

Plotland Topic Paper

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CONTENTS

1. Introduction	1
Purpose of this topic paper	1
2. STUDY AREA	2
3. National and Local Planning Policy	5
Existing local policy	5
Green Belt and the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).....	5
Draft Local Plan – Plotland Infill Policy.....	6
New Local Plan – Green Belt Infill Policy	6
New Local Plan – Protecting Green Belt Land	6
4. Conclusion	8
Recommendation.....	8

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Green Belt Map of the Basildon Borough Council Area	1
Figure 2: Plotland Areas - Map of Basildon Borough Council Area	4

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The term 'plotlands' refers to small pieces of land laid out in regular plots on which a number of self-built settlements were established in the south-east of England from the late 1800s and up to the Second World War. However, there remains some pockets of plotland development outside the main settlements. The majority of plotlands within Basildon Borough were redeveloped in the post war period.
- 1.2 The introduction of Green Belts in 1947 had a particular effect on plotlands. Areas of plotland that were not intensely developed often found that they were included within the extent of the Green Belt designation. This had the effect of freezing the extent of development within these areas at a point in time. Therefore, developed plots are interspersed with undeveloped plots where new development is now considered to be inappropriate.
- 1.3 As with most rules and regulations, over time people have found ways to bring forward new development in the plotland areas. The redevelopment of existing buildings within the Green Belt is normally permitted, provided that it is similar in scale to the existing building and does not increase harm to the openness of the Green Belt. This has enabled some of the smaller, poor quality existing buildings to be replaced with more modern structures. Additionally, some development related to countryside uses is exceptionally permitted in the Green Belt, increasing the overall number of buildings.
- 1.4 There are 13 plotland settlements within the Basildon Borough which were identified in the 1998 Basildon District Local Plan. The plotlands have a semi-rural character that is still typified by privately maintained roads, varying dwelling plot sizes, natural property boundaries and vacant plots.

Purpose of this topic paper

- 1.5 Basildon Borough Council are currently producing their New Local Plan. The purpose of this topic paper is to identify whether there is still the requirement to allocate the 13 plotland areas within the Borough and to set local policy to prescribe what development would be considered as exceptionally permitted or whether development within the plotland areas could instead be appropriately managed through the proposed Green Belt policies within the New Local Plan.

2. STUDY AREA

- 2.1 As of 2017, Basildon Borough is made up of 63% Green Belt. The Green Belt surrounds the Borough's main towns of Basildon to the south of the Borough, Billericay to the northwest and Wickford to the northeast. There are also three serviced villages within the Borough which are surrounded by Green Belt; these are Bowers Gifford which lies to the east of Pitsea, Ramsden Bellhouse to the north of the Borough between Billericay and Wickford, and Crays Hill, which is to the south of Ramsden Bellhouse in the centre of the Borough.
- 2.2 The Green Belt designation covers the entire Basildon Borough administrative area outside of these settlements, less some areas of pre-war ribbon development, as shown in Figure 1.
- 2.3 The thirteen Plotland areas within Basildon Borough's Green Belt are shown on Figure 2.

