

Brief overview of Why Fellgate Greenbelt Land Should Not Be Built On

1. Legal and Policy Protections: National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2023

- **Green Belt “Golden Rules”:**
 - The NPPF 2023 states that Green Belt boundaries should only be altered in **exceptional circumstances**, which must be fully justified and evidenced when updating local plans.
 - When land release is needed, the sequential test prioritizes brownfield (previously developed) land, then grey belt, and lastly, higher-performing Green Belt sites—only if absolutely necessary. [anthonycollins+1](#)
 - For any development allowed, “Golden Rules” apply: developments must deliver at least 50% affordable homes, increase environmental improvements, and deliver public green spaces. [localgovernmentlawyer+1](#)
- **Presumption Against Development:**
 - Green Belt policy is fundamentally designed to prevent urban sprawl, protect the countryside from encroachment, and preserve the setting and character of historic towns, all of which apply to Fellgate. [journalists](#)

2. Environmental Impact and Flood Risk

- **Biodiversity Loss:**
 - The local area supports significant wildlife and mature woodlands. Development would be “disastrous for wildlife” and irreversibly damage habitat connectivity and local biodiversity. [bbc+1](#)
 - Mature trees and green spaces, vital for pollinators and local recreation, would be lost. [shieldsgazette](#)
- **Flooding:**
 - Fellgate's fields perform a **crucial flood prevention role**. Surface water from any proposed development would overwhelm Calf Close and Monkton Burns, which already flood during heavy rains, increasing risk downstream and causing additional sewage problems. [journalists](#)
 - Local residents and campaigners consistently cite past severe flooding (“Thunder Thursday”) as evidence that expanding hard surface areas would endanger homes and infrastructure. [shieldsgazette+1](#)

3. Infrastructure and Service Limitations

- **Inadequate Roads and Public Services:**
 - Residents note the local road infrastructure is insufficient to support a major increase in housing without causing congestion and safety concerns. [shieldsgazette+1](#)
 - Public services—such as drainage, sewerage, education, and healthcare—are already stretched.
 - Northumbria Water's local networks have reportedly failed during floods in the past, suggesting increased pressure would worsen existing problems. [journalists](#)

4. Social and Community Arguments

- **Equestrian and Farming Heritage:**
 - Construction would displace equestrian communities and **threaten long-standing farming families**, undermining local heritage. [bbc+1](#)
- **Loss of Community Spaces:**
 - Once green spaces are lost to construction, the “legacy will be an urban sprawl,” damaging the area’s character for future generations. [shieldsgazette](#)

5. Availability of Alternatives

- **Brownfield Preference:**
 - Campaigners and councillors point out that there are **brownfield sites available** for development that avoid Green Belt destruction. [anthonycollins+1](#)
 - The NPPF requires that all alternatives are **fully explored and exhausted** before touching Green Belt. [localgovernmentlawyer+1](#)

6. Recent Local Plan Rejections and Public Sentiment

- **Public Opposition:**
 - Thousands have signed petitions and participated in demonstrations to protect Fellgate Green Belt, and elected councillors have voted down the proposal's multiple times. [savethefellgategreenbelt+2](#)
 - Criticisms include “undemocratic silencing” of genuine concerns and calls for more progressive planning that listens to residents rather than ignoring community voices. [shieldsgazette](#)

7. Climate Commitments

- **Climate Emergency Declaration:**
 - The Council has declared a climate emergency, with strong arguments that destroying green spaces contradicts efforts to reduce carbon emissions and support local climate resilience. [bbc+1](#)

Summary Table: Key Arguments

Reason	Details (with Reference)
NPPF “Golden Rules” & Green Belt protection	Exceptional circumstances required, sequential test, golden rules anthonycollins+1
Environmental/biodiversity loss	Damage to wildlife, habitats, mature trees, recreation bbc+1
Flood risk	Drainage, water table, historical flooding events journalists
Infrastructure strain	Roads, sewerage, services inadequate for scale of proposed housing bbc+1
Brownfield alternatives	Available and preferred over Green Belt land bbc+1
Social/community impact	Farming heritage, equestrian, loss of community spaces shieldsgazette+1
Public and councillor opposition	Petitions, votes, campaigns, democratic planning savethefellgategreenbelt+2
Climate emergency commitment	Conflict with green infrastructure and emission goals bbc+1

In summary:

Building on Fellgate Green Belt directly conflicts with national policy, local opposition, environmental imperatives, and sustainable development principles. The available brownfield alternatives and the social, ecological, and climate consequences make the case against development both compelling and strongly supported by current legislation and government rules.

