

[Alan Mace](#)

The Metropolitan Green Belt – changing an institution

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The Metropolitan Green Belt - changing an institution.

Abstract

The Metropolitan Green Belt (MGB) was established in the 1930s and has expanded enormously since. Accompanying policies, including New Towns, have since been abandoned, leaving the MGB as an 'orphaned' policy which constrains land supply. Prioritising the reuse of Brownfield land and densification are now the counter to land constraint. However, it is argued that these are not sufficient to meet the housing crisis in London and the Wider South East. Moreover, academics have pointed out for decades that strong land constraint has led to chronic housing problems, including poor internal space standards and the high cost of housing in the 'mega-region'. However, despite decades of academic discussion concerning the chronic housing problems it contributes to, and the more immediate crisis, the MGB remains a bluntly applied planning tool and carries with it no serious political discussion of reform. Piecemeal change has taken and still takes place, but this has led to a series of battles that have not achieved the core task of signalling the intention to make a sustained and substantial change to policies of land constraint. In order to chart a possible path to reform the starting point is to approach the MGB as an institution, and this includes tracing the significance of how it developed historically, and in particular the confusion over the full extent of its purposes and, thus, the real range of its benefits. A second strand is a consideration of the different reasons why people commit to institutions, and how this differentially impacts the way in which they respond and/or seek to drive institutional change. Using these insights, existing proposals for change are critiqued and then an alternative is proposed that seeks to respond to the 'rational' and 'normative' drivers of support for the MGB.

Keywords: Metropolitan Green Belt; Housing; London; Regional Planning.

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1 Introduction

For its supporters, England's¹ Green Belt² policy represents the last stand for a small nation under threat of being concreted over. In the South East of England, one of the most urbanised parts of Europe, it restrains the behemoth of London. For others, Green Belt represents everything that is wrong with the English planning system. It is patrician, big state and woefully and/or wilfully ignorant of basic economics. Although several cities in England have Green Belts, the concern here is with the Metropolitan Green Belt (hereafter, MGB³), which is the original Green Belt in England and which surrounds and runs into London. The reason for looking at the MGB is the present crisis of housing supply in London and the Wider South East (WSE)⁴, but also chronic housing problems; for example, compared across Europe, England's housing provides among the least amount of internal space (Gallent et al 2010). Given these housing supply challenges, especially focused on London and the WSE, it might seem reasonable to assume that the blunt application of MGB policy would be challenged and a more flexible approach would prevail. For decades it has been the subject of academic criticism (Hall 1973; Herington 1990; Cheshire 2009), and political challenges (Elson 1986: 234-243), but it has survived.

The MGB raises questions that are familiar internationally, including: planning's longstanding priority of seeking a clear town & country distinction; regionalism versus localism; and of managing the mega-city region. Specifically, it raises the perennial challenge of planning across jurisdictions as the MGB touches on 68 different planning authorities (including 18 separate London Boroughs). Reflecting these concerns, it is all too easy for calls to revisit the MGB to be depicted as a 'land grab' by London. However, in practice it is not possible neatly to separate housing demand in London from the WSE. Put simply, people do not stop at internal political borders when looking for housing. While this has long been case (Jackson 1973), significant changes in the national economy have led some to ask whether the MGB '[is] fit for purpose in a post-Fordist landscape' (Prior & Maemaekers 2007: 579). Part of the politics of MGB reform, therefore, is establishing a sense of 'fair play' between London and the WSE. While it is simply not reasonable or accurate to regard London's housing needs and market to be discrete from the WSE, it is understandable that other authorities would call upon

¹ Planning is devolved to the constituent parts of the UK. As there are, consequently, differences in Green Belt policy, this article focuses on England.

² Following Government documents, Green Belt is capitalised throughout except where referring directly to a non-capitalised use.

³ Throughout Green Belt is used when referring to the broader national policy and MGB when referencing the Metropolitan Green Belt.

⁴ Named the Greater South East by Peter Hall, the WSE is now in more common usage and refers to areas within the former government office regions of the East, South East and London. A broader definition of the Greater South East also includes Dorset, Northamptonshire and Wiltshire.

London to rethink that part of the MGB within its borders before or alongside changes beyond London.

Overlaying this is the centralised nature of the English planning system and its policy-based character. The purposes of Green Belt are set by government, which has also determined that the extent of Green Belts is now substantially fixed. These and other government signals about the significance to be given to Green Belt are important in the English planning system, which is a 'case-by-case' system that rests heavily on the weighing of material considerations to arrive at a decision. In this system Green Belt has become a 'first amongst equals' policy as it is accorded great weight by government, leaving considerably less flexibility of interpretation than is the case for most other policies. This begs the question why governments for decades have so staunchly defended Green Belts when, particularly in the case of the MGB, there is so evidently great pressure for development close to London with its burgeoning economy and where so many struggle to afford housing.

To explain the durability of the MGB, and in order to seek change the article draws on core concepts from New Institutionalism that, among other things, facilitate a focus on the qualities of the policy itself. The MGB is characterised as a 'policy institution', which, because it is bolstered by a powerful cultural institution - the English countryside - is highly resistant to change. It is argued here that to challenge the power of the MGB as an institution it is necessary to understand that it encompasses both a myth of what it is and what it does – that Green Belts are 'full of nature' and accessible and that they limit all development to the cities and protect all Greenfield sites. Although others have done this before it remains an important starting point. Next it is also necessary to distinguish between the different drivers of those who support the institution. There are both 'rational' and 'normative' reasons for supporting the MGB and, across different interest groups, in combination, these motivators for maintaining the MGB are powerful. Seeking change to Green Belt policy therefore speaks to other settings where policies have generated interest groups and shaped actors' behaviours and responses to change.

A proposal for change is offered that seeks to work with the institutional character of Green Belt. The government is key as it alone can permit substantial changes in the policy. One response to this would be to seek to expose the costs of the policy to government. However, as noted at the outset, this simply produces two entrenched camps; pro change and pro the status quo. Here, an approach is set out that seeks to minimise opposition to change on the part of those who are committed to the policy for rational reasons in order to increase pressure on government to allow greater flexibility for the MGB. It is recognised that those who have normative ('belief') reasons for maintaining the Green Belt are unlikely to shift their position substantially. However, it is argued here that it is not necessary to 'convert' the normative group in order to move government to change. A set of

conditions is proposed with the purpose of making change more acceptable to the 'rational' group and which might soften, at the margins, those with a normative commitment to Green Belt. The overall purpose of the conditions is to maintain support for sustainable development patterns, including the focusing development on cities, while signalling an increase in land supply. To give one example, the MGB has had the unintended consequence of extending commuter patterns as people travel across it to live in developments beyond its outer borders (Barker 2006). This justifies green field development close to and within London but this should not undermine policies that seek to focus new build on urban brownfield sites. Therefore, while advocating for release of tracts of MGB land, the conditions seek to ensure an 'even playing field' between this and Brownfield sites in cities.

1.1 Methods & structure

This article is primarily a desk-based study of the MGB with the purpose of understanding better the politics of reform, how we might go beyond the polarised, broad-brush character of the debate, which is particularly unhelpful at a time when the region faces a crisis of housing supply and where realistic estimates of provision fall well behind need. The politics of reform includes the question of cross-jurisdictional work. To achieve this the article seeks to address two broad questions:

1] the purpose and future form of the MGB (inside and outside Greater London) in the context of contemporary housing provision and urban development planning in the region; and

2] how collaboration can effectively be pursued to develop an understanding of the wider planning/housing market concerns, and promote forms of development, including a modernisation of the MGB, to meet the collective needs of the region's residents.

To start, a number of practice-based and academic articles were appraised. As the project commenced (starting December 2015 and ending in November 2016) it joined a series of practice-based reports that sought to focus attention on the need to review Green Belt policy and, in particular, the MGB (Manns, 2014; Quod/Shelter, 2016; London First/Quod, 2015; Papworth, 2015; 2016). These provided a useful summation of the key arguments for change, although as noted, primarily by seeking to set out the costs of the MGB to government. Throughout the project regular web searches were employed to scan for news stories on the Green Belt/MGB. In addition membership of 'Planning Resource' provided updates of Green Belt policy, case law etc. The selected academic texts provided historical background to the development of the Green Belt in London (eg Elson 1986). From here snowball referencing was employed alongside online database sampling. A number of databases were interrogated (eg GEOBASE, JSTOR, ScienceDirect and Web of Science). Keywords included 'green belt' in combination with spatial references; eg 'metropolitan', 'London',

'UK' and 'England'. And thematic cross references; 'housing', 'reform' 'region', 'Garden City', 'Green Wedge'. An initial scan of article abstracts and of book introductions/contents allowed for the filtering of material – in particular to focus on the Metropolitan Green Belt rather than Green Belt in general. A total of 43 books, academic papers and practice reports were selected which directly referenced Green Belt in England and which were exclusively or partially concerned with the MGB.

The project was focused towards a practice based report (ANON et al 2016a) and supporting short film (ANON 2016b), which were informed by a series of one to one meetings and workshops organised around a set of themes and attended by invited practitioners and academics who contributed to each of these - a full list of participants is supplied in the report (ANON et al 2016a). The meetings/workshops allowed for filling in knowledge gaps (in particular perspectives on and descriptions of practice – eg how Green Belt reviews are approached) and to discuss the proposals as they were being developed (eg the 'pioneer' corridor). Notes were taken in each of the meetings and workshops but they were not recorded, as the intention was to ensure that participants did not feel constrained in making contributions. The workshops were managed under Chatham House rules where the researchers were able to draw on the information given but not attribute it to an individual. In addition, a series of individual interviews were set up both in advance of and after workshops where ideas were explored in greater depth. These meetings and workshops were not structured as part of an academic research project; for example, participants were not selected using rigorous criteria and notes were not coded. Therefore, where these sources are used they are footnoted as a 'personal communication' to indicate status of the material. To maintain anonymity the professional background of the contributor is indicated eg 'planning consultant' but no name or organisation is supplied.

This article draws on the proposals developed in the original report e.g develops the idea of conditions for change and the use of a pioneer corridor but in addition to the practice report it introduces and expands on the theoretical background that informed these ideas. Given the focus on the politics of change, and the fact that Green Belt has proven incredibly resistant to change, the theoretical position was informed by the New Institutionalism literature. The case is developed using the following structure; in section two, 'The Development of an Institution', the significance of the conceptual and physical development of the MGB is reviewed through the lens of the MGB as a policy institution. A core feature of a policy institution is the ability to persist through changing conditions. Essential to this is the instrumentalisation of the MGB as, rather than having an absolute rationale in theory and an ideal form in practice, both have been adapted over time to meet specific interests. In section three, 'Nothing Gained From Over Constraining', the considerable changes

across London and the WSE through which the MGB has endured are considered. This includes the decoupling of policies for land constraint and development (Green Belt and New Towns), and the 'passive' effects of this, as development has continued to take place, but on sites outside of rather than within the MGB. Notwithstanding this, defenders argue there is sufficient land for development from Brownfield sites and densification, a view that is contested here. This leads on to section four, 'Options'. While the present government has sent some signals of preparedness to show some flexibility, these are ambiguous and the definitive position set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) is strongly supportive of the status quo. Legal interpretations have confirmed the NPPF as resistant to anything other than relatively minor changes under exceptional circumstances (PAS 2014). This section is employed to review how others have sought change in Green Belt policy, often by highlighting 'irrational' aspects, such as where it leads to the restriction of development near to railway stations. Also considered is the option of abolishing the policy. It is argued that any appeal to the 'irrationality' of Green Belt – either in its totality or in particular instances – can always be countered by those who advocate for the institution on the basis of beliefs about the inherent value of the rural. In section five, 'Challenging the Institution', an alternative set of options for change is set out. At the core of the approach is the position of central government. No fundamental change to Green Belt policy is possible without a change in policy by government. But at present the rational position for government remains to maintain the status quo. The task therefore is to convince government that there are sufficient benefits in challenging the status quo. The proposals seek to work with the current trend towards localism over regionalism and also to recognise that changing the MGB has both a Wider South East and a London element to it. Importantly, the proposals seek to build up a coalition whose interests might challenge the 'rational' underpinning of the MGB, convincing government that the benefits of change would outweigh the political costs. Finally, in section six, 'Conclusions' are drawn.

2 The development of an institution

To understand the particular realisation of Green Belt policy in the context of England the policy process is theorised through the lens of New Institutionalism. It is argued that the extent of the Green Belt, through both space and time is explained by understanding both the English countryside and Green Belt policy as institutions – where institutions are understood to be ‘the rules of the game’. The first sub-section reviews relevant concepts from the literature, including differing explanations of why people commit to institutions, which are pertinent to understanding the difficulty of changing substantially Green Belt policy. Having referenced a theoretical framework, the following sub sections draw on this to interpret the development and entrenchment of the distinctive characteristics of Green Belt policy in England. Earlier models emphasising the bringing of open public spaces to the city came from Europe and the US, including Vienna’s *Ringstrasse* (Freestone 2002) and the American Park Ways that were both particularly influential in the early days (Amati 2008:3). While these ideas were in circulation internationally, it was the Green Belt and its containment function that was eventually to gain a hold in the UK. Moreover, while Green Belt policy has been adopted in other countries, it has generally not become the dominant policy it has in England (Amati 2008).

2.1 A ‘New Institutionalism’ perspective on policy

The potential of an ‘Institutionalist’ approach to explain planning practices is considered by, among others, Vigar et al (2000), who summarise the development of a range of perspectives that have been applied to planning practice, including urban regime and communicative planning theory. Like these, the ‘Institutionalist’ approach recognises that processes of governance, including policy formulation and application do not happen only as set-out in formal or official descriptions of organisations and procedures. Many actors, including planners, are active agents in the interpretation of policy and will seek to find room for manoeuvre within the structures of organisations. An ‘Institutionalist’ approach is useful in providing a framework in which policy can be placed centre stage rather than actors. Following from this, three related concepts from New Institutionalism are considered: first, policy itself can become an institution. There is some confusion over the definition and use of institutions in the literature; this is reinforced by cross-disciplinary use of New Institutionalism that has served to reinforce non-standard use of terms and concepts (Ostrom 2007). Notably while some conflate institutions and organisations these can also be understood as distinct where institutions represent accepted ways of doing things. Once the two are made analytically distinct some, but not all, policies may be regarded as institutions. Where actors regard policies as relatively open to change then there is no justification for regarding them as institutions, they are simply variables that might be taken into account when looking at political institutions. However, an intrinsic quality of an institution is its ability to survive short to mid-term

political and economic change, which, as shall be shown, the Green Belt has been adept at. The durability of a policy, separate from the political institutions that created it, is a characteristic that can make a policy an institution in its own right, (Pierson 2006: 116-7).

A further test of whether a policy can be regarded as an institution is described by the second concept, that once a policy has been set in place it can lead to actors amending their actions and to the building of 'institutionalized relationships' in a response to the policy. Other approaches to the policy process look at how actors seek to exercise autonomy, acting as interpretive being they seek to adapt policy to the context in which they find themselves including their belief systems (Vigor 2000:48). However, tactical responses to new policies can be distinguished from strategic responses where actors start to form new alliances and/or ways of working in response to a policy, "[i]f policies as institutions matter for political scientists, it is because the influence of policies on social actors – on who they are, on what they want, on how and with whom they organize – is such that it changes the way these actors engage in politics" (Pierson 2006: 116). The extent to which this happens will depend on whether a policy is perceived to be likely to endure. In the UK a modest change in policy on density, and a more significant policy on prioritising Brownfield land in the UK became a signal for developers to change their behaviour including to make long-term adaptations to the type of housing product they were equipped to deliver (Karadimitriou 2013). Such changes are not easily made or reversed and so indicate a belief that the context (favouring higher density housing on brownfield land) is unlikely to change in the foreseeable future. The Green Belt has unusual institutional characteristics as a lobby group exists to promote and protect it. The Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE) was established in 1926 (as the Council for the Preservation of Rural England), and currently reports a membership of 60,000.

Third, where the adaptations people make to a policy prove beneficial. "...a policy will continue on the same path long after external factors would suggest that it should have changed...policy affects politics" (Ingram et al 2007: 95). Policy produces advantaged groups and these, it has been found, are more likely to become actively engaged in support of the policy than those who are losers from a policy (Campbell 2003 cited in Ingram et al 2007: 99). Politicians, in turn, respond to this by assuring and possibly increasing the benefits. This is an aspect of path dependency, that is, processes of governance and economic development are, "...structured by the history and geography of what has gone before" (Vigar et al 2000:49). In the case of house builders, switching back from steel frame apartments to 'traditionally' built street houses would be burdensome requiring reskilling their workforces and would require many other potentially expensive shifts including how a developer manages their land supply pipeline. 'Winners', those developers who have adopted a model suited to brownfield development, would not welcome a policy shift favouring producers of street housing.