Green Belt Map of the Basildon Borough

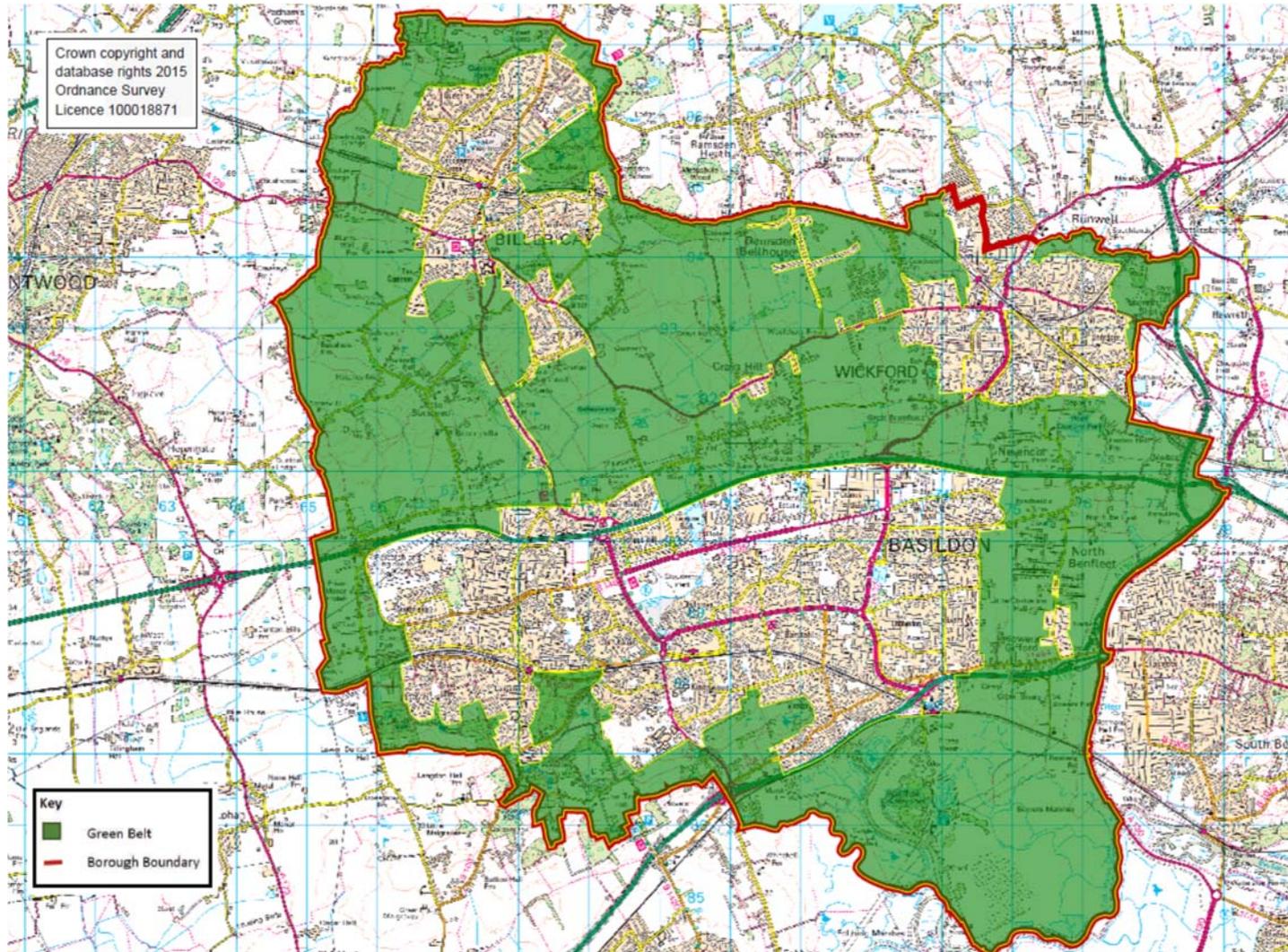


Figure 1: Green Belt Map of the Basildon Borough Council Area

Plotland Areas - Map of the Basildon Borough

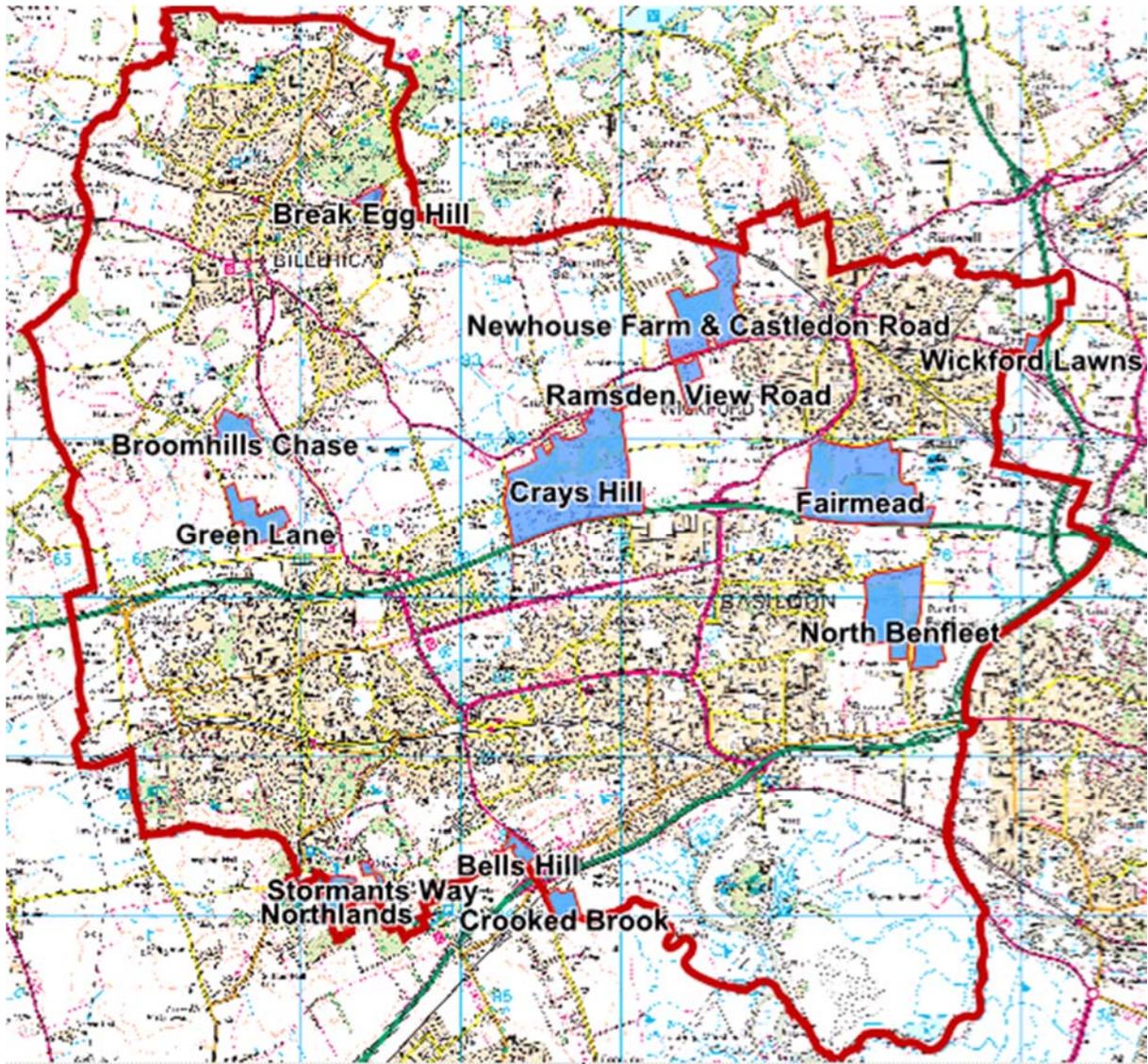


Figure 2: Plotland Areas - Map of Basildon Borough Council Area
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3. NATIONAL AND LOCAL PLANNING POLICY

Existing local policy

- 3.1 The plotlands have been subject to a restrictive development policy through policies adopted as part of the Basildon District Local Plan (1998). Policy BAS GB8 allowed for the re-use of existing buildings in accordance with the criteria in policy BAS GB7, provided that the buildings were not being converted for residential use. The purpose of the policy was to prevent the intensification of development within these areas by preventing buildings exceptionally permitted for countryside uses being redeveloped for residential use thereby eroding the Green Belt. Policy BAS GB3 also restricted the height of replacement dwellings within the plotlands to avoid a more urban form of development in those areas.
- 3.2 The 1998 Basildon District Plan was prepared prior to the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, and as such was subject to a saving Direction by the Secretary of State in 2007. The saving direction allowed for the continued use of a number of policies within the Basildon District Local Plan beyond 2007. However, not all policies were saved. Policy BAS GB8 which refers to the Plotland areas within Basildon Borough was not saved.

Green Belt and the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

- 3.3 Section 9 of the *National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)* sets out the national policy for Green Belt. It states that the fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl and identifies the essential characteristics of Green Belts as being their openness and permanence.
- 3.4 National policy also establishes five purposes for including land within the Green Belt. They are:
- 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.
- 3.5 Paragraph 89 of the *NPPF* sets out the types of development that are exceptionally permitted within the Green Belt. The *NPPF* refers specifically to the construction of new buildings and infill development within the Green Belt and states that “limited infilling or the partial or complete redevelopment of previously developed sites (brownfield land), whether redundant or in continuing use (excluding temporary buildings), which would not have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt and the purpose of including land within it than the existing development”.