Reference to support our views

Citing Government and Official Rules

- **NPPF 2023 Paragraphs 145–148:** Require precise evidence and justification for altering Green Belt boundaries, and prioritize other land before releasing Green Belt. [localgovernmentlawyer](#)
- **NPPF “Golden Rules” Paragraph 156:** Mandate at least 50% affordable housing, sufficient infrastructure, and major enhancement of public green spaces in any permitted development. [anthonycollins](#)
- **Town & Country Planning Act 1947:** Green Belt designation still protects land from “most forms of development,” only alterable in strict circumstances. [journalists](#)

Sources with links to evidence

1. <https://blog.anthonycollins.com/post/102jxyx/the-revised-national-planning-policy-framework-what-has-changed>
2. <https://www.localgovernmentlawyer.co.uk/planning/401-planning-news/59432-government-announces-adoption-of-revised-national-planning-policy-framework-aimed-at-boosting-housebuilding>
3. <https://journalists.org.uk/adam-ingoe/2025/03/20/whats-fuelling-the-controversy-over-the-fellgate-housing-proposal/>
4. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c05j6r6053no>
5. <https://www.shieldsgazette.com/news/politics/a-blueprint-for-future-development-in-south-tyneside-has-been-rejected-by-councillors-4772656>
6. <https://www.shieldsgazette.com/news/save-the-fellgate-green-belt-campaign-hits-out-at-flawed-local-plan-consultation-procedure-4731403>
7. <https://savethefellgategreenbelt.co.uk/local-plan-defeated-for-the-2nd-time/>
8. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/ce98ne41d89o>
9. <https://www.shieldsgazette.com/news/politics/south-tyneside-local-plan-blueprint-for-development-of-homes-and-businesses-blocked-again-5011022>
10. <https://savethefellgategreenbelt.co.uk>

Supporting Narrative with links to source evidence

Rules and Legislation

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2023 clearly prioritizes **Green Belt preservation** over housing growth by establishing strict tests and a “tiered” or sequential approach to development:

1. Brownfield-First Principle

- The NPPF requires planning authorities to give priority to developing *previously developed (brownfield) land* for housing before considering any Green Belt release. Substantial weight is placed on remediating degraded or derelict urban sites for new homes, steering growth away from the Green Belt. [groups.friendsoftheearth](#)

2. Exceptional Circumstances Requirement

- Green Belt boundaries can *only be altered in “exceptional circumstances”* when local needs cannot be met by brownfield or other non-Green Belt land, and these must be robustly justified and evidenced during plan making. There is no presumption in favour of releasing Green Belt land for housing. [thinkhouse](#)
- Any review for boundary changes follows a strategic process—with *grey belt* (lower-performing Green Belt land) considered only after all other options and must not undermine the core Green Belt purposes. [local+1](#)

3. Golden Rules for Any Green Belt Release

- If Green Belt release is proven necessary, it must meet strict criteria:
 - Provide at least **50% affordable housing**.
 - Deliver significant **infrastructure improvements** to support new homes.
 - Mandate **accessible high-quality green spaces** for residents. [assetzcapital+2](#)

4. Preserving Green Belt Purposes

- The NPPF upholds the five original Green Belt purposes: preventing urban sprawl, avoiding the merging of towns, protecting countryside, preserving historic towns' character, and encouraging urban regeneration—ensuring these are not compromised by housing development. [penningtonslaw+2](#)
- It specifically states development on Green Belt should only occur where it does *not* fundamentally undermine its purposes, and releases must be sustainable and subject to further safeguards. [local+1](#)