Following the three points above it is evident that there are rational reasons for committing to a policy institution. Where a policy is anticipated to be long-term, or once it becomes evident that it will endure, utility maximising rational actors will seek to maximise the gains (or minimise the losses) flowing from a policy. Under the 'rational' model, the institution also improves the predictability of the future actions of others. It therefore reduces transaction costs by making others' options, choices and actions more 'knowable' but will also guide the actions of the actor as their expectations are adjusted in response to the anticipated actions of others. The benefit in this arrangement is not necessarily that any one party always receives the maximum pay off (getting entirely what they want), but rather the price of compromising is outweighed by the efficiencies of not having to establish new relationships and negotiate from scratch on every occasion. As landowners, property owners, developers and the general public have all seen Green Belt policy endure and be strongly defended, they anticipate its continuance and adjust their behaviour accordingly, and it is rational to do so as the policy helps to avoid future shocks and makes the future more knowable. This is particularly evident for owners of property in or near Green Belt as they can be assured that developers are unlikely to seek to build in the Green Belt. This is important for owner-occupiers, as the value of their home will include a premium in recognition of this (McCann 2001: 256). For government, changing Green Belt would be like throwing a large stone into a calm pond, as it would threaten to undo the 'contract' between the parties, and their respective interests, that has developed over time. Supporting Green Belt, therefore, saves 'doing battle' with a series of interest groups – the government will support Green Belt for as long as it believes it will be worse off challenging Green Belt than accepting the restrictions that it sets on development.

However, reflecting the development of a parallel literature (Hall & Taylor 1996), there is more than one explanation of why people commit to institutions. Following Peters (1999) a fundamental distinction can be made between 'rational' and 'normative' drivers. 'Normative' is used as shorthand here, referring to values as a driver for supporting an institution, as opposed to 'rational' drivers where individuals see the efficiency benefits of supporting an institution. Under this alternative explanation for the formation and maintenance of institutions individuals, rather than being entirely strategic, are "[...] satisficers, rather than utility maximizers" (Hall & Taylor 1996: 939). In this interpretation institutions provide a value frame for actors as they are associated with a personal and/or professional sense of self. In the case of Green Belt the 'normative' explanation for supporting the institution is linked to aesthetic, even moral views about the countryside and the distinction between it and the built form. This has links to moral geographies where values and qualities are associated with particular landscapes. The association between the English landscape and Englishness as an identity is well documented (Matless 1998; Wiener 2004), and includes the intimate connection between the development of the nuclear family and the immorality of the city

and the morality of the rural (Stone 1977). These historical values and identities continue in the present day, exemplified by the 2012 Olympic opening ceremony in London where the first image of Britain beamed out to an international audience was of a bucolic setting; green fields, sheep and a cottage under a lonely cloud. The Opening Ceremony speaks to a 'foundational cultural story' of England in particular, where the countryside is as a marker of stability, of stasis set against the insecurity and upheaval of industrialisation to which England came early but to which England has never fully reconciled itself (Wiener 2004), and which was also depicted in the Olympic opening ceremony. In this context, the Green Belt is powerfully associated with definitions of Englishness. If the countryside serves as pivotal part of national identity, the Green Belt's purpose of preventing change in the countryside is profound, greatly increasing the stake that some have in the Green Belt. In this reading, to cede any changes to Green Belt policy would be to sow doubt about the durability not only of the policy but of a particular national identity too. The normative position in particular reflects the observation of March & Olsen (1989: 25-7 cited in Peters 1999: 32), that institutions derive much of their logic, structure and meaning from the society in which they are formed.

In both cases, the 'rational' and the 'normative' models, actors invest in, work with and adapt their behaviour to institutions in no small part because of their durability; they provide a stable basis for action and interests cohere around them. However, the distinction between rational and normative actors is significant when attention turns to the circumstances under which an institution might change. Given the extent to which the different institutionalisms focus on the stability of institutions – making it a defining feature – it then become problematic to explain why and how institutions would ever change (Hall & Taylor 1996). Put crudely rationalists should seek change when the compromises required to maintain the institution no longer outweigh the gains – for example of minimising transaction costs. And normative institutionalists should seek change once a sufficient gap opens up between personal beliefs and the values embedded in the institution concerned. However, in both cases, "[e]xpectations about what others will do are [...] crucial in driving behaviour towards a coordinated outcome [as institutions] have considerable staying power because of the difficulty of coordinating around an alternative" (Pierson 2006: 118). This again references path dependency, as the cost of disrupting established ways of working that have developed around any given institution can be considerable.

Path dependency is closely associated with a third strand of institutionalism, 'historical institutionalism'. This approach sees the state, "as a complex of institutions capable of structuring the character and outcomes of group conflict" (Hall & Taylor 1996:938). The historical approach still draws institutions broadly as ways of doing things, as embedded procedures and routines. Two characteristic elements of this approach are pertinent; first, the stress on path dependency and relatedly, on unintended consequences (returned to later). Second a focus on the "asymmetries of

power associated with the operation and development of institutions” (Hall & Taylor 1996: 938). An important aspect of the asymmetry of Green Belt policy is the relationship between the ‘absolutist’ and singular nature to the ‘normative’s position and the more nuanced and fragmented rationalist’s position. While for rationalists, who are not committed to countryside/openness there may be many instances in which a change to the policy would be acceptable, especially if it were sufficiently anticipated to allow for the adjustment of alliances and business models. But for the ‘normatives’ there is nothing to be gained from compromising any element of the Green Belt, any building on it would represent an absolute loss. Therefore, for ‘normatives’, if government seeks to roll back on any element of Green Belt policy, or a developer seeks permission to build on any site in the Green Belt, these are not simply isolated and changes that can be accepted as reasonable, but rather they threatening to undermine the very normative basis of the institution. The influence of the normative approach is reflected in the National Planning Policy Framework. Whereas other planning policies are *assumed to be permanent* until changed, the NPPF sets the Green Belt apart temporally by *anticipating that it will outlive plans* and their policies:

“When defining boundaries, local planning authorities should: ...

- satisfy themselves that Green Belt boundaries will not need to be altered at the end of the development plan period; and
- define boundaries clearly, using physical features that are readily recognisable and likely to be permanent.

NPPF 2012: section 85

Individual and organisational support of Green Belt may not be underpinned exclusively by either rational or normative drivers but, given their different ‘logics’, one will dominate. While the actions of both are informed by the stability that the policy offers, as has been outlined, the different drivers will impact, “how [...] actors behave, what [...] institutions do, and why [...] institutions persist over time (Hall & Taylor 1996: 939). These differences inform sections four and five where ‘options’ and ‘conditions’ for change are discussed. But before that the focus is on the development of the Metropolitan Green Belt through to the current policy position.

2.2 Purposing and Shaping the Metropolitan Green Belt

The present scale and purpose of the MGB are both regarded by the government as established and fixed; reflecting a characteristic of institutions that they become naturalised (Schneider and Ingram 1997: 75). To challenge this, it is useful to look at how both the scale and the purpose have changed over time reflecting the tactics of MGB proponents, especially those with a normative position. The extent of the MGB is significant when in section three the focus is on the impacts of the policy as

these are linked to its physical scale and the purposes are returned to in section five where, it is noted, the MGB is defended, in part, using ‘a promise on the future’ which reflects its roots. That is, while the MGB became a tool to contain London its conceptual development included providing access to open space for Londoners.

The London County Council (LCC) was established in 1889 and formed the first truly London wide authority – but covering a smaller area than contemporary Greater London and the conterminous Greater London Authority⁵. Members of the London County Council (LCC) had expressed concern about the growth of London as early as 1891 when the LCC itself was only recently established. The primary concern was that, in then the World’s most populous city, residents should have better access to countryside. Reflecting this, the concept of the Green Wedge was also to the fore in planning debates during this period as a response to the need to deliver open, green spaces to Londoners. The density of population in 19th Century London informed the call for access to openness. Today, London has surpassed its previous peak population but this hides a very different story on population density, which is today less than a third of its peak in the 1830s (101 compared to 364 people per hectare) (MDAG 2016). Given the densely packed population, a combination of wedges and Green Belt was proposed, as in the case of London’s pre-LCC landscape led plan for London in 1829, which proposed a series of concentric Green Belts and wedges (Schumann 2003). This foreshadowed the 1890 proposal by LCC member Lord Meath for Park Ways, influenced by his visit to Chicago, and the 1901 proposal by Member of Parliament, William Bull, “to join existing open spaces by a park belt, half a mile wide, running a little beyond what was then the outer edge of built-up London” (Thomas 1963: 14). Here, as in other cases where Green Belts were proposed, these were to be *within* the city, with the Vienna Ringstrasse offering a model insofar as the intention was to introduce a *belt of green into a growing city rather than* to limit the city (Manns 2014).

A significant shift in purpose came with George Pepler’s proposal in 1911 for a Parkway more distant from the edge of the built-up area of London. As the chief technical planning officer for the London government board, his focus was on the need to improve communications. His half-mile wide Parkway was to encircle London some ten miles distant from its centre and would include road, tram and train systems with approximately a quarter of the land remaining under greenery (Thomas 1963). Only in 1924 was an explicit link made by the LCC between a MGB and the need to limit the physical growth of London with the LCC’s town planning committee’s proposal for a half-mile wide belt around London with the intention of limiting London’s growth (Thomas 1963: 17). However, this did not mark a clean break with the past. The Greater London Regional Planning Committee established in 1927 pressed for more space for recreation as a purpose of any future MGB. And

⁵ The LCC is reflected by the present day distinction between Inner and Outer London where Inner London approximates to the old LCC jurisdiction.

although Abercrombie would later come to be closely associated with the Green Belt, through his 1944 Greater London Plan, he was a proponent of a combining Green Belts and wedges (de Oliveira 2014), reflecting the longer purpose of access alongside containment.

In the early days the need to finance purchases of land was sometimes linked to purpose. While the call for improved access to recreational open space partly reflected a concern for the poor health of the working classes, it also promised to help in delivering a MGB that could preserve the countryside. Where land had to be purchased, “London’s residents (those most in need of open space) or the National Playing Fields Association could be asked to pay for green belt purchases” (Amati & Yokohari 2006: 130). Similarly, in 1934, in the run up to the Second World War, attempts were made to persuade the Air Ministry of the need to purchase ‘MGB’ land for future defence related uses; emphasis was placed on the potential for the MGB to secure locations for aerodromes and barracks (Amati & Yokohari 2007:314). Ultimately these shifts in purpose did not yield funds, but they illustrate how the purposing of the nascent MGB was linked to the intent to expand it.

The LCC’s intention of a Green Belt for London only started to take form on the ground in 1935 under the LCC’s ‘green belt scheme’. This provided grants of up to 50% to neighbouring authorities outside London to purchase land that was to be protected. The status of the nascent MGB was enhanced by the 1938 Green Belt (London and Home Counties) Act that gave greater legal protection to these cross-jurisdiction arrangements (recognising a need for a regional and cross-regional approach that is absent from English planning today). Numerous reasons were given in justification of the LCC grants even, in some instances, simply to hedge against future rises in land prices that would make it unaffordable in the future, meaning that;

Although flexibility in determining the aim of the greenbelt ensured that a great deal of land was bought, it meant that by the time the [LCC] scheme came to an end in 1938 the use for this land defied explanation (Amati & Yokohari 2007:318)

Function followed finance but it would be to miss the point to conclude that it *mattered* that the function/purpose defied explanation, as the logic informing the roll out of the policy was a clear belief in the inherent value of preserving openness. Therefore, the many uses, or non-uses, could be ‘explained’ insofar as they achieved this. For Amati & Yokohari (2007), this logic is personified by C.L. Stocks a civil servant and member of the Council for the Preservation of Rural England. He was not a planner, but was influential in the development of this planning policy on Green Belt.

Stocks clearly supported keeping the land as open as possible. He first wanted to give consideration to a variety of open-space uses such as golf or aviation. When describing his reasons for doing this to a member of Essex County Council, he explained that it was

“simply to invent every possible kind of public user which will preserve the property as a public open space of some kind in the future, while securing the revenue which we must, as trustees, secure” (329).

Openness was prioritized over access and/or quality, a situation that continues through to the present day, but, as we will see, access and quality have not disappeared from the scene and this is important in understanding how the Green Belt has been bolstered as an institution.

The rise in the 1920s of containment as a purpose must be set against the backdrop of the explosive outward growth of London in the interwar period (Jackson 1973), by the outbreak of the Second World War in 1939 twenty per cent of Great Britain’s population were Londoners (Hebbert, 1998: 56), as London’s population continued to reduce since its nineteenth century peak, this was achieved through suburbanisation. Ironically, if the LCC sought to contain London’s suburban expansion it was also partly responsible for it. The LCC itself had promoted the suburbanisation of Londoners from 1903, following the 1900 Housing of the Working Classes Act that allowed Authorities to acquire land and build outside their boundary. The LCC developed a series of estates in counties neighbouring London, with estates such as Becontree now incorporated into Greater London. This option was itself informed by an ambivalent attitude to the city on the part of LCC officials; as one housing manager at the time expressed it, ‘[a]nyone would prefer living in a little cottage with a nice little garden with healthy surroundings, to living in a block dwelling five or six storeys high...’ (Burgess, quoted in Saint 1989: 220). The LCC’s preferred suburban public housing estates contributed to the significant physical expansion of London in the first half of the twentieth century, but between the two World Wars the massive growth in privately built, owner occupied suburbia soon dwarfed public sector led suburbanisation (Jackson 1973). Suburbanisation has long been regarded as inherently flawed, as suburbanites seeking a suburban life generate demand to build over the countryside they seek to live beside. A cultural attachment to countryside, therefore, drove *both* suburbanisation *and* calls for its curtailment in order to preserve the countryside at the ever-expanding city margins. Immediately after the Second World War this was resolved by the MGB curtailing suburban development alongside a New Town programme, which allowed for the continued dispersal of London’s population.

This response to limit the physical growth of London emerged from the normative pro-containment stance of those such as Stocks, but powerfully underpinned by other factors supporting an extended MGB after the Second World War. This combination is embodied in Abercrombie who was a founder member of the CPRE, but who would also be influenced by a longstanding concern that the UK economy was becoming evermore geographically unbalanced as the economy of London and the

South grew proportionally more than that of the North. This reflected the decline of export dependent 'old' industries mainly in the north and the growth of then modern non-export dependent industries in the South (Ward 1988:12; see also Hall 1964). In 1937 the Royal Commission on the Distribution of the Industrial Population had been appointed and has come to be known by the name of its chair, the Rt. Hon. Sir Montague Barlow. The Barlow Commission was to look at the present and future distribution of the 'industrial population'. The longstanding issue of economic unbalance was supplemented by immediate post war concerns including the vulnerability of large cities to aerial attack. London had already experienced bombing from airships in the First World War. Following the extensive bombing of London and its suburbs during the Second World War, a war that culminated in the US's nuclear attacks on Japan, the vulnerability of large cities was all too evident. Just as the nuclear experience partly contributed to the US federal government's policy of facilitating residential and industrial suburbanisation (O'Mara 2006), so, in the UK, a reduction of vulnerability to future aerial attack provided an additional rationale for urban dispersal (Barlow 1940: 98, section 203). These broader economic and security concerns, and the choices made to seek to contain London, drew on longstanding concerns about the density and extent of London. Barlow drew on a tradition going back at least to Howard (1965 [1898]), that sought to distribute population (and some production) from an overcrowded and therefore overly expensive/overly vulnerable central London.

Abercrombie's 1944 Greater London Plan included the latest proposal for a MGB substantially bigger than earlier iterations. This was underpinned by normative views of the countryside and openness and the 'need' for economic balance and resilience. The logic for expansion did not overcome the need for a mechanism to deliver an expanded MGB. The passing of the 1947 Town & Country Planning Act would be a 'game changer'. It had two immediate impacts for the MGB: first, the local planning authorities it created were permitted to include Green Belt policies in their local development plans, and; second, because the Act 'nationalised' the right to develop land (all development required planning permission regardless of land ownership), it was possible massively to expand the MGB as the need to purchase land for Green Belt had been removed. Now it was possible to designate land as Green Belt without owning it, allowing planning authorities then to refuse to permit a change to the existing use of land. However, this only 'froze' the current use and did not allow planning authorities to direct changes of use or improvements – to access for example. Abercrombie still envisaged the LCC continuing to fund some purchasing of land, for example where the authorities wanted to change Green Belt land from a private to a public use, or from farmland to recreation land. However, notwithstanding the national compensation arrangements that were to follow (Hall 2002), the 1947 Act removed the financial burden on local authorities when designating Green Belt land. Significant expansion came, nationally, with the intervention of Duncan Sandys, then the Ministry of Housing and Local Government. In 1955 a Green Belt Circular encouraged other

cities to consider developing a Green Belt and a later circular in 1957 on the designation and allocation of Green Belt land led to a considerable growth across the country which included the expansion of the MGB. The emphasis on containment by Green Belt rather than access to and quality of Green Belt was reiterated by Sandys who restated the purpose of urban containment: Green Belt had neither to be green nor attractive (London First/Quod 2015).

