

11. The Green Belt

MAIN PRIORITIES

Merseyside County Council's main priorities in establishing a Green Belt are to:—

- Check the spread of development; reinforce the urban regeneration strategy; safeguard agriculture, recreation and nature conservation; maintain the separate identities of towns and villages.
- Refuse consent for most development in the Green Belt, but permit limited development where villages can accept it without damaging the countryside, and where planning consents already exist.
- Prevent development close to the edges of the Green Belt from spoiling its character and amenities.

11.1 The reason for the Green Belt

As long ago as the 1920's, the Government saw the need to preserve open land around big cities. The motives for establishing "Green Belts" were firstly, to preserve amenity and secondly, to protect agriculture from the sprawling growth of towns and commuter villages. In 1955, the Government advised local planning authorities to prepare Green Belts, so that these aims could be achieved and also to preserve the separate character of each town.

11.2 The existing situation

Lancashire and Cheshire County Councils proposed almost all Merseyside's open land, then within their administrative areas, for Green Belt designation. Lancashire submitted its proposals in 1960 and Cheshire in 1961. Neither was approved by the Secretary of State because there was no regional plan, although he accepted them as a basis for development control. None of the former County Boroughs submitted Green Belts, although St. Helens had an informal policy which was consistent with that for the surrounding areas of Lancashire. There are, however, significant areas of open land within the former Boroughs which are still not protected by Green Belts. Such land is vulnerable to development. Conversely, there is a considerable amount of vacant and under-used land in Merseyside towns which should be developed in order to make more efficient use of existing services and improve their general appearance. A restriction on building on the edges of towns is essential to our aim of encouraging the development of this land.

11.3 What the Green Belt will do

The establishment of a Green Belt in Merseyside is necessary to:—

- check the outward spread of the built-up area, direct development into existing towns, and encourage their regeneration;
- ensure that towns and villages keep their individual character; and
- safeguard the surrounding countryside, so that its potential for agriculture, nature conservation and recreation and its value as an amenity for townspeople is preserved.

Such a Green Belt would be in line with the suggestions made in the Strategic Plan for the North West, that a Green Belt in Merseyside was needed to direct development to the right areas.



11.4 Policy

There will be two broad areas of Green Belt;

- (i) In the Wirral Peninsula;
- (ii) to the east of the River Mersey, around the principal settlements and including green wedges into the conurbation.

The Green Belt is shown in the key diagram and its precise boundaries will be defined in the Green Belt Subject Plan.

Green Belt

-  Green Belt
-  Areas where special policies will be applied pending completion of detailed local studies.

11.5 Control of development

In the Green Belt there will be very strict control of development. An applicant for planning permission will have to show that there is a special reason why the development should be allowed. This might include, for instance, cases where the nature of the development was such that it could only take place outside the built-up area.

11.6 Policy

Within the Green Belt planning authorities will not give planning permission for development except in very special circumstances, other than for the purpose of agriculture, forestry, outdoor sport and recreation, tourist facilities, cemeteries, institutions standing in extensive grounds or other uses appropriate to a rural area. Proposals for such development will be considered in the light of their siting and general position in the Green Belt and, in particular, the policies relating to open land and recreation.

11.7 Villages in the Green Belt

The expansion of villages can conflict with Green Belt principles. However, a limited amount of development of gaps in the built-up area, and "rounding off" of the existing villages or settlements may be acceptable in certain cases. Where this is the case, such land may be excluded from the Green Belt and the precise boundaries defined in the Green Belt Subject Plan. In assessing whether a village or settlement should be "inset" into the Green Belt; that is, whether a limited amount of new development will be allowed around it, account will be taken of its existing character, the availability of public utilities, the capacity of the road system to cope with any additional traffic, the availability of community facilities and the impact which any expansion may have on the principles of the Green Belt and on open land and recreation policies.

11.8 Policy

As a general rule, planning authorities will not allow villages in the Green Belt to expand further, but limited growth may be allowed in settlements or villages in the Green Belt if they are suitable for accommodating additional small groups of houses or other forms of development which complement, or are essential to the function of, the settlement. In deciding whether such villages should be allowed to expand further, account will be taken of the existing character, the availability of public utilities, the capacity of the road system to cope with any additional traffic, the availability of community facilities and the impact which any expansion may have on the principles of the Green Belt and on open land and recreation policies.