5. Planning for Sustainable Housing Growth

- Where housing needs genuinely cannot be met otherwise, and only after exhausting non-Green Belt options, local authorities may *strategically review* boundaries for “grey belt” release. However, “very special circumstances” for housing do not automatically outweigh Green Belt protection. [assetzcapital+2](#)

In summary:

The NPPF 2023 places clear restrictions on Green Belt release and embeds a strong national presumption against building on protected land. Authorities must exhaust all alternative options to meet housing need, and only consider Green Belt—under the most stringent conditions and with mandatory benefits—where absolutely necessary, always upholding Green Belt’s primary purposes.

Sources with links to evidence

1. <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/proposed-reforms-to-the-national-planning-policy-framework-and-other-changes-to-the-planning-system/proposed-reforms-to-the-national-planning-policy-framework-and-other-changes-to-the-planning-system>
2. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/67aaf8f3b41f783cca46251/NPPF_December_2024.pdf
3. <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/green-belt>
4. <https://www.local.gov.uk/parliament/briefings-and-responses/revisions-national-planning-policy-framework-nppf-and-other>
5. <https://www.assetzcapital.co.uk/national-planning-policy-framework/>
6. <https://thinkhouse.org.uk/site/assets/files/2775/hocl02023.pdf>
7. <https://www.penningtonslaw.com/news-publications/latest-news/2024/new-national-planning-policy-framework-published-key-points-of-difference>
8. <https://groups.friendsoftheearth.uk/whats-new-national-planning-policy-framework-nppf>
9. <https://www.myerson.co.uk/news-insights-and-events/changes-to-the-national-planning-policy-framework>
10. <https://www.propertymark.co.uk/resource/faster-planning-processes-must-prioritise-infrastructure.html>

National Planning Policy Framework (2023 NPPF)

Paragraph 148 of the 2023 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) establishes a clear, sequential hierarchy for releasing land from the Green Belt for development:

- First Priority:
Plans should give priority to the release of previously developed (brownfield) land within the Green Belt for development.
- Second Priority:
If further land is needed, the next consideration is “grey belt” land —this typically refers to land within the Green Belt that is not previously developed and does not strongly contribute to the core Green Belt purposes (such as preventing urban sprawl or protecting historic towns).
- Final Priority:
Only if the first two categories are insufficient should plans consider releasing other Green Belt land, generally higher-performing in Green Belt terms, and this should be a last resort.[1][3][4][5][6][8][9]

Throughout this process, authorities must also give weight to promoting sustainable patterns of development—that is, ensuring released sites are suitable with regard to infrastructure, accessibility, and sustainability criteria. Paragraph 148 thus prevents the loss of the highest-performing Green Belt land unless absolutely necessary and only after all other more sustainable or less valuable options have been thoroughly explored.

Links to source evidence

1. <https://www.landuse.co.uk/thoughts/guide-to-national-green-belt-policy-changes/>
2. <https://www.penningtonslaw.com/news-publications/latest-news/2024/nppf-revisions-regarding-the-green-belt>
3. <https://www.localgovernmentlawyer.co.uk/planning/401-planning-news/59432-government-announces-adoption-of-revised-national-planning-policy-framework-aimed-at-boosting-housebuilding>
4. <https://urbanistarchitecture.co.uk/green-belt-rules-nppf/>
5. <https://www.wrighthassall.co.uk/knowledge-base/the-new-nppf-2024>
6. <https://moderngov.threerivers.gov.uk/documents/s14270/Appendix%201%20-%20Green%20Belt%20Topic%20Paper.pdf>
7. <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/green-belt>
8. <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/national-planning-policy-framework/13-protecting-green-belt-land>
9. <https://lichfields.uk/blog/2025/march/05/how-grey-is-the-green-belt>

Green Belt

Green Belt release under the 2023 NPPF is permitted only with strong evidence, after exhausting alternatives, following a strict hierarchy of land preference, and delivering substantial public benefits (“Golden Rules”), without undermining the essential functions of Green Belt land.