Growth continued apace throughout the 1960s and 70s although Green Belt designations were not always formalised by government, leaving them vulnerable, and despite opposition from the house building industry (Elson 1986). A key test came with the election of the significantly more market/less planning orientated Thatcher government in 1979. Government circulars are one of the many material considerations that are taken into consideration when determining planning applications. They carry legal status and their wording is subject to close reading and interpretation in the courts. In the early days of Thatcher's administration, circular 22/80 reassured interested parties that the Green Belt remained an important policy to be maintained. However, Elson (1986) provides a detailed account of how a later draft circular in 1983 was interpreted as proposing a more liberal approach to Green Belt policy with the possibility of increased development of Green Belt land (some exceptional development has always been allowed). After a bruising political battle this was withdrawn and Circular 14/84 confirmed the extant position on the Green Belt and then strengthened it by adding a new purpose – to support urban regeneration by encouraging re-development of city sites (see also Herington 1990: 24), a change to which we return in the following sub-section. This was a salutary lesson for politicians of the danger of seeking to challenge the extent of Green Belt protection. Significantly it also serves to illustrate that political parties and governments contain many positions and the opposition to draft circular of 1983 was effective partially because the ruling Conservative Party was divided (Elson 1986: 237). This division included differing rationalist positions as some Members of Parliament had more to lose from a change in Green Belt policy than others. Furthermore, the Party also compassed members with normative as well as political-rationalist reasons for supporting the institution. Under and after Thatcher designations were formalised by central government and today the MGB covers 516,000 hectares (5,160 km²), an area more than three times the size of Greater London itself (1,572 km²). In linear terms, it stretches northwards up towards Letchworth, eastwards to Southend-on-Sea, south past Crawley and to the west it surrounds Slough. Measured from the centre of London to its outside edge it extends more than 55km (34 miles) to the north, east and south, and over 35km (22 miles) to the west (see Figure one).

<INSERT FIGURE ONE ABOUT HERE>

2.2 Current purposes

Over the life of the Green Belt it has been described and regulated by a series of different national planning regimes. Nevertheless, certain basic principles have remained in place since the 1947 Act. England has a discretionary planning system; rather than using zoning, it is a plan-led system – although the Green Belt looks something like a zonal system. Plans are developed in a context set by the national government; but there is not a national plan. Plans are produced at different levels, sometimes regional (in the case of London), always at the local authority level and sometimes below this at a neighbourhood scale. Currently, it is the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) that sets out broad government guidelines for plans that the lower level authorities have demonstrably to work within. It sets out the purpose of Green Belt, including the MGB. These are fivefold:

- 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.

NPPF 2012: section 80

The five purposes in the NPPF are drawn verbatim from the preceding planning guidance that it replaced, Planning Policy Guidance 2 (PPG2 Green Belt 1995). The purpose of the NPPF was to rationalise the far more expansive documentation that preceded it. Given this, the verbatim transfer might be considered as reflecting the significance given by central government to Green Belt and reflective of a path dependency in relation to this policy. The first, second and fourth purposes come almost verbatim from a 1955 government circular issued by Sandys. The first four purposes are variations on the theme of seeking distinct town borders that separate them from other towns and the country. It is noteworthy that the aim of openness, which drove early proponents such as Stocks, is implied by but not specified in the five purposes. This is because openness is regarded as an outcome of the five purposes, a point made clear in the wording of the NPPF that surrounds them. The openness of Green Belt is described as ‘an essential characteristic’ (NPPF 2012:para 79) - if it is not open it is not Green Belt. This takes us directly back to Stocks as, in essence, London could be ringed by a series of airfields - as once proposed (Amati & Yokohari 2007), golf courses or scrubland of little environmental quality, as the outcome would still be openness and the purposes achieved. Access is also absent from the purposes, but unlike openness that is a requirement for Green Belt (it is its essential characteristic), while access and quality are presented as incidental benefits. While, as we have seen, early proponents of a MGB emphasised the importance of public access, this doesn’t

flow automatically from either the purposes set out in the current NPPF or from the outcome of openness.

Therefore, the Green Belt is something that benefits the general public through being an 'amenity at a distance'. We can look out to openness, rather than necessarily having access to move through it. It is a moot point whether members of the public, when surveyed about the Green Belt, really understand the limited access and environmental quality that it affords. The potential for confusion is likely to have been compounded by the duplication of policy. Other policies provide access to open space (e.g. Metropolitan Open Land, MOL, and Country Parks), and controlled development in areas of aesthetic and scientific significance (e.g. Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, AONB, and Sites of Special Scientific Interest, SSSI). In some cases these designations overlap with Green Belt and would continue even if Green Belt policy were abolished. Unrealised suggestions were made to signpost Green Belt land so people would know when they were walking through it and benefitting from it (Amati & Yokohari 2007). Although never realised, if delivered, the proposed signposting of the MGB might have clarified where the MGB *is not* the policy providing access to countryside, as well as where it is.

That, in many cases, the Green Belt provides neither access nor quality of land is implied in no less a place than the Ministerial Forward to the NPPF (CLG 2012) where it states that Green Belt designation creates a possible opportunity: "land that has been depleted of diversity can be refilled by nature – and opened to people to experience it, to the benefit of body and soul". The important point here is that the statement recognises that after eighty years both access and quality are far from having been achieved (around a third of the MGB is accessible). One of the effects of the 1947 Act was to make designation possible, but without giving control over access or finance to fund improvements, and despite the continued claims for these incidental benefits, there remains no active mechanism or requirement to achieve them. Green Belt is, therefore, reinforced as an institution by a promise on the future. This has two implications when considering Green Belt reform. First, it leads to a form of double accounting. The promise of incidental benefits in the future increases the perceived costs of any reform; not only would we lose some openness, but also the future potential benefit of access and/or improved land quality. This adds to the MGB's institutional stickiness, as proponents of 'no change' can legitimately argue that these can never be achieved in situ once development takes place, without having to address the likelihood of them ever taking place in the absence of development. The second important aspect is that the argument around Green Belt is greatly muddled by the ability to sometimes link purpose and incidental benefit and at other times to insist on their separation. Those seeking reform often focus on the issue of limited access or poor quality land (Manns 2014). This is readily negated by proponents of the status quo who can argue that access and quality are not the measures by which Green Belt should be judged;

rather, it should be judged by openness. This might be reasonable if they did not then, themselves, draw on the future promise of access and openness to muster public support.

The addition of the fifth purpose, to support urban regeneration, is a relative newcomer from 1984, and is informative in emphasising how Green Belt policy is instrumentalised. The addition of the fifth purpose reflects a response to a perceived threat to Green Belt from the pro-market Thatcher Government under which there had been a substantial growth in out of town shopping centres. It gave Green Belt defenders a powerful new tool, reflected in how the CPRE now promotes this purpose, “...Green Belts are *primarily* about good planning in towns and cities through encouraging urban regeneration; protecting attractive landscapes is a spin-off benefit”, (Miner 2014:np *emphasis added*). The weight given to the fifth purpose is telling, with the aesthetics of openness becoming, itself, an incidental benefit to the ‘primary purpose’ of good planning, which is equated with urban regeneration. Justifications for the Green Belt go well beyond those in the NPPF, and into the realms of the fantastical on occasions. In 2014 Government Secretary Eric Pickles repeated a longstanding metaphor that the Green Belt functions as the ‘green lungs’ of urban areas (Hope 2014). Such an appeal is clearly fanciful insofar as Londoners would not suffocate for a lack of air without the Green Belt. Even in a less literal interpretation, the metaphor is disingenuous as it suggests that the Green Belt is an organ within the city, perhaps in Camden and Wandsworth, and not sitting far outside the body of the city in Hertfordshire and Surrey.

In summary, the historical development of the MGB feeds into a contemporary ‘confusion’ of the primary purpose (constraint) and incidental benefits (including access), which are sometimes brought together and sometimes held apart. The roots of this ‘confusion’ lie in the roots of the Green Belt, but instead of regarding this ambiguity as accidental the mixing of purpose and incidental benefits has always served important purposes for advocates of Green Belt and that it continues to impact how it is discussed and defended. The lack of clarity both results from, and further facilitates, the instrumentalisation of Green Belt policy. There have always been multiple claims for Green Belt and, once enacted, the policy could be defended by the ‘expansion’ of its purpose that to this day provides differing justifications to different groups in seeking to defend the Green Belt. This is not unique to Green Belt policy; for example, a similar observation has been made of another of planning’s cornerstone policies, density, where, “[the suspicion is] that the notion of the compact city can be used as a cover to push forward policies and interventions that have goals other than environmental and social sustainability” (Holman et al 2015b: 6. See also Searle and Filion 2011; Charnock and Ribera-Fumaz 2011; Sorensen et al. 2010). The instrumentalisation of the policy through the confusion of purpose and promise is of central importance in Sections Four and Five when consideration is given to how to enact change, but first the reasons for calling for change are set out.

3 Nothing gained from over-constraining.

In this section attention is paid first to the changes that have happened during the course of the life of the MGB. The economic geography of England has changed dramatically and in multifarious ways while, as we have seen, the direction of travel of MGB policy has been one of expansion supported by 'blunt' enforcement. The trade off between MGB policy and economic changes has contributed to a twofold 'failure' of housing supply. First, a chronic one including low internal space standards and high costs, and second, a crisis of housing numbers, contributing to spikes in house prices (see Hilber & Vermeulen 2016 for evidence of a link between land constraint and less stable house prices). These problems are not solely attributable to MGB policy, nor only to policies constraining the supply of land, but land constraint, including the Green Belt, is a contributor. In the second part of this section, the present options for land supply, including Brownfield land, estate renewal and suburban intensification, are set out and it is argued that while these are important, they are not sufficient and, therefore, some change of Green Belt policy is necessary to allow it to contribute to the range of land options available.

3.1 Fitting a mega city into a shrinking city's Green Belt

The Green Belt was first enacted in the 1930s, the decade in which London reached its peak twentieth century population (1939; 8.61m). This was followed by a long period of population decline, reaching its nadir in 1988 (6.7m), before increasing to 8.63m in 2015, an all-time high. The population is predicted to continue to grow and to reach 10.2m by 2039 (GLA intelligence 2015). Therefore, for most of its life the MGB has been enacted against the backdrop of London as a shrinking city. There is, then, the temptation to focus on recent decades, after the late 1980s, to argue that London and the Wider South East is in a new epoch to which the MGB is no longer suited. This may hold true if we were to focus just on the crisis of housing but, given chronic housing problems in the UK, the accumulated impacts over time of constraint on land supply, including that caused by the Green Belt, are also considered. To understand the long-term impact of the Green Belt it is necessary to outline briefly the way that planning developed in the period after the Second World War. The 1947 Town & Country Planning Act was part of a radical agenda (by modern standards) of state intervention in the UK. Drawing in no small part on the experience of the Second World War and the period preceding it, the post-war Labour government sought to build a radically new social order delivered through a very different relationship between society and markets than that which we have today. This envisaged a leading role for the state in 'masterplanning' new communities where the state would acquire and manage land and deliver public housing and where the market's role in housing supply would be marginal (Hall 1973: 617).

This is illustrated through the New Towns programme, which was a policy that accompanied the Green Belt. While the old cities would be constrained by the Green Belt, demand for new housing would partly be met through a programme of New Towns. Abercrombie had proposed ten sites in the 1944 Greater London Plan; at White Waltham, Chipping Ongar, Harlow, Margaretting, Stevenage, Redbourne, Stapleford, Meopham, Crowhurst and Holmwood; with proposed populations of between 25,000 and 60,000 in total they would house 515,000 Londoners. The programme started to become a reality with the passing of the New Towns Act in 1946. Initial progress was slow but by 1950 eight sites were identified, some from Abercrombie's plan, such as Stevenage and Harlow, others added, including Welwyn and Bracknell. The New Towns programme proceeded through three phases, with a move to larger projected sizes culminating in Milton Keynes, a third generation New Town. By the 1970s, the programme had withered on the vine, "...regarded with increasing ambivalence by central government [t]hey did not meet with a dramatic halt with any particular politician calling for an end to the programme" (Alexander 2009:48). The success of New Towns, if measured by projected and actual population, reflects a north-south divide, with those in the Wider South East meeting their 'targets' and many in the north and Scotland falling somewhat short. Although 'Central Lancashire' (1970) joins Milton Keynes (1967) as one of the two New Towns substantially larger than proposed (on 2007 estimated figures +29,000 and + 34,500 respectively) (Alexander 2009:49), it was rather different, being a regeneration vehicle for three existing towns/cities: Preston, Leyland and Chorley.

The New Towns programme illustrates one of the two ways in which the Green Belt became decoupled from the assumptions that supported its sustainability. Before it was delivered on the ground, the Green Belt had been envisaged as part of a paired policy of urban containment *alongside* planned new urban settlements. In 1929 the Greater London Planning Committee, in its first report, noted that the MGB was to be, "...reserved on a background of unlimited Potential Building Land' and twinned with a proposal for Areas of Building Development" (Manns 2014:13). The second illustration is the link between the distribution of employment and the Green Belt. An interventionist post-War state, drawing on the aforementioned Barlow report, set itself the task of seeking to rebalance employment across the UK, which since the late nineteenth and into the twentieth century had seen a long-term shift in employment that increasingly came to favour the South of England over the North (Massey 1984; Scott 2007). In the thirty years after the Second World War, attempts to challenge the broad southerly drift of the economy had only a limited impact (Hall 2002). Neither New Towns nor industrial/employment relocation were achieved at the scale expected and both have since been abandoned. Of the triptych, only the Green Belt survives. As an 'orphaned' policy the MGB continues to contribute to the constraint of land supply in the Wider South East, while the rest of the 'family' of policies, aimed at shifting housing and development

pressures elsewhere, has disappeared. This reinforces the case for regarding the Green Belt as having the qualities of an institution, as it has demonstrated considerable staying power, having outlived significant other policies that once logically sat alongside it. Even though core justifications have been abandoned (regional development) and complementary policies have ceased (New Towns), the Green Belt persists and does so without moderation.

New Towns and policies for the distribution of employment reflect an assumption informing the 1947 Act, namely, that the state would be planning for a relatively stable and knowable world. The decline of the New Towns programme illustrates the fallacy of this assumption with, for example, the post war baby boom coming to a rapid end with the introduction of the contraceptive pill. As well as unanticipated social changes, long-term economic restructuring and economic shocks, including the 1970s oil crisis, also changed the anticipated course of events. Reflecting this, the decline of the New Town programme has been attributed to the changing world in which it found itself, both socially and economically (Alexander 2009). These changes impacted planning more generally; writing on the period between the 1947 Act and the 1970s Hall (1973) observed,

...the pace of change has been unprecedentedly rapid. Despite frequent complaints from critics about our sluggish pace of economic growth, urban England has witnessed a rate of change unparalleled in any era since the early Industrial Revolution...(614).

The Green Belt, New Towns and the employment policy did not anticipate all these changes, but the MGB contributed to the way in which the Wider South East changed. Drawing on the insights of New Economic Geography, Hall and Pain (2006) have described the mega-city-region that has developed in the Wider South East of England, and which:

...consists of no less than 51 functional urban regions (FURs) dominated by London, which – extending for an average of 30 miles (50km) from the centre – has a total population of 9,025,960 people... while London remains the dominant centre in the region, with by far the greatest concentration of business service firms, [...] other centres have grown and attracted a range of business service industries which form a substantial part of their economic activity. (125)

The Green Belt has contributed to shaping this pattern of development across the WSE, directing it into towns and cities but also to available greenfield sites that are beyond the Green Belt. This 'leapfrogging' of the Green Belt was noted by Herington (1990: 32) writing on the impacts up to the end of the 1980s, and was raised again through a government review of housing and planning where the impact of the Green Belt in lengthening commuter journeys was noted (Barker, 2006: 9 see also Evans 1998). Therefore, the Green Belt, as enacted, is too blunt a tool optimally to shape the

development of towns and cities at a regional scale, as it simply limits them at their edges (Herington 1990:19). This has environmental, social and economic consequences as Green Belts have, "...served both to make urban areas more compact and functional urban regions less so" (Gordon 2008:4653).

