Colenutt, 2020a, 2020b). Again, this highlights the urgent need for strategic planning, especially of the Green Belt *and* housing numbers (Goode, 2019b, 2019a, 2020g).

10.3. Planning Policy and Governance

The pressing need for strategic planning to address the housing crisis and other issues
The proposed policy changes to the Green Belt, including a sustainability purpose underpinned by social and environmental objectives to address the affordability of new homes built there and help create a 'greener' policy, have already been outlined in Chapter 6. Consequently, broader structural and governance reforms, centred around the interlocking themes of better systematic integration and more positive planning, are focused on here. The Green Belt's historic success at containing urban areas is acknowledged alongside the effectiveness of the broader planning system in preserving the English countryside but planning is arguably more limited when it comes to positively delivering high quality new development (Sturzaker and Mell, 2016; Raynsford Review, 2020). The thesis throughout has outlined how many of these issues related to the Green Belt stem from the lack of strategic planning and conceptualised alternative arrangements to address this (Chapter 9). There is a role for national government to set up sufficient strategic governance arrangements and to more effectively integrate planning nationally, regionally and locally given the twin imperatives of solving the housing crisis and climate change (Raynsford Review, 2018b; Harris, 2020). The thesis has made the case for strategic decisions regarding the Green Belt and growth/restraint locations to be *ideally* made strategically through a Green Belt Commission and regional/sub-regional plans although it recognises that Combined Authorities conducting Green Belt reviews are probably the most feasible option in the short-medium term (Goode, 2019a).

Although planning is necessarily limited in what it can achieve, there is a case for stronger, more positive and integrated spatial planning along European lines (Nadin and Stead, 2008; Goode, 2019a). However, making this 'case' is currently challenging given the historic antipathy towards strategic planning of the governing Conservative Party, which swept away regional planning in 2010, whilst strategic planning was largely absent from the White Paper (Young, 2019d; MHCLG, 2020a; Simons, 2020a). Nevertheless, its necessity remains and has become increasingly poignant with the deepening housing crisis and failure of the localism agenda, especially the DtC, to meet the Government's 'target' of 300,000 new homes annually (McGuinness and Mawson, 2017; Goode, 2019a; MHCLG, 2020a).

Spatial scales and the decision-making process
The adversarial, confrontational DAD, 'Decide-Announce-Defend', nature of planning ideally needs to move towards more proactively and productively engaging people in planning and positively redirecting their energies towards a positive vision of place (Rydin, 2011, p. 95; Raynsford Review, 2018b). Neighbourhood Planning has been relatively successful in this regard but the challenge remains of more productively involving people in strategic planning (Cahill, 2004; Wargent and Parker, 2018). Underlying this is the fundamental governance challenge of the appropriate spatial scale at which decisions are made (subsidiarity), strategic decision-making actors and getting structures 'right' (Goode, 2019c, 2020g). Some planning decisions arguably need to be made strategically, such as strategic development sites, housing numbers and the Green Belt, with less scope for *local* politics. Perhaps in 'exchange' for less *local* politics in these higher-level, strategic decisions, there could be greater scope for more community and political engagement with other matters through Local Plans, such as design or community facilities. Although entailing more governance layers, Table 36 develops distinctive, idealised spatial scales of planning decision-making, drawing inspiration from the preceding empirical Chapters and the Raynsford Review (2018b, p. 103):

Table 36 - Idealised Governance Scales		
Spatial Scale	**Decisions Made**	**Extent of Community Involvement**
National	A National Plan setting out key transport priorities, economic objectives and broad locations of development and restraint, like the Oxford-Cambridge Arc. The overall spatial extent and purpose of the Green Belt could be debated as part of this.	People would be involved in the Green Belt debate. Whilst there would be broad involvement with the National Plan, there would be limited *direct* input with it being developed by central Government.
Regional	Setting out strategic transport, land-use and economic priorities. A more detailed plan of strategic development locations and Green Belt boundaries based on recommendations by the Green Belt Commission.	The public would be consulted on the overall spatial visions/options, like new towns etc., although actual decisions would be made by politicians alongside experts on behalf of residents.
Local	There would be greater public involvement but the focus would be on the character of development and ensuring supporting facilities rather than large, controversial strategic allocations or housing numbers.	High as with the Local Plan process now.
Neighbourhood	These would be integrated into local plans and updated at the review stage (Wargent and Parker, 2018). They would, as now, be concerned with the local character of areas and housing, especially its type, and maybe consider *small-scale* Green Belt release.	Very high as with current process.

