

# DEPARTMENT FOR COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

## WRITTEN MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

### Green Belt

**The Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government (Brandon Lewis):** In my written statement of 1 July 2013, *Official Report*, Column 41WS, I noted the Government's intentions with regard to the importance of the protection of the Green Belt.

The Government's planning policy is clear that both temporary and permanent traveller sites are inappropriate development in the Green Belt and that planning decisions should protect Green Belt land from such inappropriate development. I also noted the Secretary of State's policy position that unmet need, whether for traveller sites or for conventional housing, is unlikely to outweigh harm to the Green Belt and other harm to constitute the "very special circumstances" justifying inappropriate development in the Green Belt.

The Secretary of State wishes to re-emphasise this policy point to both local planning authorities and planning inspectors as a material consideration in their planning decisions.

That statement revised the appeals recovery criteria by stating that, for a period of six months, the Secretary of State would consider for recovery appeals involving traveller sites in the Green Belt, after which the position would be reviewed.

The Secretary of State remains concerned about the extent to which planning appeal decisions are meeting the Government's clear policy intentions, particularly as to whether sufficient weight is being given to the importance of Green Belt protection. Therefore, he intends to continue to consider for recovery appeals involving traveller sites in the Green Belt.

Moreover, Ministers are considering the case for further improvements to both planning policy and practice guidance to strengthen Green Belt protection in this regard. We also want to consider the case for changes to the planning definition of 'travellers' to reflect whether it should only refer to those who actually travel and have a mobile or transitory lifestyle. We are open to representations on these matters and will be launching a consultation in due course.

17 January 2014