3.2 Housing demand

The shapers of the 1947 Planning Act and the MGB could hardly have foreseen the changes in society and in economic wealth that occurred in England during the second half of the twentieth century, yet both have had profound impacts on the demand for housing. Hall (1973) noted long ago that increased demand for land for housing is not simply the result of an increase in households, but also in wealth; as people have more income they want to consume more housing, to live in larger flats or houses. As he observed, demand for housing is elastic and where people have more disposable income they will choose to spend part of this on housing. This leads some, from a welfare economics perspective, to argue that as land constraint doesn't remove this desire it simply means that restricting supply increases the cost of realising this desire (Cheshire et al 2014). Advocates of Green Belt and other policies of containment argue that the elasticity of demand for housing space supports their case. Building more houses will not only meet the needs of those without homes or those whose housing needs are demonstrably undersupplied. If there were more homes and, consequently, housing space cost less per square metre, anybody who values space and has the resources will buy more of it. For some this 'weakness' in the supply side argument is made worse by the financialization of housing. As mortgage products have moved from being a means to fund housing to being investment products in their own right they have opened up the possibility of acquiring loans to more people and it is this that has placed upward pressure on prices (Aalbers 2008). Once again, the implication of this on the supply side is that we would have to build at a scale far in excess of immediate 'need' in order to suppress housing and therefore land prices as we would first have to meet increased demand driven by new mortgage products. Those who see this as problematic can easily make an analogy with roads. In the past we increased road capacity to manage traffic congestion, but greater road capacity encourages more people to buy cars and existing car owners to drive more. This leads to more congestion, suggesting the need for more roads that will encourage greater car use. The analogy with housing is not exact, but a previous government suggested the 'danger' of releasing 'socially excessive' demand through increases in supply when it signalled an intent to move from a policy of 'predict and provide' to 'plan, monitor and manage' (Gallent & Carmona 2004). There is, then, a clash of 'value systems' related to housing and to whether we should be able to consume what we can afford or, as there is a finite supply of land, society should seek to constrain demand for housing (Power 2013). Therefore, how much land we need for housing partly depends on where we stand between the two positions.

For 'constrainers' there are a number of ways to manage housing demand. Housing demand and supply varies hugely across the UK. If we could shift demand to reflect better existing supply we would do much to address regional inequalities and the demand for housing (especially in London and the Southeast) would be greatly diminished. This approach is advocated by, among others, the CPRE, yet, as already noted, even in a period of more interventionist government, attempts to stem the shift to the South in terms of employment met with limited success. We might argue that this simply reflects an insufficient will on the part of central government, and indeed, compared to other states such as South Korea, the UK government does not evidence a strong will to direct employment/industrial policy (Chang 2010). However, there is no evidence to suggest that this is likely to change in the foreseeable future and, therefore, if we are going to do more to meet the need for housing we are unlikely to achieve this through a regional matching of existing supply and demand, however desirable this might be. In short, the economy will continue to drive demand for more housing in London and the Wider South East.

An 'intra-region' intervention could be to seek to better match occupancy levels, encouraging people with spare rooms to downsize to smaller housing, for example. Those in favour of this approach argue that it could benefit people, especially the elderly, by freeing up the resources given to occupying 'too much' space. Of course, homeowners could do this spontaneously in the market, but many don't. In some cases this is likely to be because of a lack of alternatives. Where insufficient appropriate smaller homes are available in the right place at the right price there may be a role for intervention to seek to address this. However, this suggests the need to build more housing in the region to meet the needs of downsizers. In other cases, under occupiers want and can afford to pay for more space than is strictly necessary. The extent to which one views this as acceptable depends on one's worldview, but again, it is difficult realistically to foresee any significant government intervention to push 'willing' under occupiers to downsize – despite policies to achieve this across the public housing stock through the so-called bedroom tax where public housing tenants are charged for under-occupancy. Without taking a view on the 'correctness' of such approaches, in a country with a strong tradition of being market orientated, alternative ways of allocating existing housing, such as inter-regional balancing of supply and demand and managing under occupancy within regions, seems highly improbable for the foreseeable future. These options may make a contribution, but they will only have a limited role in addressing the undersupply of housing in London and the Wider South East.

If there is not to be a significant shift of housing demand to other regions or significant interventions in how private housing is consumed to maximise use of the existing stock within the region, the next question is whether we have enough land allocated to meet housing demand in London and the

Wider South East. Both the chronic problem of housing standards and cost and the present 'crisis' of housing numbers suggests not, although this is contested as we will see when Brownfield land is discussed below.

3.2.1 Enough land already?

London is used here as an example, because it is at the centre of the crisis and because figures are readily available, to ask if there is enough land to meet demand without recourse to the MGB, although it is important to emphasise that that this exercise could be reproduced across the WSE. Although London is at the economic centre of this mega city region and has particularly intense generators of housing demand, including higher levels of immigration than to the rest of the region, it should not be regarded in isolation. The WSE is generating its own employment and population growth that feeds through into endogenous demand for housing. But also, if London cannot supply the demand for housing people will move across the borders in search of housing. Moreover, people may simply move out of London because they prefer the housing and lifestyle offered outside London; people will trade space for centrality in some instances (Gordon 2008). The movement of people across borders to satisfy housing choices is reflected in the observation that much of the traditional leafy green suburbia to which many households in England have aspired is now to be found within the WSE more than within London's own suburbs (Cochrane 2011). While much of the WSE *plans* to undersupply in relation to housing demand (Emmett 2014), London has made great strides in meeting its own needs through the granting of permissions for new housing. This might appear to negate the argument against MGB reform outside London – that London needs to 'pull its weight' before expecting others to look to their part of the MGB. However, as we will see, sufficient permissions do not turn into sufficient new housing and so London is not meeting its need either.

Figures for London's housing needs vary partly as a function of different ways of estimating existing and future needs and the period over which the backlog of needs will be met. On another calculation, even to maintain the 2011 position (itself worse than in 2000), London requires 59,000 new homes a year (McDonald et al 2015). Mayor Khan has committed himself to an 80,000 target, although the current target *minimum* set by the Greater London Authority is for 42,400 units per annum⁶, based on an assessment of land supply assessed through a Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) carried out in 2014. Taking the Greater London Authority's 'official' target minimum for new housing units the next question is whether this is going to be or is likely to be delivered. A superficial appraisal of London's granting of planning permissions for housing is reassuring. Between 2004/05 and 2012/13 the average annual rate of approvals was 57,789 units against the target *minimum* of 42,400 units per annum (Molior 2014). These headline figures appear

⁶ This includes both market and affordable housing products.

to undermine the connection made between the need for more housing land and changes to the MGB premised on there being insufficient land to meet the need for housing. If we set aside the chronic or long terms effects of constrained land supply on housing (suggesting a need for far higher levels of housing provision), there appears to be enough land to meet 'immediate need' or, in other words, to address the crisis. This is the position of advocates for the Green Belt status quo and, superficially, this appears to be a reasonable position. But a problem arises through the gap between planning permissions granted and housing delivered. Over any given period there is a considerable discrepancy between the number of housing units granted permission (feeding the so-called supply 'pipeline') and those that eventually come out of that pipeline.

To draw further on the pipeline metaphor, housing supply is not dissimilar to water supply where leakage creates a substantial difference between how much goes into the pipes and how much comes out. In the case of the housing supply pipeline Molior (2014) look at the period 2004/5 to 2012/13 in London and find that roughly half of all permissions granted do not get built. The reasons for this discrepancy are many and complex (Holman et al 2015a), including that virtually all new development in London is on brownfield land, but evidently the number of permissions granted does not indicate future supply. Delivery is, in an important aspect, a function of the sorts of permissions granted. One explanation is that London relies heavily on large Brownfield sites to achieve the level of permissions granted. This seems reasonable, intuitively, as it is probably easier to achieve large permitted numbers on a few large sites, rather than seeking to achieve the same permissions on a huge number of small sites. In 2014 in London 700 sites of less than 500 units yielded 72,932 permissions for new market homes, while just 66 schemes of more than 500 units yielded permissions for 99,184. Although larger sites deliver permissions they don't necessarily deliver the much-needed units, as there is a dynamic on large sites that prevents permission from turning quickly into starts and, therefore, completions. These figures are for private market housing and this is important as, self evidently, developers have to sell these. Developing a large site in one go and placing thousands of new units on the market causes a localised deflation of prices and so developers will bring a smaller number of units on stream over a longer period; indeed, "[v]ery, very few schemes commence over 500 units in any five year period. This is because selling more than 100 units per year [on any given site] is very difficult" (Molior 2014:16).

<INSERT TABLE ONE ABOUT HERE>

Accusations run thick and fast as to why the gap exists, these tend to split along professional and public/private divides. The claims and counter claims (including land-banking by the private sector and the slow granting of permissions by the public sector), have been reviewed over the years (e.g. Barker 2004) and in crude summation it is probably fair to say that there is some truth in all the

claims about why we undersupply housing and specifically why all permissions do not turn into housing units; the mistake would be to suppose that any one reason is *the* reason. The important point is the proportion of permissions that turn into housing on the ground and the timescale over which this occurs. The chances of something happening to change this seems unlikely; not least, because the causes are multiple and so not amenable to a simple solution (Holman et al 2015a; *pace* Molior 2014). The gap between permissions and housing output is not limited to Brownfield land, but this important source adds its own, further complications and produces particular behaviours that impact the achieving of a sufficient supply of housing.

Nationally, the development of Brownfield land has been prioritised with a target (for at least 60% of all new housing to be built on Brownfield land) since 1998, with subsequent increases being made for the proportion of new development to take place on Brownfield land (since 2013 the NPPF encourages but does not set a target for the development of Brownfield land). Of course, the flipside of requiring a minimum proportion of development to take place on Brownfield land is effectively to limit the amount of development that can take place on greenfield (as opposed to Green Belt) land. Therefore, Brownfield first acts as a constraint on greenfield sites *alongside* Green Belt. Seen in this light, it is very important that Brownfield land is then able to deliver the amount of land needed for housing. Nationally, a simple tally of Brownfield sites and housing need suggests that Brownfield can meet England's need for housing land, but, "the vast majority of Brownfield sites in 2012 were less than 1 ha in size (71%), with 22% in the 1-5ha range, 6% in the 5-20 ha range with only 1% (317 sites) being greater than 20 ha" (Sinnott 2015:15). In London, in 2013 49% of 'starts' were achieved by just nine companies with 94 firms comprising the remaining 51%. Large companies are rarely interested in small sites, which comprise much of the Brownfield supply. This could be a great opportunity for small developers to develop small sites, but there can be many complications to developing Brownfield land, so called 'hardcore' sites being the most difficult.

Examples from London illustrate that while large sites are now delivering housing they take a long time and significant investment by the public sector to come forward to the point of producing planning applications. King's Cross Central took 35 years from a draft plan to commencement and with massive public investment in the station complex to the south; Battersea took 50 years from the closure of the power station to project commencement and has required an extension of the Northern Line; and third, the Royal Docks Greenwich took 30 years from the closing of the docks to the first phases of the scheme with investment in transport through Docklands Light Rail, Crossrail and increases in road capacity (Quod/Shelter2016). Therefore, the future supply of large sites will not be easy or quick, based on past experience and, as discussed, even once granted permission the

build-out of housing will take place over many years and a significant proportion of permissions will never turn into housing.

Other 'off the Green Belt' options may also be desirable but hard to deliver and/or may not yield as much additional housing as expected; these revolve around densification generally and, specifically, in the suburbs, local high streets and public housing estates specifically. Governments have, through policy, sought to encourage higher density development. In practice, national policy sets low targets and even these have since been removed with a change of government. In 2004 the Greater London Authority introduced a 'Sustainable Residential Quality' density matrix with the first London Plan and this remains. The impact of past national and London Plan policy on density has been to send signals that higher density was more acceptable than in the past and, certainly in London there has been a considerable upward shift in density. However, this has produced a particular behaviour, with the impact being to greatly increase densities on Brownfield land rather than to greatly increase the delivery of housing overall (Gordon et al 2016). In specific cases of densification (suburbs, high streets and estates), Stringer (2016) again highlights how each would only deliver over long periods. Suburban densification could offer the greatest addition of land of the three. The suburbs of outer London are often observed to have particularly low densities overall given their proximity to the centre of a world city, with the typical semi-detached inter-war home being built at around 30 units per hectare. A complex pattern of residential up-scaling and decline is taking place across outer London where many local high streets are challenged by changes in shopping patterns (OLC 2016). The suburbs may offer the potential for densification that is beneficial to the suburbs, especially around local high streets. Although the retailers are often not doing well, these high streets are often well served by Underground and rail links (e.g. Southgate, Bexley, Romford and Pinner) and where this is not the case the London bus network hubs people into the rail network (e.g. Wrythe Lane, Carshalton, Harrow Weald and Collier Row). Therefore, the suburbs, sensitively densified, could provide a sustainable source of increased housing numbers. The problem here is that the suburbs are dominated by home ownership and therefore site assembly would require buying out (probably through compulsory purchase), multiple homeowners. This would be an expensive and time-consuming option. There are tracts of ex-industrial and public sector land across outer London and these can and do yield housing land; Colindale and Mill Hill East, both in Barnet, are examples of large-scale suburban development. Although the outer boroughs are seen as broadly conservative and residents are assumed to oppose new development, Barnet shows that a Conservative run borough can approve schemes for large quantities of new housing. However, these Brownfield suburban sites are subject to many of the caveats set out for Brownfield land already – including the likely desire of developers to build out bigger sites over a number of years to avoid a local suppression of prices.

To conclude this section, there are several ways of increasing the amount of new housing without recourse to Green Belt land or to the wider (although also constrained) supply of greenfield land. Brownfield land and densification, including that of suburban areas, are options and governments have promoted both Brownfield and increased density. These have both been 'successful' insofar as Brownfield land has been built on and densities have increased, although whether the full range of aspirations for mixed, inclusive, stable etc.... communities have been achieved is less easy to measure and the outcome less certain (Holman et al 2015b). In London, a basic comparison of the permissions granted (without recourse to Green Belt land) and housing targets suggest that enough land is available. However, there are two important points to note. First, Brownfield sites on which both inner and outer London depend, can take a very long time to become available and second, even once an application is made and permissions are granted, only about half of permitted housing is ever delivered. It is unlikely that we will see a fundamental change in these factors. One solution would be to make many Brownfield sites 'application ready' more quickly. While this would involve much more than just increasing national investment in significant new transport infrastructure, even achieving this condition will be hard in the present economic climate.

As the present supply solutions are not sufficient, and given the crisis of housing, we might assume that a critical juncture had been reached – that something must change. However, as predicted by historical institutionalism, path dependency suggests that even when a critical juncture is reached, in this cases a housing crisis, the tendency is to fall back on existing norms and practices and, at best, to seek to adapt them to meet the crisis (Pierson & Skocpol 2002). In this case, despite long-term evidence that Brownfield land and permissions on it is not producing the amount of housing required, attention is focused on changing the long-term trend rather than looking to other sources of land alongside what Brownfield can deliver. The approach here is to challenge the path dependency as we need much more than 'enough' land with 'enough' permissions to deliver 'enough' housing. This becomes even more pertinent if we wish to go beyond the crisis to address the chronic problem of English housing, and we would need access to even greater amounts of land. In the following section the options for the MGB to contribute to the stock of land available for housing are set out.

4 Options

In this section the question of change in the MGB is considered, change that both can and does happen and also proposals for change. Although the Green Belt is a powerful institution, realised as a blunt and effective policy tool it does not sterilise land from any change forever. Therefore, the focus of the first sub-section is on the ways that change is currently enacted, through ad hoc applications, local reviews and changes to the NPPF. It is argued that these approaches miss opportunities as they are largely small-scale and uncoordinated and fail to take the opportunities of more strategic change. Moreover, this incremental approach stokes concern from the public who can see neither when nor where it will end. In short, a series of smaller, unpredictable changes may make people more defensive towards the institution than a more planned, even if larger scale, change. A more strategic approach allows for dialogue where parties can explore how proposed changes will impact on them; for example, in terms of the 'rational' institutional model, will the new arrangements provide a reasonable compromise (always a feature of partaking in an institution for rational reasons) where any losses do not outweigh the benefits? And in the case of 'normative' models, could some loss of openness in some places be compensated by realising unmet ambitions in other locations?

Next, proposals that seek a greater level of change than is possible under the existing arrangements are looked at. These focus on existing public transport infrastructure and/or using other existing infrastructure by developing extensions to existing settlements. It is argued that this is an improvement on the current position as it makes better use of opportunities to be more strategic and has a planned and predictable element to it. A key weakness of these approaches is that as they would likely take place on a 'station by station' or an 'extension by extension' basis, they would not impact land prices as the approach would not send a signal to markets that a substantial increase in land supply is to take place. In this regard it might ease the housing crisis by supplying some more housing, but it would not address the chronic problems brought on by the long-term constraint of land. The next option, abolition of the policy, addresses strongly the question of sending signals to the market. This approach also seeks to challenge the planning system more generally as it is founded on the belief/argument that markets are, with few exceptions, a more efficient allocator of scarce resources than state planning. As this setting out of the options is, of necessity, a broad-brush approach to the alternatives, criteria are proposed that might be used by practitioners to evaluate the options. The matching of the options to the criteria leads to the proposition of a further option that draws on the history of green wedges and corridors, discussed in section two, to focus change in the coordination corridors which are set out in the London Plan, and which run out of London, through the MGB and into the counties beyond.