Draft Local Plan – Plotland Infill Policy

- 3.6 The Plotland Study (2015) looked at redefining the plotland areas and introducing a plotland infill policy through the Local Plan which would allow for limited residential development within the defined plotland infill areas. The Draft Local Plan 2016 proposed this Plotland Infill Policy as Policy GB 3. The policy proposed alterations to be made to how the plotland areas were set out in the Draft Local Plan Policy Map to reflect the infill areas only and set prescriptive guidance on what development would be suitable within those areas.

New Local Plan – Green Belt Infill Policy

- 3.7 The Draft Local Plan 2016 consultation received mixed reviews in relation to the proposed plotland infill policy. As part of the evidence base for the New Local Plan, a variety of work has considered the existing plotlands and Borough's Green Belt and how to steer development appropriately. Subsequent to this a further Green Belt Infill Policy Topic Paper (2017) has been produced to review the proposed infill policy, the policy within the NPPF relating to Green Belt Infill and an alternative local policy for Green Belt Infill within the Borough.
- 3.8 The recommendations of the Green Belt Infill Policy Topic Paper (2017) were to replace the Draft Local Plan Policy GB 3 – Plotland Infill with an alternative Green Belt Infill Policy. The replacement policy would provide detailed criteria for development to comply with for sites located within the Green Belt more generally to be considered appropriate in line with the NPPF.
- 3.9 Should the Draft Plotland Infill Policy GB 3 be removed from the Local Plan, there is no longer a requirement to specifically allocate the plotland areas on the Local Plan Policies Map as there are no longer any policies within the Local Plan which require the plotland areas to be defined. Given the policy would apply to the Green Belt more broadly, its objectives nevertheless could still be achieved.

New Local Plan – Protecting Green Belt Land

- 3.10 There a number of other Green Belt policies within the Local Plan, strategic, allocation and development management policies, which seek to protect the Green Belt:
- Policy GB 1 – Strategic Approach to Green Belt Protection (Strategic policy), seeks to protect the permanence and openness of the Green Belt.
 - Policy GB 2 – Green Belt Extent (Allocation policy), clearly identifies the extent of the Green Belt on the Local Plan Policy Map to clarify which land the Green Belt policies apply to across the Borough.
 - Policy GB 4 - New Development in the Green Belt (Development Management policy) sets out the criteria requirements to be met by new development proposed in the Green Belt.

- Policy GB 5 – Extensions and Alterations to Buildings in the Green Belt and Policy GB 6 – Replacement Buildings in the Green Belt (Development Management policies) details the standards to which extensions, alterations and replacement buildings within the Green Belt must demonstrate to receive support from the Council.
- Policy GB 7 – Change of Use of Buildings and Land in the Green Belt (Development Management policy) lists the requirements for a change of use proposal to meet to be considered as appropriate in the Green Belt.
- Policy GB 8 – Ancillary Buildings and Structures in the Green Belt (Development Management policy) sets out the criteria where ancillary buildings and structures would be appropriate development within the Green Belt.
- Policy GB 9 – Boundary Treatments in the Green Belt (Development Management policy) encourages the openness of the Green Belt and respect to the character and special qualities of the landscape to be safeguarded.
- Policy GB 10 – Agricultural Worker Dwellings in the Green Belt (Development Management policy) defines the requirements that must be demonstrated to allow for agricultural worker dwellings within the Green Belt.
- Policy GB 11 – Positive uses of land in the Green Belt (Development Management policy) provides the criteria to ensure positive uses of land within the Green Belt.

4. CONCLUSION

- 4.1 The above policies are considered sufficient to ensure that development and land use within the plotland areas would receive the required protection under the Green Belt policies and would not warrant any further local policies to be applied to ensure the plotland areas are appropriately protected.

Recommendation

- 4.2 This Topic Paper has identified that the 13 plotland areas within the Basildon Borough are no longer required to be allocated on the Local Plan Policy Map.
- 4.3 There is no longer a recognised need to have a specific local policy relating to the plotland designations as there was in previous versions of the Local Plan.
- 4.4 It is recommended that the plotland infill areas associated with the 'Draft Local Plan Policy GB 3 Plotland Infill Areas' are taken off the Local Plan Policy Map and any reference to the policy removed from the Local Plan and the intent to permit infill, be incorporated into Green Belt policy more generally.