These policy recommendations are necessarily broad because, as the Raynsford Review (2018a, 2020) and Planning White Paper (MHCLG, 2020a) highlighted, there is value in looking at the *whole* planning system holistically. Indeed, this often distinguishes academic planning research from practitioner studies which usually looks at one particular issue or policy (Rydin, 1985, 2013). Conversely, whereas the Raynsford Review (2018a) did not examine policy *per se*, this research has looked at a poignant policy, the Green Belt, and *then* explored the broader interlocking issues related to it in the empirical chapters (the housing crisis (6), community opposition (7), planning's political nature (8) and governance (9)).

10.4.   Planning Practice

The Profession

Chapter 7 highlighted the need for planners to better engage the public in planning, especially to involve a wider range of people, to rebuild people's trust in the system (Grosvenor, 2019; Edgar, 2020; Ellis, 2020). This is vital to developing a more inclusive, balanced popular 'conversation' on the

Green Belt. Another key challenge is better harnessing the public's tacit, experiential knowledge with this thesis proposing both a national and strategic Green Belt debate. As a minimum, it is important that planners take consultation sincerely as an inherent 'good' although perhaps the issue is more 'who'/'how' the *system* engages people (Upton, 2019; Goode, 2020c). In view of the widespread criticism that it is largely older people with property who 'shout the loudest' in community opposition and the Green Belt debate (Lloyd, 2006, p. 10), planners need to more critically consider *how* they engage the public, including the possibility of better utilising technology as outlined in the Planning White Paper (MHCLG, 2020a). However, technology is still being developed and physical interaction continues to have its value (Broderick, 2018; Wilson *et al*, 2019).

The Profession's relationship with the Government, policy, and academia
It is important for planners to consider policy improvement although, given work and time pressures and the seeming lack of Government responsiveness to their views on many issues, such as PDRs, resourcing and strategic planning, it is understandable why they give limited consideration to it (Harris, 2020; Hills, 2020). Nonetheless, a significant general challenge in this project was getting planners, especially younger ones, to critically reflect and constructively consider what the Green Belt *could* be. Perhaps this was somewhat inevitable for England's most popular and renowned planning policy but it reflects the broader literature on the 'calculative turn' in planning, its 'fragmentary', increasingly compartmentalised nature and growing proceduralism and 'box-ticking', which has left planners with little 'space' to critically reflect on policy effectiveness and the overall system (McAllister, 2017, p. 122; Parker *et al*, 2018, p. 734; Slade *et al*, 2019, p. 31). Nevertheless, considering policy improvement is still vital for academics and practitioners (Wargent and Parker, 2018) so that proposals are made to Government and planners/academics speak 'truth unto power' (Tickell, 1995, p. 237).

Finally, many planners interviewed expressed an interest in academic research but most complained that it was not 'relevant' enough to practice, too 'theoretical' and 'inaccessible' behind the paywalls

of academic journals. Of course, theoretical work has its value and planners may not be interested in or committed to exploring academic work (Martin, 2001; Dorling and Shaw, 2002; Soja, 2010). Additionally, as Bicquelet-Lock (2019) highlighted, practitioner and academic research is distinctive as often having different aims and priorities but the key is how academic research is *communicated* and *disseminated* to ensure that it is accessible (Kraftl *et al*, 2018). There also needs to be more mutual respect, dialogue and exchange between the academy and practice (Bicquelet-Lock, 2019a). Finally, there is a role for professional bodies, such as the RTPI/TCPA, and individual planners to continue to make the case for more powerful and positive planning (Kenny, 2019c; Slade, Gunn and Schoneboom, 2019).