4.1 Incremental change

The Government's NPPF rules out significant increases or decreases in Green Belt, stating that, "The general extent of Green Belts across the country is already established". It might appear surprising, remarkable even that the extent of the Green Belt nationally, expanded over many decades, and where boundaries have been determined by a series of local authority decisions with no central government plan, has produced an extent of Green Belt that the Government considers to be close enough to correct to remain largely fixed. An institutional reading of this approach in the NPPF is that the Government is acting rationally, implicitly recognising the downside of Green Belt (it does not want to make things worse by permitting it to get bigger), but not extending this logic to shrinking the Green Belt because the entrenched normative position makes this a very difficult option (the political rationality being it is not a fight worth having). Therefore the government intends to leave things as they are. As a result most change in designations are small-scale being achieved through applications and appeals, local reviews and government policy changes.

4.1.1 Applications and appeals

As noted earlier, a wide range of material considerations are taken into account in determining a planning application. The NPPF, other government advice, adopted local plans and neighbourhood and regional plans (where these exist – currently in London) are all important, although not exclusive, considerations. Planners are, therefore, required to exercise considerable planning judgement in determining an application. There is a right of appeal for the applicant where planning permission is refused. In the first instance appeals are considered on behalf of the government minister by planning inspectors. Where their decision is further contested, the courts become instrumental in ruling on the exercise of planning judgment. In the process of ruling on an appeal the courts will weight numerous elements. This includes that planning authorities are required to demonstrate a five-year supply of housing (NPPF para 49) and where they have failed to do so this can weigh against any decision to refuse an application for housing where the applicant appeals the refusal. Case law abounds, but a recent example based on an application in Cheshire saw a developer win an appeal for permission to build 150 homes in a Green Gap, as distinct from Green Belt, although the ruling has implications for the latter. The ruling was clear that both policies identifying land *and* policies restricting land contribute to the overall supply of land and that, where there is not a five-year supply, an authority cannot ignore or discount policies that restrict land (Cheshire East BC v SoS CLG 2015).

4.1.2 The Green Belt review process

When reviewing local plans, local authorities will, therefore, take into account the need for housing and capacity for new housing. Where this is inadequate the authority may carry out a Green Belt

review. There is no set methodology for carrying out reviews and these are often contracted out to consultants. Commissioning authorities vary in how they approach reviews. In essence, some intend for the review to identify Green Belt land that might be developed while other authorities 'go through the process' with little or no intention of having Green Belt identified for development⁷. Some local authorities seek to act as 'free riders' on neighbouring authority's housing land, not identifying enough land in their own area and assuming or hoping that neighbours will make up the shortfall.

At present the MGB Is used as a political weapon for diverting growth elsewhere within the South East. This passes the buck for handling growth from one set of Shire Counties to another, and the counties outside the Green Belt may be as failing to accept further growth as those within it. (Herington 1990: 42)

With no standard methodology it is possible to influence the outcomes of a review. In asking whether a Green Belt site might be removed, the process is to judge any given parcel of land against the criteria in the NPPF alongside broader considerations, including the impact on openness. Together, this potentially produces a 'catch all' situation where it would be more-or-less impossible to remove any existing Green Belt. The 'technique' for authorities seeking to justify removing some Green Belt is to adjust down the size of the parcels of land under consideration as the smaller the parcel size, the easier it is to make a case that the parcel does not meet the government's principles. This works by minimising rather than countering the normative case for Green Belt. As any development on Green Belt represents some loss openness the normative case against development can never be countered rather the extent of the 'offense' can only be minimised. Evidently, any large parcel of land, if developed, would affect openness to a greater degree than a small parcel.

Given that an authority is required to demonstrate a five-year supply of land, and appeals to develop on Green Belt might be lost where this is not the case, one might expect all authorities requiring more land for housing to carry out Green Belt reviews that favour land release. However, the position of central government does not make this a clear calculation. In a review of current Green Belt case law (applicable not just to the MGB), the Planning Advisory Service describes planning law as, "...a highly complex, fast-moving and litigious area" (PAS 2014: 1). A key point of argument is precisely what constitutes an 'exceptional circumstance' as referenced in the NPPF, which would allow for the designation or de-designation of Green Belt as part of plan making. Previously, the courts have taken a very narrow interpretation, ruling that insufficient identifiable land to meet housing needs does not *necessarily* constitute an exceptional circumstance warranting the de-designation of Green Belt land through the policy review process. In a 2013 case it was noted that

⁷ Personal communication, planning consultant, London, 18 February 2016.

shortfall of housing land in a plan may be acceptable where deemed inevitable due to land constraints, such as AONBs, National Parks and Green Belts (Hunston v SCLG reported in PAS 2014). While local authorities may have felt legitimated in taking a restrictive view of reform by case law on plan making, more recent rulings in responses to appealed applications may suggest a change of circumstances.

Some local authorities have de-designated significant amounts of Green Belt land. A recent example includes Newcastle City Council that removed 9% of its Green Belt, 410 ha. Other examples where relatively large proportions of Green Belt have recently been removed include Christchurch, 6% and Rushcliffe 4%. This occurred in the reporting period 2013/14 – 2014/15 that saw the largest loss for five years. To contextualise this, approximately 13% of England's entire land mass is designated Green Belt, therefore, this five-year-record loss totalling 2,000 hectares represents 0.1% of the Green Belt in England.

4.1.3 Government changes

Finally, for incremental approaches, the government can change the rules (including in response to case law, but not retrospectively). This can happen through changes to the NPPF, but other statements from government are also capable of being a material consideration. As we have already seen, the Thatcher administration attempted to make changes in planning advice that caused a strong reaction. The present government, despite reiterating its strong support for Green Belt, has also consulted on options which could see more development in the Green Belt; first, by making it more likely to be acceptable to replace a structure with a larger one without falling foul of the test of openness; and second, by providing a more permissive approach to building 'starter homes' on Brownfield sites in the Green Belt. Another occasion when government permits development in Green Belt is for major infrastructure projects. One effect of maintaining openness is that land is kept available for railways, motorways and airport expansion which are delivered through national rather than local mechanisms with the result that, "[t]he Green Belt is a rigid national planning policy which is rarely modified to suit regional or local economic needs and is more often breached to allow infrastructure provision seen to be in the national interest" (Herington 1990:16). This is happening in and around London. The building and recent widening of the M25 London orbital motorway was greatly assisted by the MGB. The proposed expansion of Heathrow could see the westward expansion of the two existing runways into Green Belt land and the proposed high-speed rail link between London and Birmingham would also pass through the MGB to the west of London.

There are, therefore, mechanisms by which, currently, the Green Belt can be developed in places. Despite the narrow interpretation of the NPPF, in some circumstances there have been planned urban extensions into the Green Belt. However, the NPPF is clear that the extent of the Green Belt

nationally is more-or-less set and, reflecting this, changes to the quantum of Green Belt overall are at a modest level – as we have seen 0.1% in a ‘high’ period. These changes, alongside minor changes to policy by central Government, are suboptimal for a number of reasons. As they generally constitute the release of small amounts of Green Belt land they fail to send a signal to markets regarding land availability and so do nothing to make land more affordable. Furthermore, they only have limited cognisance of the wider regional picture. They result in development where the rules allow it rather than where ‘good planning’ would provide it. Furthermore, incremental change may, ironically, strengthen the position of the normative group as every incremental adjustment of a boundary to reduce slightly Green Belt or permission to build on Green Belt has the potential to be a rallying call for normative supporters – as they defend the Green Belt in its totality any small changes represent a threat to the Green Belt as a whole. The resulting on-going vigilance for the Green Belt reinforces the rational case for landowners and developers to plan for a Green Belt fixed for the foreseeable future and to behave accordingly.

4.2 ‘Logical opportunities’

Having set out the current limited options for change, in this and the following sub-section proposals for more fundamental change are considered. The most common approach presently is to focus on Green Belt near to railway stations (AECOM 2015, Cheshire 2014, Papworth 2015; 2016). The dual logic here is that development could take place while minimising increases in car use, but also that it exposes the restrictions of the Green Belt on good planning as land near to a railway station is currently constrained from being developed. The second broad theme is that of Garden Cities/Garden City Extension. This, too, highlights the restrictions that Green Belt places on the broader planning process (TCPA 2002). This might be seen as an approach that recognises the political strength of the normatives (the policy cannot be challenged fundamentally), but which seeks to make challenges where Green Belt can be shown to be sufficiently economically/ socially/ environmentally ‘irrational’ to overrule the rationality of the normative case.

4.2.1 Public transport ‘ped-sheds’

This approach focuses on de-designating Green Belt land that fulfils certain criteria – typically within a given distance of a railway station and where the MGB land includes no other designations (e.g. it is not a SSSI or MOL). The clear logic of this is to emphasise the negative aspects of Green Belt, preventing development in a location that is clearly relatively sustainable in transport terms. In essence, to make a good planning argument and to emphasise how the Green Belt can lead to bad planning. More positively, it makes a clear attempt to assuage the fear that any new development creates, namely, that of increased motor traffic. However, as we will see, this has to come with caveats around actual travel patterns and optimising density; but first the approach is outlined. Now

moving towards completion, London's Crossrail One (the Elizabeth Line), is used as a warning for future public investment including the, likely, Crossrail Two and High-Speed Two lines. Several stations along the Elizabeth line sit in or proximate to Green Belt and so, despite huge public investment in the line and stations there are cases where it is not possible to extract greater benefit by increasing the amount of housing near to a greatly improved connection to central London - examples of such stations include Ivor and Taplow (Cheshire 2014). The problem goes back even further, although it is sometimes missed through familiarity. Parts of the London Underground system run through the MGB, and so land near some stations, on the far eastern reaches of the Central Line at Theydon Bois for example, is similarly prevented from development that could make better use of the existing infrastructure (Papworth 2016).

With a welcome stress on the Wider South East and not just London, AECOM (2015) have carried out a broad-sweep assessment of stations with underdeveloped catchments. They push out to a 90km radius from central London, past the MGB to Cambridge and Oxford and the South Coast, to map the extent of stations where there is potential for greater development of land within each catchment. Across the whole of the MGB AECOM calculate there are 63,874 hectares of land without protection other than the Green Belt, not in a floodplain and within a mile of an existing railway station. They do not suggest that all of this could or should be developed, but it indicates the scale of Green Belt land close to stations across the WSE. Focused just on London, Stringer uses an 800-metre, 'ped-shed' catchment for existing train, tram and Underground (metro) stations. He, too, removes other designations such as AONB, SSSI and MOL, and therefore only land that is Green Belt and that has no other designation is captured in this sweep. He goes further than AECOM in his calculations by assuming that only 60% of the land remaining would be developable and, on this basis, 20,000 hectares of land would be available. Again, this is not to suggest that all of this land could or should be built on, but it indicates a crude gross figure as a starting point which could then be refined through more detailed analysis of sites.

4.2.2 Urban extensions

The potential for Garden Cities, long advocated by the Town & Country Planning Association (TCPA 2007, 2012, 2014a, 2014b, 2015), was also considered as part of the project. Garden Cities hold a particular place in the planning and popular imagination. Although very different in their execution, they are still invoked in new development, as in the recent case of Ebbsfleet Garden City. It was soon evident that the cost of providing infrastructure for a freestanding, greenfield Garden City would render it an unlikely option. More realistic is a hybrid option – urban extensions drawing on Garden City principles. URBED has developed a competition-winning proposal for a modern garden city 'Uxchester' (URBED 2014). They argue the case for a Garden City or New Town model that is woven into an existing city – as seen in Edinburgh's new town. They move from a general model to apply it

to the case of Oxford. Although proposed for a Garden City competition rather than as a development proposal, it indicates how the financing of the proposal would or could work. As is the underlying case here, they were concerned with the distorting effects of land costs.

The ability of [other northern European countries] to build to such high standards and to plan so effectively is not because they have better designers, planners and developers. It is rather because they operate with a different economic and regulatory framework. The quality of what we build is, at its heart, an economic rather than a design issue and is the focus for the first part of this essay. In the UK most of the money and talent in the housebuilding industry is focused on unlocking the land through a contested planning system; on the Continent it is focused on what is built on that land. (Urbed 2014:2)

The URBED proposal certainly has ambition and proposes a Garden Cities Act to set out conditions for managing their development and management in the wider spirit of the Garden City, which from its initial concept (Howard 1965 [1898]) has always been more about governance and finance than design.

4.3 Wholesale change to abolition

An alternative position is simply to go head-to-head with the normative case by arguing the cost of Green Belt policy outweighs the benefits to such an extent that the policy should be subject to wholesale change or even abolished. The argument is that the effects of the Green Belt are incremental, building up and only becoming fully evident over time. This is compounded by the planning system changing more slowly than the macroeconomic climate. For critics of English planning, the disconnection between planning policy and market signals is at the heart of the system's failure. A key failing of the planning system has been to over-restrict the supply of land, and the MGB epitomises this. For some, therefore, the Green Belt is emblematic of a wider problem with the planning system. These opponents call for the complete removal of Green Belt policy as one important way of righting the negative long-term impacts of the English planning system. They note that other planning restrictions would remain in place and that, where Green Belt land was of particular value it might be protected under a different designation were abolition to take place. The 'strong' market argument is also bolstered by the assertion that, in addition to the suppression of land values, abolition would allow price signals to operate to establish *where* in the former Green Belt development is most required (Papworth 2015). Whether or not we accept their diagnosis of the planning system and the benefits of giving greater weight to price signals (Cheshire & Sheppard 2005), the abolition option certainly would be the most effective in signalling the intention to significantly relax the restrictions on land supply. However, the 'wholesale reform' case has contrary

political roots. In addition to a free-market logic supported by right wing think tanks with a Hayekian preference for minimal state planning, the case for significant Green Belt reform can be made also by the left (Edwards 2000), as a welfare case can also be employed to support the case for major reform. There is a pressing need for more housing and for better housing. Whether as owner-occupiers or tenants, people find it increasingly difficult to meet adequately their housing needs. Edwards (2000), argues that this confluence of interests could yet help form powerful partnerships to argue for substantial reform of Green Belt.

4.4 Criteria for assessing options

In order to judge the options six criteria are proposed, these are paired and respond to normative, rational and historical explanations of Green Belt as an institution. The first two most directly relate to the normative supporters of Green Belt. First, is that an option should avoid substantial short to long-term negative impacts on the natural environment – aesthetically, ecologically and recreationally (access). As noted, there are other designations already in place to protect the most valued land and were Green Belt to be considered for development there would need to be a process for determining which sites had the least and which the most, according to this criterion. All development will impact openness and the ‘catchall’ nature of this aspect of Green Belt has already been observed. However, after this the extent to which openness is impacted is down to landscape and landscaping. The process of local review can be effective here in identifying sites less likely to impact openness. Ad hoc government changes, such as Starter Homes on Brownfield sites in the Green Belt are unlikely to have the same sensitivity. The ped-shed approach might be limited here as it links development to existing locations (public transport ped-sheds) and so may also have problems minimising impacts on openness. The more open brief of Garden City/extensions offers a higher probability of site selection that is sensitive to landscape and other ecological considerations. Although freestanding Garden Cities are less economically viable than extensions to existing settlements (URBED 2014), they have the advantage of having no immediate neighbours whose enjoyment of openness would be impacted.

Second is how any given option impacts the actual or perceived likelihood of further erosion of Green Belt protection. The incremental approaches, as already noted, contribute to a feeling of uncertainty and a sense that the Green Belt is being undermined. This is because, although incremental change does not yield a particularly large quantity of new development, where and when it happens is unpredictable. Each incremental and generally small Green Belt change is, potentially, a separate battle stoking up fear of further change. The ped-shed option at least indicates the set of possible locations where change might happen – although clearly there would be a series of conflicts over each potential station development. The Garden City/extension option

would take place through the planning system and so would provide an opportunity for dialogue first, but in the absence of a national plan for Garden City/extensions echoing the New Town programme, there would remain a high degree of uncertainty. Finally, the wholesale change/abolition approach would produce less certainty for the public were it to be driven by market logic determining where development should take place. This uncertainty would not just be for the public and would not necessarily be popular with landowners or developers. Many parcels of land in the Green Belt already have 'options' on them and both landowner and developer expectations and behaviour are shaped by existing Green Belt policy. As with any institutional change, there would be considerable disruption for many who have adapted to the current arrangements.

The next two criteria focus on the rational interests of local homeowners and other residents. Third, whether the option has the potential to produce any substantial compensating advantages for nearby residents. The purpose of this is to encourage a more supportive attitude towards the change. Support for the Green Belt rests on peoples' understanding of the balance of interest in the status quo or change. While 'self-interested opposition to development is often derided (where NIMBY is applied dismissively), concerns about local impacts of development are perfectly rational. Of particular importance in the context of the Green Belt, is that new development should bring improvements to the vast majority of the Green Belt that remains. The need is to ensure that development is accompanied by a mechanism to improve access and quality – the incidental benefits that are claimed for the Green Belt, but for which there are no mechanisms currently in place. Ped-shed focused development yields another example as where development near to a railway station overcrowds a service existing residents will, logically, oppose it. Therefore, development must pay for improvements to services to make them at least no worse than they were before. Here a tension is evident that illustrates how carefully development would have to be managed. In the case of the MGB the proposed Crossrail Two railway, if built, would provide justification for ped-shed development. However, housing/commercial development can also be used a means to help pay for Crossrail Two as was the case, particularly from office development, for the 'Elizabeth Line' – Crossrail One. While there is the potential for a virtuous circle of development funding infrastructure, facilitating development the danger is that seeking to extract too much from development to pay for infrastructure can undermine the quality, and therefore the acceptability, of development. The level of density desired to maximise revenues for new infrastructure may be at odds with Green Belt policy (Transport for London official⁸).