Links to source evidence

1. <https://urbanistarchitecture.co.uk/green-belt-rules-nppf/>
2. <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/green-belt>
3. <https://marrons.co.uk/our-news/revised-nppf-key-takeaways-you-need-to-know/>
4. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/67aaf8f3b41f783cca46251/NPPF_December_2024.pdf
5. <https://blog.anthonycollins.com/post/102jyxy/the-revised-national-planning-policy-framework-what-has-changed>
6. <https://www.localgovernmentlawyer.co.uk/planning/401-planning-news/59432-government-announces-adoption-of-revised-national-planning-policy-framework-aimed-at-boosting-housebuilding>
7. <https://www.local.gov.uk/parliament/briefings-and-responses/revisions-national-planning-policy-framework-nppf-and-other>
8. <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/national-planning-policy-framework/13-protecting-green-belt-land>
9. <https://www.cpre.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/State-of-the-Green-Belt-2023-online.pdf>
10. <https://lichfields.uk/blog/2023/december/20/not-just-housing-the-december-2023-nppf-revisions>

Release of Green Belt land

The established priorities (brownfield and “grey belt”), is a set of rigorous factors must be addressed to justify such a move under the 2023 NPPF:

Exhaustion of All Alternatives:

The authority must fully demonstrate that all other reasonable options for meeting identified development needs have been examined. This includes maximizing brownfield use, increasing the density of development in existing urban areas, and exploring whether neighbouring authorities can help accommodate unmet needs.[1][2][3][4][5]

Acuteness of Need:

The scale and urgency of housing or employment land need must be objectively assessed, including whether need can only realistically be met by releasing Green Belt land.[2][1]

Sustainability and Infrastructure:

Consider if the proposed development would promote sustainable patterns—e.g., access to public transport, jobs, and services—and if infrastructure can support new growth.[3][4][2]

Impact on Green Belt Purposes:

Assess the degree of harm to the core Green Belt purposes (preventing sprawl, protecting countryside, etc.) and whether the impact can be mitigated or compensated.[4][1][2]

Compensatory Improvements:

Any loss of Green Belt must be offset by environmental or accessibility enhancements to the remaining Green Belt land.[3]

Defensibility of New Boundaries:

Changes should establish clear, permanent, and recognisable new Green Belt boundaries to guard against further loss in the future.[4][3]

Discussion with Neighbouring Authorities:

Document efforts to work with neighbouring authorities through a statement of common ground on whether they can accommodate some of the development requirement.[1][2]

Evidence and Transparency:

All decisions must be transparently evidenced and justified through the local plan or its review.[6][1][4]

Sumup

Releasing Green Belt land beyond the preferred priorities can only occur after robustly demonstrating no realistic alternatives, acutely assessed need, consideration of all impacts/sustainability, compensatory measures, and thorough engagement with relevant stakeholders and authorities.

Links to source evidence

1. https://www.sunderland.gov.uk/media/20876/SD-33-Review-of-the-Sunderland-Green-Belt-Part-1-Exceptional-Circumstances-for-Releasing-Land-from-the-Green-Belt/pdf/SD.33_Review_of_the_Sunderland_Green_Belt_Part_1-Exceptional_Circumstances_for_Releasing_Land_from_.pdf?m=636802953653470000
2. <https://www.planningresource.co.uk/article/1682501/five-circumstances-exceptional-enough-justify-green-belt-release-local-plans>
3. <https://www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/media/1739/green-belt-topic-paper-w-cover-web.pdf>
4. https://www.sstaffs.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2024-04/green_belt_except_circs_topic_paper_2024.pdf
5. <https://cannockchasedc.gov.uk/sites/default/files/document-library/Green%20Belt%20Topic%20Paper%202023.pdf>
6. <https://www.local.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/green-belt-244.pdf>
7. <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/national-planning-policy-framework/13-protecting-green-belt-land>
8. <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/green-belt>
9. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/67aafe8f3b41f783cca46251/NPPF_December_2024.pdf
10. <https://new.calderdale.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2023-03/exceptional-circumstances-release-green-belt.pdf>