10.5. Filling the Research 'Gap', Limitations and Further Research

The Research 'Gap' (See Introduction Chapter 1)

This study has filled an important research gap of geographically based, empirical work on the Green Belt which both theorises the policy *and* has practical policy relevance to the increasingly pressing 'wicked problem' of the housing crisis as the most significant driver of inequality in England (Lund, 2017, p. 36). In contrast to the often aspatial, radical recommendations of the economic school, the study has been cognisant of the Green Belt's institutional history and popular political support in developing recommendations as seeking to move the polarised popular debate forward. It has incorporated theoretical insights, vital for an academic project and drawn from the literature, opposing viewpoints, from speaking to different stakeholders, and consideration of what is politically feasible. The views of *planners* on the policy, which has been missing from many studies on the subject, has been crucially important to this research.

Another key gap that this thesis has sought to meet is exploration of the importance of space and geographical variability through a case study of the West Midlands whereas the Green Belt debate has focused largely on MGB. Indeed, the thesis has drawn on a range of multi-scalar sources of evidence through mixed methods compared to the somewhat narrow focus of some academic

studies or private sector consultants reports which largely focus on national statistics (For example: Hilber and Vermeulen, 2014; Broadway Malyan, 2015). Finally, as deriving theoretical insights from the geography/planning literature, the thesis sits at the intersection of theory, policy and practice which too often have been artificially separated.

Limitations

There were limitations to both the breadth and depth of the thesis, especially the Methodology (see Chapter 5). Firstly, analysing the Green Belt using a social justice approach was necessarily broad and it was challenging establishing causal links, such as the link between the Green Belt and house prices, whereas the Green Belt could have been analysed more closely by assessing it directly against the five purposes as would typically be done in a consultant's report. Nonetheless, whilst some of the detail and nuances of the policy's effectiveness may have been lost through this study's analytical approach, it was vital for the thesis to be grounded in the very topical issue of the housing crisis and using an established, academic analytical approach of social justice made it more related to the academic literature. Secondly, the findings and theorisation about *everyday* campaigners at the *regional* level was only based on extensive engagement with one campaign group (SSGB) and limited engagement with another one (PF). On reflection, there may have been an overfocus on interviewing planners and *professional* campaigners regionally rather than further engagement with everyday campaign groups in the West Midlands. This could potentially have led to planning 'knowledge' being privileged over 'community' knowledge (Bradley, 2018, p. 25), especially with the researcher being a planner himself, but given the restricted timeframe of data collection, the time limited nature of campaigners and difficulties of engaging with campaigners, like SSCG, this would have been much more logistically challenging. Indeed, more qualitative research is needed to focus on the characteristics of a range of campaign groups in different regions and whether opposition to Green Belt development varies significantly in character to greenfield development. Thirdly, many of the planners and planning stakeholders interviewed were drawn largely from the researcher's

professional network or had spoken or written on the Green Belt rather than necessarily being the representative view of the *whole* profession. However, this is a common issue with planning research (for example Tait *et al*, 2020), and the methodological challenges of capturing a representative sample were explored in Chapter 5. Finally, as exploring the importance of space, the study could have undertaken more geographically based case studies, especially of other regions such as the North West and North East (Sturzaker, 2010). This research largely focused on the West Midlands but these other areas, which have even more brownfield land and greater urban regeneration challenges, may have provided more spatial nuance on the policy's effectiveness and further elucidated its complex relationship with the housing crisis. However, the methodological reasons for focusing on the 'depth' of a single case study were explored in Chapter 5.

Further Research

There are other important avenues for further research including more publications based upon this project's empirical data. A wider area of further research could involve comparing the Green Belt with similar policies and non-Green Belt areas. For example, the Green Belt in England could be compared with the Scottish Green Belt policy as Scotland has a more flexible approach to it and research could probe the potential reasons for this, like a different popular conception of the countryside and the amount of developed and undeveloped land (explored with Planning Academic (4) in interview) (Lloyd and Peel, 2007). Additionally, comparing the English Green Belt to the Welsh one could be very instructive, especially why Wales only has one Green Belt (Cardiff/Newport). More broadly, comparing the English policy to other green belts internationally, both present and former Green Belts, like those in Christchurch, Tokyo, Sydney and Seoul, would be useful to evaluate their effectiveness, chart their spatial extent, explore their governance arrangements and the reason for their demise compared to the longevity and success of the English Green Belt. The effectiveness of the Green Belt as a policy needs to be compared with similar policies, like Urban Growth Boundaries in Portland and Melbourne, whilst the Green Belt could be compared with other growth