⁸ Personal communication, London, 10 March 2016.

Forth, relative to other possible development options, development on Green Belt land should not greatly increase road traffic. Incremental change offers limited potential to think strategically about the connections between particular developments and transport infrastructure. Clearly, advocates of the ped-shed option partially seek to make their case in this way - to counter concern about traffic generation by any new development, and the Garden City/extension option also provides the potential for greater coordination of transport and land use. However, even these more coordinated approaches are not without problems. As transport experts contributing to the project indicated, only about 25% of all journeys are commutes to work which might be the most amenable to rail use. However, many others are from place for place for leisure or to service the household (shopping, trips to doctors etc.). Therefore, although development close to a railway station can help reduce journeys by car, it certainly would not eliminate them. Although, it is probable that most of these will simply be journeys displaced from elsewhere, from wherever people end up living. Advocates of abolition recognise that the planning system would continue to apply policies that seek to coordinate housing, employment and transport, and that this should prevent highly unsustainable travel patterns. In all three cases, density might offer some help. Increasing densities to produce a district centre near to a station rather than just residential suburbs could further reduce the need to travel by car. However, again, there is no reason to suppose that many residents will not still drive to larger out of town retailers - the 'IKEA' run - and certainly, the impacts of density on travel behaviour is not a simple matter (Alexander and Tomalty 2002). However, as noted, one of the particular unintended consequences of the MGB has been to extend commuting, as people travel over it to take up housing options beyond.

The final two criteria are more strategic and focus on possible political attractions of change. They offer the opportunity to break the path dependence of Green Belt policy by indicating there is an alternative better than the current policy. Fifth, the potential of the option to contribute to a relieving of the housing supply and affordability problems across the WSE. Incremental change (applications and appeals etc) by their very nature do nothing to significantly increase land availability and, therefore, will not push down on land values. Advocates of the ped-shed approach suggest that substantial amounts of land could be made available. This is a benefit over the incremental option as it holds out the possibility of more sites for development but because this would be unlikely to happen as a concentrated event there would probably be only weak pressure bearing down on land values. This is also likely to be the case for the Garden City/extensions approach. The abolition approach would send the strongest –indeed a disruptive – signal of the intent to relax constraint and so push down on land values. However, it also the option that creates the greatest resistance.

Finally, the sixth criterion is whether the option can contribute to a more coherent/sustainable long term pattern of development across the WSE. As already highlighted, the Green Belt was originally accompanied by policies for the redistribution of population and employment at a regional and national level. The Green Belt is now an orphaned policy. At a cross-regional scale it sterilizes from development an enormous expanse of land reaching out from London without indicating in a planned manner at the regional scale where development can and should take place. In practice it has the effect of pushing development out to 'default locations', to places that are not MGB, including to Greenfield land beyond the MGB. This produces a regional pattern of development that is not of our choosing and is sub-optimal. Significant changes to MGB would be an opportunity for better planning at a regional scale. However, this leaves open the question of how to achieve this where there are few mechanisms for regional scale planning.

4.5 A Coordination Corridor Option

As the discussion in this section has indicated so far, there are, as we might expect, possibilities and limitations for all of the options. A possible way of assessing these has been set out as well as a general indication of how this might work. Given the limits and merits exposed in the different options, a further one is proposed here, which seeks to bring together the merits of those reviewed while attempting to overcome the limitations. The incremental option is rejected as inadequate for five reasons. First, it will fail to significantly address the housing crisis as it will not produce a significant amount of new housing. Second, it fails to deal with the long term housing quality/affordability problem as it does not signal the intent to make significant changes to the level of land constraint, which could then suppress land prices. Third, and related to the previous point, it fails to change developer behaviour – where developers hold land and tightly control its release to housing in the knowledge that supplies are and will continue to be constrained. Fourth, it fails to make best use of good planning to coordinate investments in housing, employment and transport. Finally, fifth, although not providing significant amounts of new land for housing, the unpredictable nature of incremental development stokes up fears that the Green Belt is under constant threat and is being compromised. This leads to a series of battles in defence of the Green Belt while yielding relatively little new development.

The ped-shed and Garden City/extension options have the benefit of providing potentially more land and in a more coordinated manner. However, each station and extension will be open to contestation, reflecting a limitation of the incremental approach and so there is not likely to be a strong signal of the intention to relax land constraint and so suppress land prices. While abolition of the policy would be the most effective way of suppressing land values, this option is rejected as it

would simply be likely to galvanise opposition to any change with supporters being able to rally opposition to abolition around the apocryphal prospect of the whole of the former Green Belt being opened up to development and built over. It appears to represent a fundamental challenge to the Green Belt that extends the front on which any battle for change must be fought as every community in every part of every Green Belt will be roused into opposition and, therefore, seems to make a successful outcome less likely.

<PLACE FIGURE TWO ABOUT HERE>

The hybrid model proposed here draws on the coordination corridors (Figure two) that have been a feature of the London Plan since its first iteration, which included a thematic map showing them. The five coordination corridors are focussed on transport routes radiating from London and nearly always include one of the London airports. They include a series of towns that are important to the polycentric economy of the Wider South East and contain a series of locations that, like London itself, are subject to considerable growth pressures. Given the likely future intensity of pressure for development in these corridors, and the existing - and in some cases planned for - infrastructure there, focusing a relaxation of the MGB in these corridors would have a spatial logic to it. The coordination corridor approach is not exclusive of other options; in particular, it could encompass the 'ped-shed' and 'extensions' options but provides the potential for intervention on a more 'regionally' planned and greater scale than either of these alone could. In Figure three, an assessment of the different options, including coordination corridors, is set out using the criteria discussed in this section. A broad-brush approach has necessarily been adopted here and, clearly, any assessment as set out in Figure three would require more detail to provide greater accuracy. In the following section, two important early requirements for the corridor approach are discussed: conditions and mechanisms.

<PLACE FIGURE THREE ABOUT HERE>

5 Changing the institution

It is possible for institutional compliance to occur simply because people cannot imagine the alternative – the way that things have been done is the way that things should and will be done (Scott 2001). Opening up options is, therefore, an important first step in seeking to change the Green Belt. The broad-brush options approach set out in section four only takes us so far in imagining an alternative and, thus, challenging the institutional inertia of the Green Belt, including the role of central government in underwriting this centrally administered policy (*pace* Amati & Yokohari 2006). The approach developed in this section, therefore, is twofold; first, to move from the criteria set out in Section Four, turning these into *conditions for change*; and, second, to consider *mechanisms for*

change and how local partnerships of the willing might bring pressure to bear on government to make the legal changes that would permit substantial change. The case is made for the merits of taking a *pioneer corridor approach*, for building out from a pilot initiative in one of the London Plan coordination corridors rather than seeking change in all the coordination corridors at the same time. The case has been made that the housing crisis is regional and not a London phenomenon that happens to spill over its borders; however, the perception of spill over remains strong and so, finally in this section, it is argued that London needs to take a leading role in Green Belt review to negate the charge that it is simply trying to free ride by seeking to 'grab Green Belt' in neighbouring areas while avoiding the difficult task of significant Green Belt review in its own jurisdiction.

5.1 Necessary conditions to make change acceptable

Those seeking change have to successfully confront both the rational drivers of support for the institution - including those held by government, which may see no political mileage in challenging the current position - and the normative drivers of the institution, where a high value is placed on preserving the countryside/openness, including through the use of Green Belt policy. The calculations in favour of the status quo by the 'rationalists' rest in part on the strength of opposition to change from the 'normative' group. One approach would be to seek to moderate the position of the normative group, but as there is very limited scope for arguing with their position those advocating change often seek to persuade the rationalists that the cost of the status quo is greater than that of change, which will incur the opposition of the normative group. As a result, one of the key tactics employed by those setting out options for change is to focus on the illogical nature and undesirable outcomes of Green Belt policy. Confronted with a highly inflexible institution which governments find it rational to defend, both the 'logical opportunities' approach and 'abolitionist' positions set out in section four seek to emphasise the balance of rationalities. Put another way, the sheer irrationality (and therefore costs) of the policy has to be shown in order to outweigh the (very real) rationality of inertia for government, which faces the wrath of the normative driven groups if change is proposed. In her book on water politics in Mumbai, Björkman (2015: 30) reports how public sector workers viewed the World Bank's techniques for justifying privatization: "before you shoot a dog, call it mad". The logical opportunities approach suggests that the dog is mad in some circumstances, but might be re-trained. However, for abolitionists the dog is just plain mad. Both camps provide a range of statistics. For the logical opportunities group, the amount of land in the Green Belt and near to railway stations and so able to support sustainable travel patterns, and for abolitionists, the financial madness of land-use that ignores market signals: "It is hard to imagine a less efficient use of land than growing rapeseed in fields around Romford" (Papworth 2015: 19). That

the MGB is three times the size of the Greater London Area or that more of Surrey is covered by golf course than housing⁹ are facts employed to make the case for shooting the dog.

However, making the case for change to government in this way implicitly treats those opposed to change as a single block. In practice, many 'organisations' (eg local government, professional bodies and homeowners) will contain within themselves a range of views, more normatively or more rationally informed; more open or less open to change. This is represented in Figure four where the grey box indicates the 'centre ground' of given organisations and where the black horizontal and vertical lines indicate the range within the group along the two axes. The smaller of the two right-angled triangles represents the 'zone' of those committed to Green Belt reform and the larger of the two right-angled triangles a 'zone' of negotiation where groups are willing to countenance change. This is, of course, only a representation, but it seeks to illustrate the potential room for movement available to open up discussion of Green Belt reform. The government box has a frame indicating its special role, as it is able to determine future Green Belt policy. No change will happen without government countenancing change (moving into the larger triangle), but if others move there they could shift the centre of gravity in government. An important point is that all groupings, wherever their centre of gravity, will continue to encompass a range of drivers; more normative or rational and a range of desire for change or the status quo. Moreover, it is not necessary to have everyone in agreement with change in order to get government to this point.

<INSERT FIGURE FOUR ABOUT HERE>

To bring relevant organisations and groups to a space of negotiation a series of conditions is proposed that seeks to emphasise the benefits of change to the 'rational' group and to mitigate the perceived losses for the normative group. Five conditions are proposed; although in practice these might be altered or extended, at this stage they are proposals that seek to address immediate and obvious opposition to change:

1. a mechanism should be adopted to channel some of the enhancement of land values towards compensating benefits in affected communities
2. to ensure the delivery of affordable housing (as well as contributing to the wider affordability of accommodation)
3. to secure a contribution to the enhancement of undeveloped parts of the MGB.
4. housing and employment development should be integrated with public transport provision, and in support of these conditions,
5. densities should be optimised

⁹ Although only if one counts the 'footprints' of the houses themselves and not related development including gardens.

(based on ANON et al 2016)

The conditions arise from the same concerns that informed the criteria for judging options set out in section four and are, therefore, connected (Figure five). These would require much work in advance of any substantial change to the MGB. This is important point as it negates the charge that a change to Green Belt policy is simply a 'knee jerk' reaction to the housing crisis, and/or a 'blank cheque' for developers, and/or would damage policy on Brownfield by providing a reservoir of easier to develop land.

<PLACE FIGURE FIVE ABOUT HERE>

First, compensating benefits in affected communities. It is rational for existing residents to resist change where they see it is disadvantageous for them. The loss of openness is one such case and we return to this in condition three below. Beyond this there are less direct reasons why residents may view development as representing an overall loss; summed up as greater competition for existing resources, such as school places, access to health facilities and increased congestion (see also condition four below). In the previous section, it was noted that development might pay for new infrastructure, but this is not necessarily the outcome. One of the most obvious drawbacks of the 'ped-shed' approach is that where transport infrastructure is already running near to or at capacity, developing new housing near stations would be seen as a substantial dis-benefit by existing residents who would face greater competition for space on existing services. Therefore, development in the MGB is not an easy win or a low cost option. Incremental change is unlikely to happen at a scale that allows for the planning of new schools and certainly not the provision of substantial new transport infrastructure. The coordination corridors approach must be used as opportunity to do some basic planning, to link development with a range of necessary services and infrastructure.

Second, affordable housing. The purpose of the coordination corridor approach is to signal a significant change in the extent of land constraint with the intent of suppressing land process over the longer term. However, unlike the abolition option, this would not have a dramatic immediate effect, especially if all of the coordination corridors were not taken forward at the same time (see pioneer corridor below). The MGB represents a strong statement by society of the way in which it values openness and its desire to restrict the outward expansion of cities. Whether we agree with these values or not, much has been invested in delivering Green Belt policy and the policy has created particular conditions, including substantial differences in land prices between MGB and non-MGB land. Furthermore, the MGB has created a desirable bucolic environment that those who have the resources would pay to consume, through the purchase of new executive homes dotted throughout the MGB - as is the case around Beijing (Zhao 2016). It would generate significant opposition if changing public policy were to lead to the siphoning off by landowners and developers

of increased land values and/or the development of executive homes. Therefore, in the short to mid term there would be a need to use effective existing mechanisms, or to adapt these to secure affordable housing.

Third, enhancement of undeveloped parts of the MGB. Throughout, the point has been made that the MGB is formulated around a core purpose (containment), but with important claimed incidental benefits (particularly access to and improving the quality of the land designated for containment purposes). Linked to this, when members of the public defend the Green Belt for giving access to open space, this may be delivered through other mechanisms such as Metropolitan Open Land or Country Parks. The Green Belt is not always the mechanism delivering what is being defended. Furthermore, professional groups such as the Landscape Institute (2015) are seeking to increase awareness that the Green Belt land should do more, providing access, and flood management and increasing bio-diversity, for example (see also Thomas & Littlewood 2010). At present, we simply don't ask enough of the land in the Green Belt because it can serve the purpose of containment without doing much else. A planned approach to changing Green Belt policy should include a mechanism for improving the use of the remaining Green Belt, the vast majority of it, where development takes places on some former Green Belt land.

Fourth, integrate development with public transport. Related to the first condition, existing residents will rightly be concerned that development will bring higher levels of road traffic and, possibly, congestion. Clearly neither is desirable although, as already noted, increases in traffic are likely to happen with any development and so, to some extent, this problem is one of where it happens rather than whether it happens at all. That said, proximity to good public transport could help to reduce car use. Neither does all development in the Green Belt need to be housing. London has experienced a considerable loss of employment uses to housing and the Outer London Commission has suggested that this might be able to continue if it were traded off against greater development of commercial space in the WSE¹⁰. This would generate its own traffic management issues where employers would need to develop and apply travel plans to minimise their impacts on traffic generation.

Fifth, in support of one to four - optimise densities. The uses and limitations of density have produced an extensive literature (for example, Boyko and Cooper 2011; Holman et al 2015b), and, like the Green Belt, there is the danger of it being applied as a crude tool. The main point here is that density involves a series of trade-offs, so there is no simple linear model of higher density yielding greater benefits. Higher density development can lead to less affordable housing (Boyko & Cooper

¹⁰ Outer London Commission. (2016). *Seventh Report: accommodating London's growth*. [Online] https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/olc_accommodating_growth_main_report_fixed.pdf

2011:16), for example. On a positive note, higher densities can support public transport, infrastructure and other services by producing a quantum of population to support these as users. Density can also help to deliver some of these by providing a quantum of development to pay for the installation of infrastructure and services. Again, much work would need to be done to get this right were the Green Belt to be developed. All the conditions listed seek to appropriate money realised through increases in land value that flow from re-designating Green Belt land for housing. However, the danger is to regard this as a bottomless pot and to seek to spend the uplift many times over. Moreover, to ensure that these benefits are realised would require more robust mechanisms than currently in place where viability appraisals are sometimes used by developers to bid down benefits. Models from the past, including the New Town Development Corporation, may well be required to deliver and this would again require a significant shift on the part of government.

