

GREEN BELT

- 5.101 Green Belt designation covers 77% of the area of Three Rivers. The fundamental aim of the Green Belt is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open. Within the Green Belt, there is a general presumption against inappropriate development which should not be approved except in very special circumstances.
- 5.102 The East of England Plan aims to reconcile growth in the region with the protection of the environment and the general extent of the Green Belt. It does not identify Three Rivers as an area requiring strategic review of the Green Belt. Protection of the Green Belt and open countryside is a key objective of the Three Rivers Core Strategy. However, the Green Belt boundary is tightly drawn around urban areas, and local evidence has demonstrated that future development needs cannot be accommodated entirely within the urban area.
- 5.103 Therefore, as set out in the Spatial Strategy, while the main focus for development in the District will be the main urban areas, there is also a need for some minor adjustments to the Green Belt boundary to accommodate growth in the most sustainable locations on the edge of existing settlements. Boundary changes are expected to provide land for housing and employment development and may also provide land for one or possibly two new reserve secondary school sites in the Rickmansworth Area, depending on the outcome of Hertfordshire County Council work on the potential to expand existing secondary school provision in the South West Hertfordshire area.
- 5.104 Detailed changes to the established Green Belt boundary will be made through the allocation of land for development by the Site Allocations Development Plan Document and are anticipated to result in a loss of no more than 1% of the area designated as Green Belt in the District. This is expected mainly as a result of new housing development on the edge of settlements in accordance with the Spatial Strategy.
- 5.105 While future development needs may require adjustment of Green Belt boundaries, the Local Plan also identifies two Major Developed Sites in the Green Belt at Leavesden Aerodrome and Maple Lodge Sewage Treatment Works. This designation acknowledges that development in these areas may be necessary over the Plan period for strategic and operational reasons. In this regard Major Developed Site in the Green Belt status for Maple Lodge Sewage Treatment Works will be retained.
- 5.106 With regard to Leavesden Aerodrome, the Council recognises the importance of the site in meeting future housing and employment needs as shown by the recent planning application to extend Leavesden Studios and previous public consultation on allocating housing development at the site. The Major Developed Site in the Green Belt status currently limits the scope to achieve both the extension to the Studios and development for housing and associated community uses. Therefore in order not to compromise the ability of the site to contribute to future development needs, the Council will review the Green Belt designation and Major Developed Site status as part of the Site Allocations Development Plan Document.

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Green Belt

The Council will:

- a) Maintain the general extent of the Metropolitan Green Belt in the District
- b) Where appropriate, make minor revisions through the Site Allocations Development Plan Document to the detailed Green Belt boundaries around the main urban area, to accommodate development needs, as detailed in the Spatial Strategy and Place-Shaping Policies.
- c) Retain 'Major Developed Site in the Green Belt' status for Maple Lodge Sewage Treatment Works
- d) Review 'Major Developed Site in the Green Belt' status in relation to Leavesden Aerodrome, having regard to the important contribution the site is expected to make to meeting needs for housing and employment
- e) Encourage appropriate positive use of the Green Belt and measures to improve environmental quality.

There will be a general presumption against inappropriate development that would not preserve the openness of the Green Belt, or which would conflict with the purpose of including land within it.