

Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP  
Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government  
2 Marsham St  
London  
SW1P 4DF

8 April, 2020

Dear Robert Jenrick,

We are pleased to send you our latest report *London's Green Belt: Our Climate Safety Belt* which sets why Green Belt is essential for tackling the Climate Emergency by:

- Ensuring more new homes can be built car-free within the existing developed urban footprint
- Promoting the development of a 'compact', low-carbon, more efficient city
- Enabling more extreme water and temperature events to be effectively managed

The report also sets out the findings of our recent analysis of Local Plan Reviews within London. We found that there are currently major threats to Green Belt land in five London Boroughs, with serious concerns arising in a further four Boroughs.

In the light of this evidence, we are disturbed by your recent intervention over the London Plan which will only serve to fuel these threats to the Green Belt, despite your Manifesto commitments at last years' General Election. While supporting the need to increase housing delivery, we are very concerned that your Directions (DR5 and DR6) requiring amendments to policy on Green Belt and Metropolitan Open Land will only encourage development of precious green spaces, which are more important for Londoners now than ever before.

I am therefore writing now to ask that you:

- strengthen and firmly apply national Green Belt policy so that it reinforces the permanence of Green Belt and better prevents loss of valuable green space
- promote the role of Green Belt in tackling the causes, and mitigating the effects, of climate change by continuing to restrict urban sprawl and reducing car dependency
- support, and not undermine, efforts to retain Green Belt land and to secure wider public benefits from it, including through woodland creation in suitable locations, promoting sustainable and community-supported farming initiatives, and improving and extending public access, and
- Reconsider your Directions on the London Plan, to support its commitment to maintaining the extent of Metropolitan Open Land and to acknowledge the Green Belt's vital role in ensuring London is a 'climate safe' city by promoting sustainable intensification and car-free development.

(continued)

Local authorities say more land is needed for housing but the evidence shows that there is planning permission for a quarter of a million new homes in London, and enough previously developed land to build for at least 20 years, even without the promising new policies set out in the draft London Plan. These include policies designed to encourage better use of previously developed land, including by promoting the use of small sites, intensifying use of industrial land, and optimising density in suitable locations, as well as the policies which would give stronger protection to Green Belt and Metropolitan Open Land. Allowing development in the Green Belt will promote urban sprawl and unsustainable car-dependency, and will not deliver the affordable homes that are needed.

I should also stress that, according to the Green Space Index compiled by Fields in Trust, London currently has less than two thirds of the green open space it needs for the number of people who live there. As its population grows, without the creation of new, and the better protection of existing green spaces, this situation will only get worse. For this reason too, it is absolutely vital that we retain all green space in London and do everything possible to promote the better use of previously developed land instead.

In view of the public interest in this issue, we will be making this letter available on our website.

I look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely,

Neil Sinden  
Director  
CPRE London