5.2 Mechanisms for collaboration and leadership within the region

At present a key barrier to change is the centralised planning system in the UK, which means that any substantial shift in Green Belt policy will depend on changes made by central government. Currently, politicians clearly judge that the political balance of interest lies in supporting the Green Belt. Attempts to 'roll back' on Green Belt policy elicit a strong reaction as described in 2.2 with the case of the Thatcher administration. The importance of leadership to push the urban fringe up the political agenda has been noted by Gallent et al (2006:193); however, given the general refusal of most national, regional and local politicians to publically contemplate change, where is this leadership to come from? As represented in Figure four, there are some possible champions, and not always obvious ones. It seems counterintuitive that local authorities would be willing to countenance change as elected members would be 'first in the line of fire' from residents opposed to change. Nevertheless, some elected officials are seeking to drive change as they are also at the front line of the housing shortage and have to find sites for new housing (Local Councillor¹¹). There are instances where local authorities have sought to establish a Green Belt review methodology that would identify minimal possible change, but others are acutely aware of the pressing need for housing and were serious in their intent to de-classify some of their Green Belt (Planning consultant¹²). These decisions emerge from understandings between local planners and politicians and evidences willingness on the part of both to contemplate reform in some authorities.

At first sight professional planning bodies do not look to be natural allies as the development of Green Belt runs closely alongside the development of the modern planning profession. The idea travelled internationally, becoming an easily recognisable ambassador for the young profession of

¹¹ Personal communication, North London, 9 May 2016.

¹² Personal communication, London, 18 February 2016.

town planning. Keeble, a well-read planning academician in his time, viewed Green Belts as one important way of publicising town planning (Keeble 1961a). Indeed, in 1955, Desmond Heap, as president of the Town Planning Institute (now the Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI)), declared, “the preservation of green belts is [...] the very raison d’être of town and country planning” (quoted in Amati & Yohohari 2007: 315). However, the contemporary story is considerably more nuanced. The Town & Country Planning Association, a product of the Garden City movement, has been critical of the expansion of the MGB in the 1960s and both it and the RTPI have expressed doubts over its current size, impacts and inflexibility (TCPA 2002; RTPI 2002, 2015, 2016. See also Planning Officers Society 2015). Green Belts are, then, significantly interwoven with the development of the profession, but are not uncontested by the profession. Nevertheless, even the most willing of local authorities to seek change has to work within the national prescriptions and proscriptions set out in the NPPF. Given that central government is likely to remain a barrier to change, making “...any radical reform...unlikely’ (Gallent et al 2006:168), a way to counter this would be to build up local and ‘regional’ coalitions of the willing who could develop the case for Green Belt reform and then pressure central government to be given the ability to make changes at the local level. In the UK this approach has the benefit of resonating with national government rhetoric on the devolution of power and the promotion of localism, including neighbourhood planning.

Given the need to develop a bottom up response through coalitions of the willing, and the wider sensitivities of Green Belt reform, the coordination corridor approach should be further refined by initially concentrating on one corridor, a *‘pioneer corridor’*, in order to explore what is possible. This has a pragmatic purpose as one reason for rejecting the abolition option was that it would simply open up so many local battles, all fuelled at the same time by the prospect of the loss of the entire Green Belt edifice – even though this would not lead to building on all Green Belt land, which would still be regulated through other planning policies. Seeking to open up all the coordination corridors to a new approach to Green Belt at the same time could similarly open up many ‘battles’ on many fronts, while a pioneer corridor could allow for a more focused and less ‘threatening’ approach to reform while potentially producing lessons that could later be transferred to the other coordination corridors. Existing partnerships are in place in the London – Cambridge corridor and officers from several authorities were participants in the work, and so this might be a potential pioneer corridor (Figure six). Moreover, this is the site for the northern part of the proposed Crossrail Two line running from the southeast to northwest of London (and running beyond its jurisdiction). The bidding process for Crossrail Two requires cooperation between London and neighbouring authorities, and so offers potential for further partnerships. Others are looking to the growth potential of a west London wedge (Manns & Falk forthcoming; GLA 2016) which has often been assumed not to need much intervention but which has substantial tracts of Brownfield land as well

as some 'poor quality' MGB within London, and also outside, and where there is still work to be done to realise the opportunities of the soon to be completed Crossrail One/Elizabeth Line.

<PLACE FIGURE SIX ABOUT HERE>

5.2.1 The potential of London

In section three the exceptional position of London was raised when considering land supply and housing delivery figures; also discussed was how the MGB was part of a suite of policies to disperse population (New Towns) and redistribute commercial growth from London. Apart from the MGB, these have since been abandoned, leaving London to find land for housing almost exclusively through recourse to Brownfield land. But historically, London has grown its population (and decreased its population density) through physical expansion. Greater London was created in the 1960s to incorporate suburban housing in neighbouring counties that had been developed at a pace during the 1920s and 30s (Jackson 1973). The proposed extent of Greater London was greater than finally realised – proposals comprised 51 rather than the final 32 boroughs, extending over a larger territory. The proposals were gradually negotiated back, 'saving' places such as Banstead, Weybridge and Esher from being incorporated (Travers 2016). The unrealised proposals are a reminder of the antipathy between London and its neighbours.

London's scale makes it, at best, a concern both to neighbouring authorities and central government. Reflecting this, in 2000, the Mayor of London was deliberately created as a weak figurehead (Travers 2004), with the GLA being a more constrained organisation than its predecessors; the LCC and the Greater London Council. However, since then further powers have accrued to the role as central government has evidently seen the mayoralty as a success and to be trusted with greater autonomy. The first Mayor of London, Ken Livingstone, used the London Plan with its statutory status as a relatively strong mechanism for a mayor with few formal powers (Thornley et al 2005). However, under the hierarchical planning system the London Plan has to be in general conformity with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), which is drafted by central government. As we have seen, the NPPF sets out criteria that cover all Green Belts, including the Metropolitan Green Belt. Without dismissing other English cities, the circumstances of London are different from those of Manchester, Nottingham or Leeds. This is reflected in a report by the London Housing Commission, chaired by Lord Kerslake, that called for London to be granted wholesale exemption from the NPPF, given the increasing concern over housing supply and cost in London. The devolution of the highest tier of planning to London was, the Commission argued, necessary because of the exceptional circumstances (LHC/IPPR 2016)¹³. For the purpose of MGB reform such a drastic measure is not

¹³ <http://www.planningresource.co.uk/article/1386344/london-exempt-nppf-says-report>

necessary as the government could change the wording of the NPPF to allow for greater local flexibility in setting the purposes and reviewing its extent. This would sit well with the 'devolution' agenda of central government, and would not be a radical departure as, in effect, it would simply allow a permissive interpretation of existing planning structures were the NPPF to make clear that the broad purposes of the national Green Belt policy could be reinterpreted in a local context.

The Mayor currently has a potential, but as yet unrealised role in coordinating Green Belt reviews within London, which currently are undertaken by individual boroughs that can do so using different methods. The legal position is unclear on the extent to which the Mayor could take a strategic position on the Green Belt across London. Within the legal framework (Greater London Authority Act 1999), the Mayor could probably expand an advisory/coordinating role, but is probably not legally entitled to direct action on the MGB within London. If the Mayor were to be given more autonomy and then to choose to coordinate a MGB review within London there is a very particular London aspect to the MGB that s/he might exploit. As the purpose of any Green Belt is mainly to define a town-country divide and to stop settlements coalescing it is, arguably, anomalous that *any* Green Belt exists *within* London as it serves to stop the city coalescing with itself (and London historically was formed by the coalescence of numerous existing settlements, even in its outer suburbs). It would be more logical to use other protections of open land within London such as Metropolitan Open Land (MOL) rather than MGB, and through this change to rethink the task of such designation. Going back to the roots of the MGB, outlined in section two, a network or web of green corridors might be protected and enhanced (emphasising public access and amenity, while also improving land uses/quality), while other sections are built on.

It is important for the Mayor of London to be an active partner in Green Belt change for a number of reasons, in addition to coordinating the existing review process within London. First, there is a question of perception, as London is easily regarded as the dominant neighbour by surrounding authorities and can easily be accused of seeking to grab territory in one of two ways. First, directly through annexation – infrequent in the UK, but some have suggested it might be time to return to the extent of London's territory (Carpenter 2016). Given these sensitivities, if coalitions of the willing are to be formed that cross over between London and the Wider South East, the Greater London Authority/Mayor must be seen to be willing to review London's part of the MGB, if only to negate the charge that London is seeking to free-ride on neighbouring authorities or to expand by default. In 2014 Luton's leadership were reported to have accused the Greater London Authority (under Mayor Boris Johnson), of double standards for not meeting its entire housing need within its borders and not revising its Green Belt, while expecting Luton to do so (Spry & Haynes 2014), and in 2016 South

East England Councils called for the new Mayor, Sadiq Khan, to reconsider his strong defensive stance on London's part of the Green Belt, in the interests of regional fairness (SEEC 2016).

The distribution of the MGB is important here, as 22 per cent of London is comprised of Green Belt. As this is a significant proportion of London's land it would appear as free-riding to seek any change to the MGB outside London without addressing that part in London. However, that 22 per cent within London comprises only 7 per cent of the total MGB – 97 per cent sits outside. If the Mayor of London can generate goodwill by seeking change within London, there are many more opportunities to deliver housing using selected MGB land outside London. Moreover, with London's employment land under pressure to be converted to housing land, the Mayor might also seek to trade off more housing on 'former' employment sites in London for the greater availability of employment sites outside (OLC 2016). Finally, the Mayor could offer leadership where there are weak mechanisms for cooperation between London and its neighbouring authorities and between those neighbouring authorities. Following the abolition of a regional structure in 2010, since 2012 the government has placed on local authorities a 'duty to cooperate' on planning matters. The extent of this is being tested as local authorities bring forward plans for approval and where some have been refused approval because of failing to evidence sufficient cooperation (eg Runnymede Borough Council in 2014, and Windsor and Maidenhead withdrawing its draft plan independently in 2016). The duty to cooperate will place pressure on the Mayor of London to work with neighbours on the MGB but, more positively, the Mayor might offer a leadership role in developing cooperation.

In summary, the conditions and mechanisms set out in this section have been informed by the need to address the durability of the MGB (and Green Belt more generally). Drawing on concepts from New Institutionalism an attempt has been made to understand and respond to the rational and normative drivers of the Green Belt policy institution. A framework for change has been proposed, not answers. This hints at an important point - just as it has been noted that Brownfield land and other options such as suburban intensification will not yield quickly or easily the land needed to address the crisis and chronic problems with housing, so, too, the approach to MGB reform proposed here will not offer quick and easy solutions. This beneficially reinforces a core point – that calls to de-designate some MGB should not see it as serving as a convenient alternative to existing land supply options (especially Brownfield land), where MGB land is released this should happen only in a planned and beneficial manner. Just as there is clearly no easy solution or 'silver bullet' to the housing problems in the WSE, so MGB reform will not provide an immediate or easy answer. The approach set out here is envisaged as a long-term one, and certainly a decade long process of remodelling, not removing, the institution of the Green Belt.

6 Conclusions

Over forty years ago, Hall (1973) exposed the emerging price of land constraint, paid in terms of the quality and cost of housing in England. Twenty-five years ago it was observed that "...the Green Belt *concept* still has currency but the Green Belt *policy* is hopelessly outdated" (Herington 1990: 43), and ten years ago Gallent et al (2006:173) asked whether it was possible to reinvent Green Belt policy. It is a testament to the Green Belt's ability to persist that the same analysis and questions largely apply today. The core reason that the project informing this article returned to the Green Belt was the pressing need for more and better housing in the London and the Wider South East. Currently, this is expressed in terms of crisis rather than the chronic problems that Hall (1973) and Herington (1990) were concerned with. The distinction is important because although a crisis might make more urgent the calls to reconsider the MGB, it is important not to lose sight of the long term nature of chronic housing problems caused by land constraint (including through Green Belt policy). Furthermore, it is important not to be entirely driven by the language of crisis as any reconsideration of Green Belt policy in response to the crisis should not rush to solutions. The MGB has been successful in restricting the outward physical growth of London; in the process, it has had a significant impact on land values, including strongly suppressing them within the MGB area. Any rush to release Green Belt land risks gifting a huge uplift in land values, the result of years of public policy, to the private sector.

In seeking to understand and interpret the durability of the MGB and to suggest ways of changing it, the starting point was that policies can themselves act as institutions as through their relative permanence they come to impact behaviours as actors anticipate the continuance of the policy and strategize accordingly (Pierson 2006). Within the New Institutionalism literature there are differing explanations for why people commit to institutions and several of these have been drawn on. The main distinction made here is between the rationalist and normative traditions, which provide different explanations for why actors commit to institutions, respectively, because the institution is an efficient way of managing complexity. Even if participation means compromise this is offset by the need to constantly re-establish positions and relationships and reform policy; or, because the institution brings together those with common beliefs or values and so helps in the mutual reinforcement of these. The challenge for Green Belt reform is that it has to challenge both 'rationalists', including the government, and 'normatives' – advocate for countryside and openness as inherently preferable to town/development. Both instrumentalise the Green Belt – that is, the policy is adapted in order to bolster it. There is a useful confusion between purpose (urban containment) and incidental benefits (access and improvement). The shifting justifications for the MGB have a long history that was referenced in section two and which has been more fully written about elsewhere. Moreover, the purpose of containment was extended in the 1980s when the Green Belt was seen to be under a threat to include urban regeneration. Defenders of the status quo are,

therefore, able to 'escalate' the cost of change in the Green Belt, even though it may never deliver on the incidental benefits and where the claim of delivering urban regeneration is hard to evidence. The Green Belt has been an effective tool in England in stopping the outward physical growth of cities, although it hasn't stopped economic and housing development from taking place beyond the Green Belt with associated increases in the length of commuter journeys.

This current housing crisis might suggest that a critical juncture has been reached and that the Green Belt will at last come under serious review. However, the historical New Institutionalism literature suggests otherwise as its focus on path dependency suggests that actors (not necessarily just strong supporters of the Green Belt) will seek tested solutions to the problem. The institutional character of the Green Belt is evidenced by the historical context. While once Green Belt was part of a suite of policies seeking the regional redistribution of employment and housing, these have withered away. This 'orphaning' of Green Belt policy has had strong negative effects in terms of housing supply but it has not weakened the policy as reform remains 'off the cards'. One reason why it remains out of consideration is the focus on Brownfield land that might be seen as the modern-day replacement for New Towns. However, it has been argued here that Brownfield land does not negate the need to rethink the Green Belt as Brownfield land is not sufficient in itself to meet either the crisis or the chronic problems of housing. There are multiple reasons for this, but key ones include: many Brownfield sites require extensive upfront investment, either for decontamination or to supply transport and other infrastructure to make them viable for developers; many sites are small and unattractive to volume house builders, while being complex sites for smaller house builders; in London at least, prioritising Brownfield appears to provoke developers to build at higher densities, but not to increase overall housing production – they fit more onto less land, but they do not build more. The case here is not a crude binary against Brownfield and in favour of Green Belt development. Rather, adding some of the MGB to the options is proposed because developing Brownfield land, like other options to increase supply such as suburban densification and high street intensification, are all complex, and in practice, will not yield the amount of housing required to address first the crisis of, and then the chronic problems with housing in the Wider South East.

Even in a time of housing crisis there is still no sign that that central government, who set Green Belt policy, are about to challenge the institution that is the Green Belt. Given the rigidity of the edifice, one argument is that eventually the planning system will become ever more stressed and will simply snap at some future point (Early 2014). However, it is not evident that any such collapse is imminent and in reality those who make such predictions do so to bolster their case for reform now. Given the likely on-going durability of the Green Belt, and the clear need for more, better and more affordable housing in England, the purpose here has been to understand the Green Belt as an institution and then to look for ways in which it might be amended in order to increase the supply of land for

housing whilst retaining the positive aspects of the Green Belt that people value and defend. The approach has been to weigh a set of options – most currently proposed in academic and practice reports, and most requiring a change of position by central government. This exercise led to a proposal that combined some of the existing options. The coordination corridors approach seeks to go beyond the options of building near to stations or delivering one off urban extensions because neither of these is likely to place in a sufficiently sustained and predictable way to send a signal to the market that land constraint was being significantly relaxed to suppress land price inflation. Without this, the ‘rationalists’ are likely to see endless battles over ped-shed and extension sites, each one using up political capital, but without delivering a step change in either the crisis or chronic problems of housing. The clearest market signal would come from abolition, but this would likely galvanise opposition from all quarters, being a fundamental attack on normative supporters of the Green Belt, and so would not be likely to succeed. Furthermore, the case for abolition is partly driven by a belief in a wider need to re-engineer the English planning system to make it one that is led far more strongly by market signals. This is a wider and more profound debate and one that cannot be addressed here. The opportunity corridors approach has the potential to bring greater strategic weight to the ped-shed and extensions approach by identifying wedges or corridors of Green Belt that could be reformed. Again, the wedge and corridor approach echoes the early discussion of the Green Belt where the aim was to make/keep accessible open space for residents and not simply to restrain urban development.