management policies, such as green wedges in Leicester for example. Cities with a Green Belt could be compared to demographically and economically similar cities without Green Belts, such as Hull/Liverpool, Exeter/York and Leicester/Derby, to research how different LPAs manage urban growth and further evaluate the Green Belt's effectiveness, especially its effects upon house prices etc. Finally, the Green Belt in England could be compared to growth management in other counties, like Ireland, whose planning system has a similar origin as Britain's but whose attitude and approach to development is very different (Fox-Rogers and Murphy, 2014, 2015). There could also be comparison with countries with looser planning systems, like the US and Australia, and those with stronger planning systems, such as Germany, the Netherlands or China.

Another fruitful area of wider research could be the land market and landowner attitudes/behaviour in England (Adams and Watkins, 2002; Bentley, 2017). For example, why has the Green Belt been so longstanding in England compared to other countries, like Japan and Australia, where landowner pressure forced governments to abandon attempts at green belts (Sorensen, 2002; Amati, 2008; Breach, 2019)? The notion of landowner beneficence, benevolence, and conservatism in England, briefly referenced in this thesis in Chapter 2 (Amati and Yokohari, 2003, 2006, 2007), could be a fascinating area of further research. Additionally, the wide difference in landowner attitudes towards developing their land, especially in the Green Belt, could be researched temporally and geographically. For example, why is it that some landowners aggressively lobby and promote their land for development, perhaps through a land promoter (Lichfields, 2018), whereas other landowners are more conservative and satisfied for their land to remain in agricultural use? Specifically, the existence of 'options' between landowners and housebuilders has been highlighted in Chapter 6 (Monbiot *et al.*, 2019, p. 16) but, given the lack of knowledge about them, research exploring their nature and characteristics, geographical extent and landowner attitudes towards them could be a fruitful area of future research. Adams *et al.* (2000) have conducted valuable research into landowner behaviour on brownfield sites but there is the need for more research on

Green Belt and greenfield sites. Indeed, this is a prescient issue given the widespread public interest in landownership in England, the price of land and land value capture following the popular publication *Who Owns Britain?* (Shrubsole, 2019) and MHCLG's (2020b) recent consultation and call for evidence on *Transparency, Competition and Land Control*. In particular, with the high cost of land in England (Cheshire, 2014b), the question of how far house prices are more affordable in countries with low(er) land prices and the broader relationship between land/house prices and economic growth are extremely important for policy and planning (Adams and Watkins, 2014; Adams *et al.*, 2016).

Finally, the housebuilding industry's structure and how it affects housing output and prices is a pressing issue. Academic and practitioner research (i.e. Barlow and King, 1992; Ball, 2007; Adams and Tiesdell, 2013; Letwin, 2018b, 2018a), has helpfully explored the extent to which the market is dominated by volume housebuilders, highlighted some impacts upon housing delivery and made the case for more SME builders. However, more research is needed on the impact of the industry's structure upon house prices and output, perhaps through cross-comparison with other European countries (for example: Ball, 2007). There is also the issue of the dominant tenure and type of housing built in Britain, which could be researched, alongside other issues related to the Green Belt, but this conclusion has highlighted the most pressing topics for further research.

10.6. Final Remarks and Reflections

To research the Green Belt is to research space as most of the wide-ranging issues connected with it, the housing crisis, community opposition, planning's political nature and governance, are also inherently spatial issues. This thesis has demonstrated the importance of space and geography in the key components of the problems related to the Green Belt *and* at the heart of potential solutions. The Green Belt is therefore a vitally important lens through which space can be theorised whilst space, spatial configurations and social relations associated with it are themselves shaped by the

policy. More broadly, the Green Belt is an extremely useful object of study because, as this thesis has found, it yields valuable wider insights into many areas, including society, economy, and culture, so is a rich seam for conceptualisation and theorisation. As probably the most longstanding and popular planning policy in England, it holds the key to many important lessons for planning theory, policy and practice.

11. References

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