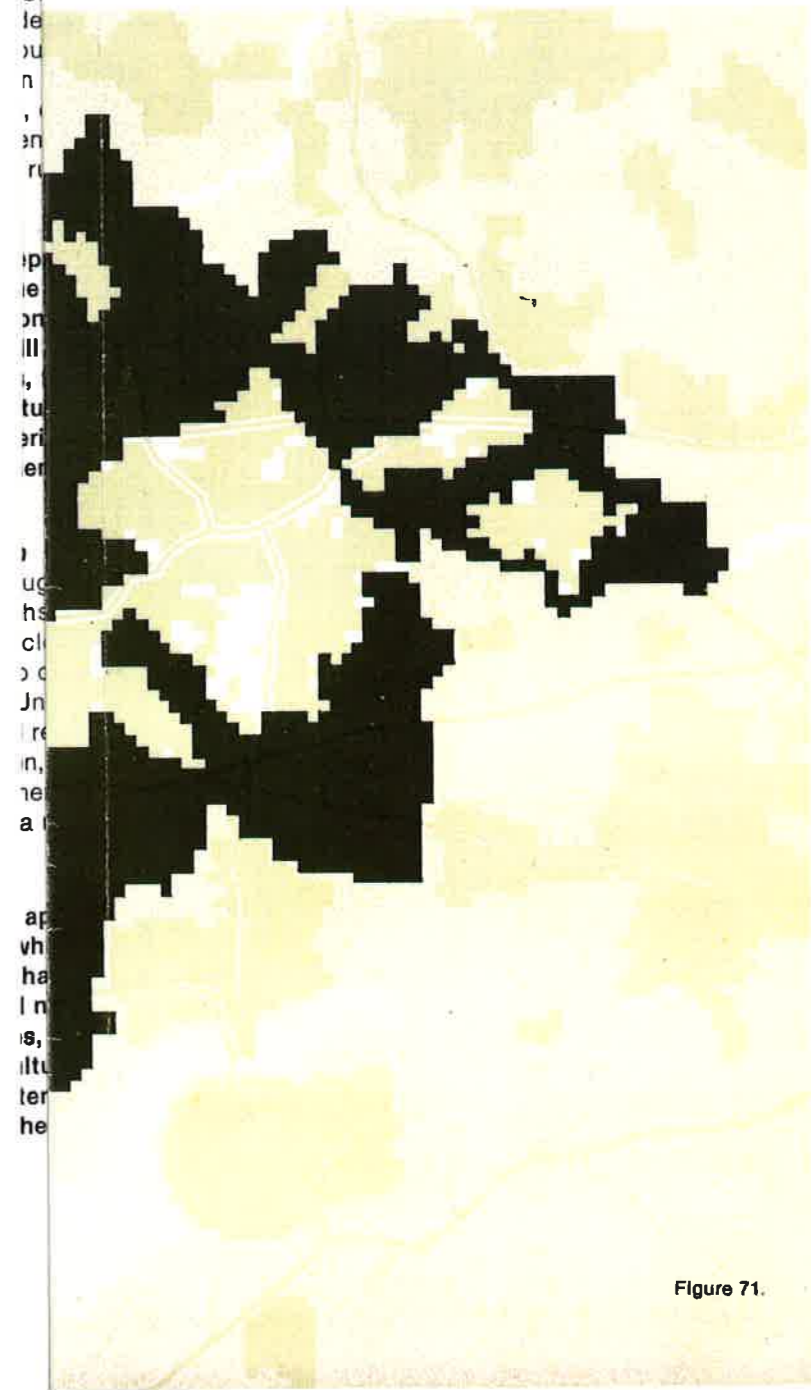


Figure 71.

Green Belt

11.9 Development near the Green Belt

The character and appearance of the Green Belt can be seriously damaged by insensitive development just outside it. This may result from the granting of planning permission, either for development which is likely to lead to future expansion into the Green Belt, or for buildings which will be too prominent in the landscape.

11.10 Policy

The local planning authorities will give special consideration to applications for planning permission for development just outside the boundaries of the Green Belt and appropriate conditions will be imposed where relevant, to ensure that the development does not adversely affect the amenity of the Green Belt and does not lead to future incursions into the Green Belt.

11.11 M.53 Corridor

The corridor of land occupied by the M.53 between Bidston and Woodchurch is an important break between the built-up areas of eastern and central Wirral. It is a priority area for landscape renewal (10.71) requiring treatment within the Structure Plan period. It could be that some further development might be allowed in the corridor without changing its character but until a scheme has been prepared, planning permission will not be given, except in very special circumstances, for development other than that which would be appropriate to a rural area.

11.12 Policy

Until a detailed scheme has been prepared for environmental improvement within the corridor occupied by the M.53 between Bidston and Woodchurch, planning permission will not be given, except in very special circumstances, for development other than for the purpose of agriculture, forestry, outdoor sport and recreation, cemeteries, institutions standing in extensive grounds or other uses appropriate to a rural area.

11.13 Marshside and Crossens Marsh

The County Council and Sefton Borough Council intend to look at those parts of Marshside and Crossens Marsh which have been enclosed by the new coastal embankment at Southport, to decide on the most appropriate uses for the land. Until the study is completed, the existing uses should remain and planning permission will not be given, except in very special circumstances, for development other than that which would be appropriate to a rural area.

11.14 Policy

Until a detailed study into the most appropriate uses for those parts of Crossens Marsh which have been enclosed by the New Coastal Road has been completed, planning permission will not be given, except in very special circumstances, for development other than for the purpose of agriculture, forestry, outdoor sport and recreation, cemeteries, institutions standing in extensive grounds or other uses appropriate to a rural area.



Figure 71.