The conditions that are proposed seek to challenging the balance of interests, including the valuing of openness, that makes Green Belt reform so difficult. Together, the criteria for selecting options and the conditions under which an option might proceed seek to address the issue of access and quality, for example, and also seek to offer some security that a planned change to Green Belt in the corridors would be a once in a generation change and not the ‘thin end of the wedge’, leading to the eventual roll back of all Green Belt. Initially the coordination corridor would be taken forward by a coalition of the willing that should set out how selective development of Green Belt land could contribute to the housing challenge, and also how the vast majority of the Green Belt that remains could do more. The purpose of this is to put pressure on central government to permit greater nuancing of Green Belt policy at the local level as no substantial change can happen without this. At its most advanced this could lead to the large-scale de-designation of Green Belt land in the corridors to permit greater flexibility and to permit development under agreed conditions. As seeking change in all five coordination corridors may open up many fronts of opposition and because there is a value in carrying out a trial-run first, the identification of a single co-ordination corridor is proposed in order to test the ideas. If successful, this could give surety that the Green Belt can be reformed whilst retaining most of what is valued. The quantity of Green Belt land would decrease, but as we

have seen it has hugely increased over the life of the policy. Some may defend against any loss of Green Belt land, although even the staunchest public defender, the CPRE, is willing to grant that some Green Belt sites might reasonably be developed. The purpose of the approach to change set out is to offer enough benefits to ‘rationalists’ and ‘normatives’ at least to have them engage with the possibility of change. Any reform of the Green Belt must assuage the fears of those who oppose change – clear benefits are necessary if defenders are to be convinced that the transactional costs of negotiating a new arrangement are worthwhile. While the Green Belt is clearly underwritten by government (albeit with change at the margins), there seems little likelihood of tipping this balance. The task is, therefore, to build up a momentum for change below central government that can challenge the government’s current ‘blank cheque’ approach to the Green Belt and so lead to negotiating making more sense.

In reflecting on the MGB thirty years after its inception, Thomas usefully sought to judge the Green Belt’s success against its ability to mitigate the effects of containment and to deliver on the quality of use of the land that was used to achieve containment: “[Its] ultimate success...depends upon the success with which alternative sites for overspill population and industry can be found, and also upon the success with which the intense competition for land in urban fringes, even between the limited range of activities acceptable in green belts, can be resolved harmoniously” (Thomas 1963:24). By these criteria, the Green Belt is failing as neither has enough land been found for housing, nor have the opportunities that large amounts of open land might afford been maximised. There is a pressing need to find ways both to continue to value and enhance the Green Belt, partly by having it work harder and do more in the current era. For most of it this means improvements to access and to the quality of land, as well as concentrating on multi-purposing. In its containment role it has had the particular effect of pushing development further away from existing cities and extending commuting times and distances. Land owners, developers, employers, residents and planners have adapted their actions and options to reflect the permanence of the Green Belt, but this has led to sub-optimal planning for the Wider South East, which is a much more complex and much more mobile region than it was when the MGB was initiated. Some development of MGB land can produce better economic, social and environmental outcomes than the present status quo. The purpose of the project reported here has been to identify possible ways to shift the institution so that it can better serve our contemporary needs.

Acknowledgments

To be added after review.

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To add after review:

ANON et al 2016a

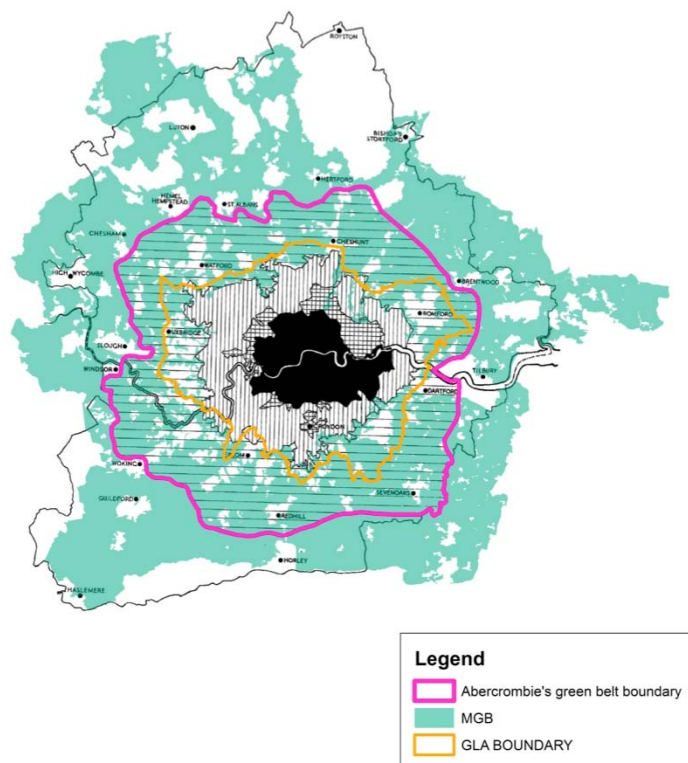
ANON et al 2016b

Table one: London housing approvals and completions 2004/5 to 2012/13

	Completions	Approvals	Pipeline
2004/5	25,300	54,779	108,818
2005/6	25,084	52,998	124,862
2006/7	27,226	57,816	142,305
2007/8	28,215	80,515	173,464
2008/9	29,534	47,254	173,772
2009/10	24,732	45,795	173,702
2010/11	19,185	57,537	177,782
2011/12	21,988	84,704	211,200
2012/13	21,923	38,703	216,476
Average	24,799	57,789	166,931
(04/05-12/13)			

Source: London Development Database, GLA/ Molior 2014 Table 1

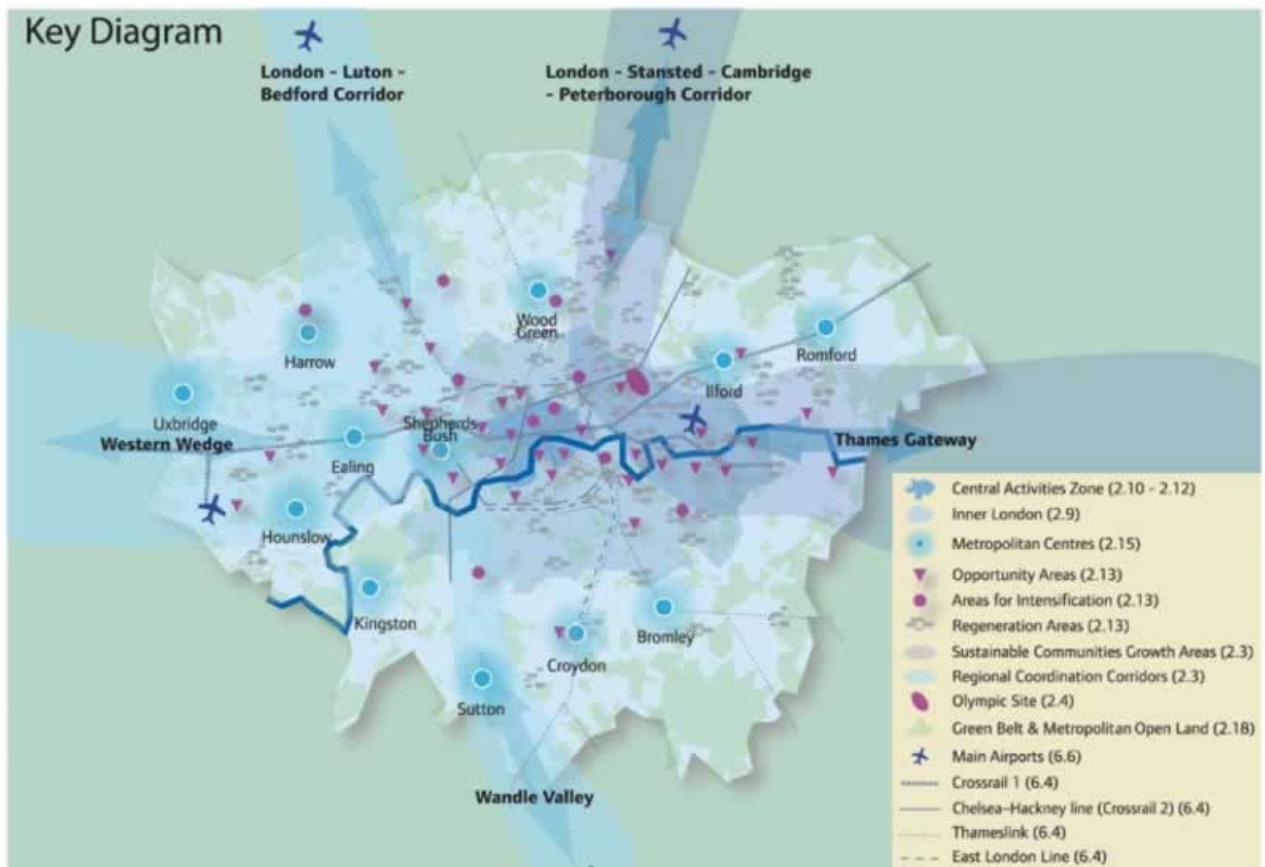
Figure one: Abercrombie's proposed and the current MGB



Source: Greater London Plan (1944), and DCLG. (2015). Area of Designated Green Belt Land. London Data Store. [Online] <http://data.london.gov.uk/dataset/area-designated-green-belt-land> Accessed 21.04.16.

Note: the northwest section around Luton was not designated as part of the MGB but is included here as it is contiguous with the MGB

Figure two: London Plan Coordination Corridors



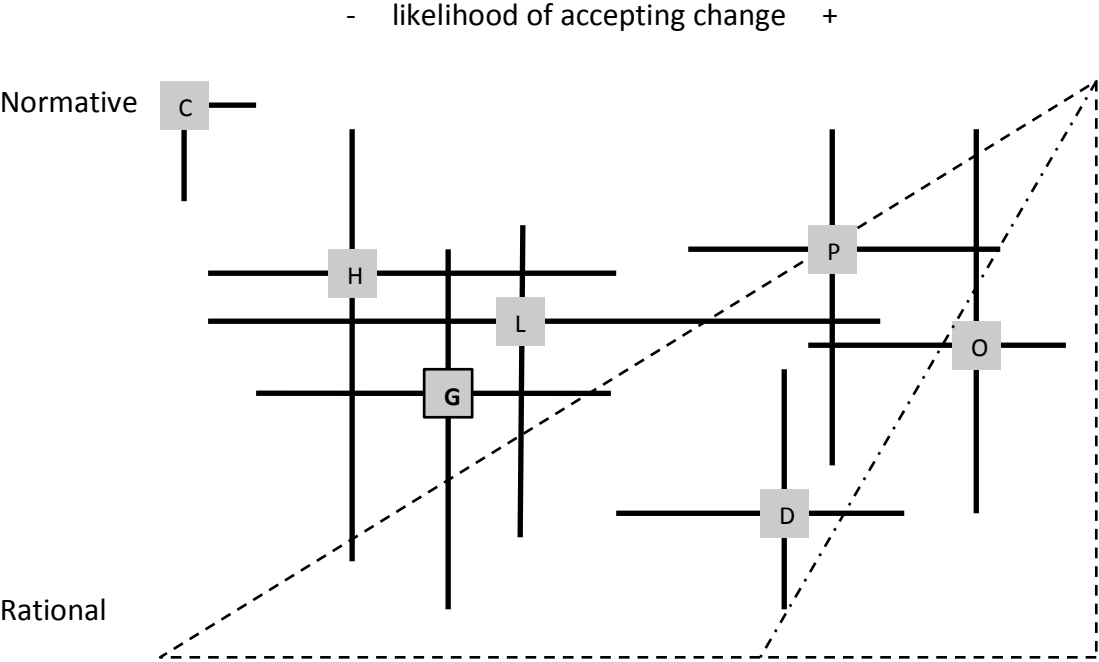
Source: London Plan (2004)

Figure three: appraising the options.

	INCREMENTAL CHANGE			WASTED OPPORTUNITIES		ABOLITION	CORRIDOR
	<i>Review Applications</i>	<i>Gov. changes</i>	<i>Stations</i>	<i>Extensions</i>			
Potential contribution (direct and indirect) to relieving housing supply and affordability problems across the WSE.	L	L	L	M	M	H	H
Predictable environmental impacts from the travel patterns of residents in the specific type of MGB development, relative to other approaches, and to probable alternative locations for residential expansion in the absence of changes to the MGB.	M	M	L/ M	H	M	L/ M	M
The likelihood of de-restriction in being accompanied by substantial compensating advantages for nearby residents, encouraging a more supportive attitude to the change.	L	L	L	L/ M	L/ M	L/ M	M/ H
The likelihood, in the process, of avoiding substantial negative effects (in the short and long term) on the natural environment, in aesthetic, ecological and recreational terms.	H	M	M	M	M	L	M
Avoiding (actual or perceived) likelihood of encouraging further erosion of Green Belt protection, in areas and cases beyond those explicitly covered by a policy and regulatory change.	M	L	L	M	M	L	M
Its potential to contribute to more coherent/sustainable long term patterns of development across the WSE.	L	L	L	M	M	L/ M	M

H=higher; M=medium; L=lower

Figure four: the potential for change.



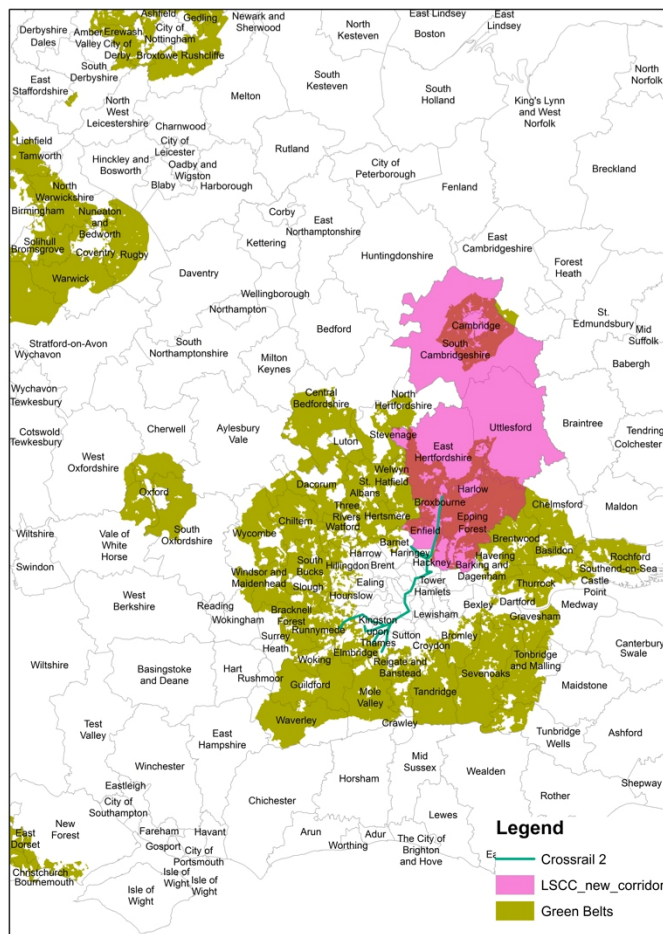
C=CPRE; D=developers; G=government; H=local homeowners; L=local government; O=land owners; P=professional bodies

Figure five: options criteria mapped against conditions and mechanisms

Criteria for judging options	Conditions & mechanisms	Possible appeal to 'rationals'	Possible appeal to 'normatives'
CONDITIONS			
1. Potential contribution (direct and indirect) to relieving housing supply and affordability problems across the WSE.	i. Ensure the delivery of affordable housing (as well as contributing to the wider affordability of accommodation).	High	Low
2. Predictable environmental impacts from the travel patterns of residents in the specific type of MGB development, relative to other approaches, and to probable alternative locations for residential expansion in the absence of changes to the MGB.	iii. Housing and employment development should be integrated with public transport provision.	High	Low
3. The likelihood, in the process, of avoiding substantial negative effects (in the short and long term) on the natural environment, in aesthetic, ecological and recreational terms.	ii. Secure a contribution to enhancement of undeveloped parts of the MGB.	High	Mid
4. The likelihood of de-restriction in being accompanied by substantial	iv. A mechanism should be adopted to channel some of the enhancement of land	High	Mid

Criteria for judging options	Conditions & mechanisms	Possible appeal to 'rationals'	Possible appeal to 'normatives'
compensating advantages for nearby residents, encouraging a more supportive attitude to the change.	values to compensating benefits in affected communities. v. Densities should be optimised in support of i-iv.		
MECHANISMS			
5. Avoiding (actual or perceived) likelihood of encouraging further erosion of Green Belt protection, in areas and cases beyond those explicitly covered by a policy and regulatory change.	Corridor approach, planned, debated with long-term vision avoiding incremental change, opportunity by opportunity change or abolition	Mid	Mid
6. Its potential to contribute to more coherent/sustainable long-term patterns of development across the WSE.	Corridor approach, building on bottom up coalitions offers potential for planned long-term vision for WSE.	High	Low

Figure six: proposed pioneer coordination corridor



Source: Gillard, E. (2012). *Great Britain Local Authority Districts Council Areas and Unitary Authorities*. Edina ShareGeo Open. [Online] <http://hdl.handle.net/10672/305> Accessed 21.04.16.