

LIMPSFIELD PARISH COUNCIL

NOTE ON THE ISSUE OF GREEN BELT/GREY BELT AND IMPACT ON LIMPSFIELD & OXTED

Introduction

This note summarises the overarching concerns of **Limpsfield Parish Council (LPC)** in relation to Green Belt policy, the emerging concept of “grey belt”, and the development pressures affecting Limpsfield and the wider Oxted area.

With the introduction of grey belt provisions in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), and the preparation of the emerging Tandridge Local Plan, LPC considers it essential that long-established Green Belt protections are not diluted in practice. The Parish lies within the Green Belt and forms part of the wider urban area of Oxted, Limpsfield, Hurst Green and Holland — an area now increasingly recognised as an historic town whose countryside setting is a key component of its character.

Against this backdrop, the Parish Council’s concerns centre on ensuring that:

- The permanence and openness of the Green Belt are properly safeguarded.
- Grey belt policy is applied rigorously and not used to justify incremental erosion of countryside.
- Land that contributes to preventing urban sprawl and preserving historic setting is robustly protected.
- Development proposals are genuinely sustainable and infrastructure-led.

The summary below sets out LPC’s key concerns under these themes.

1. Protection of Green Belt Permanence and Openness

LPC places strong weight on the core purpose of Green Belt policy as set out in the NPPF: to prevent urban sprawl and keep land permanently open. Of particular concern locally are:

- **Checking unrestricted sprawl** of the large built-up area formed by Oxted, Limpsfield, Hurst Green and Holland.
- **Preserving the countryside from encroachment.**
- **Preserving the setting and special character of the historic town.**

The Parish Council is concerned that incremental or piecemeal development — even small-scale proposals — risks eroding openness and setting precedents for further sprawl.

2. Interpretation and Application of “Grey Belt”

LPC is concerned about how “grey belt” is defined and applied in practice.

Key issues include:

- Whether land genuinely qualifies as previously developed land (PDL). LPC has questioned attempts to classify open land within residential curtilage or garden areas as PDL, particularly where there are no permanent structures.
- Whether sites truly make only a weak or moderate contribution to Green Belt purposes. In several cases, LPC has argued that sites:
 - Strongly contribute to preventing sprawl, especially where adjacent to the wider urban area.
 - Form part of the setting of the historic town.
 - Help safeguard countryside from encroachment.

There is concern that grey belt arguments may be used to justify development on land that still performs important Green Belt functions.

3. Recognition of the Combined Urban Area as an Historic Town

Emerging evidence for the new Local Plan recognises the combined urban area of Oxted/Limpsfield/Hurst Green as an historic town. This strengthens the relevance of preserving its countryside setting.

LPC sees this as highly significant. Land previously assessed as not contributing strongly to the historic setting may now do so. This could materially affect the grey belt status of sites around the edge of Limpsfield and Oxted.

4. Sustainability and Infrastructure Concerns

Even where land may be argued to be grey belt, LPC is concerned about:

- Whether sites are genuinely sustainable locations.
- Over-reliance on private car travel.
- Impacts on highways and infrastructure capacity.
- Whether developments truly meet the “Golden Rules” (affordable housing, infrastructure improvements, accessible green space).

Unsustainable locations undermine compliance with national policy requirements.

5. Risk of Inconsistent Decision-Making

Recent applications in the area have resulted in differing conclusions about grey belt status and Green Belt contribution.

LPC is concerned about maintaining consistency and clarity in how Green Belt purposes are interpreted and applied, and intends to take a consistent, evidence-based approach in its responses.

6. The Emerging Tandridge Local Plan

The forthcoming Regulation 18 consultation and updated Green Belt Assessment will be critical in shaping future development potential.

LPC's concerns include:

- How grey belt will be assessed under updated methodology.
- How housing need pressures may influence boundary reviews.
- Ensuring strong community engagement.
- Protecting land that contributes to preventing coalescence and preserving openness.

Overall Position

In summary, Limpsfield Parish Council's overarching concern is that the introduction of grey belt policy does not become a vehicle for incremental erosion of the Green Belt around Limpsfield and Oxted. The Council seeks:

- A robust and consistent assessment of Green Belt purposes.
- A holistic approach to green belt development vs piecemeal applications
- Careful scrutiny of previously developed land claims.
- Protection of the historic town setting.
- Sustainable development only, where policy tests are clearly and fully met.

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