

THE LAW SOCIETY

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THE ROYAL INSTITUTION OF CHARTERED SURVEYORS

JOINT PLANNING LAW CONFERENCE

THE METROPOLITAN PROBLEM

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THE GREEN BELTS

by

REX MERCER, FRTPI, FRICS

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BY WAY OF INTRODUCTION

1. Why, you might ask, at a conference on the future of metropolitan government and metropolitan planning, should we need to give Green Belts special consideration?
2. Simply, it is because Green Belts are a metropolitan concept.
3. Green Belts are of a metropolitan dimension.

4. Green Belts need a metropolitan overview; metropolitan policy; and metropolitan administration.
5. Planning is concerned with the public management of the country's land resource.
6. The management of our urban land, and more particularly the management of urban renewal - now of such concern - is inextricably tied to the concept of Green Belts - a fact that has only recently been properly acknowledged.
7. Green Belts are no more than a residual notion dependent entirely on the resolution of wider issues of urban policy.
8. But that is not to lose sight of the fact that Green Belts are emotionally and politically highly charged. They raise issues of intense self interest; and are seen as an expression of the divide between the "haves" and the "have nots".
9. Their true origins lie in the writings of Ebenezer Howard at the turn of the century. His was the idea of a series of "garden cities", limited in growth by belts of open land. These belts would limit the spread of the city, they would provide food for the population, and space for recreation and relaxation. Once a city had reached its optimum size then a further city would be established beyond the belt of open land.

10. Howard could have had little perception of the social and economic changes that have since taken place, nor of the scale of urban obsolescence and decay with which we are now beset; but his Utopian principles still lie at the heart of our Green Belts.
11. They now embrace about 1.8 million hectares of land - 14% of the non-urban area of England and Wales.
12. Half of the population of England and Wales live within urban areas surrounded and contained by Green Belts.
13. They are synonymous with our major urban areas - London, the West Midlands South and West Yorkshire, Merseyside and Greater Manchester, and Tyne & Wear - those very metropolitan areas which are about to lose any semblance of metropolitan government.
14. Green is good and healthy; urbanisation is ugly and bad. Belts constrain; the combination of green and belt is emotively and politically powerful.

15. They are of course not necessarily green, nor belts; indeed they were originally conceived as girdles (perhaps expressive of the fashions of the time!) and are now frequently coupled with the word "fingers", giving expression to a growing concept not only of containment but also of the breaking down of urban places.

16. Nonetheless, Green Belts have been, and remain the one and only plank of public land use policy which has stood the test of time; they are believed to be inviolate and permanent, and their purpose is publically and surprisingly well understood; they are fiercely supported by those who live in them, and beyond them, and who seek their protection - articulate people with local political clout - who will not willingly concede one hectare to urban use; and they have just survived the culmination of an unprecedented attack by the joint forces of non other than the volume housebuilders, the Department of the Environment and the Secretary of State.

17. For nearly ten years the nation's housebuilders and others have been chipping away at Green Belt policies to achieve the release of land. They saw in the present government's political philosophy the potential for driving a wedge between the long established Green Belts and existing urban areas.

18. By a well-organised and well-argued attack, in the guise of the champions of the house purchasers, the House Builders Federation eventually put so much pressure on the Department of the Environment and its Ministers that we witnessed the spectacle of the government issuing during last year ill considered and highly contentious draft circulars on Green Belts and land for housing.
19. Not unexpectedly, these brought about a storm of public protest resulting in an unprecedented withdrawal and redrafting of the circulars, accompanied by extraordinary statements of explanation by the Minister attempting to damp down the controversy.
20. In turn this prompted a wide-ranging debate on the whole philosophy of land use policy, potentially of no less importance than the debates of the 1940's, 1960's and 1970's which underpin the policy and administration of the present planning system.
21. Only the prompt intervention of the House of Commons' Environment Committee which decided to enquire into the draft circular fiasco, deflected the attack. The Committee's conclusions have put Green Belt policy firmly back on its feet for the next decade.
22. The question now is whether Green Belts can survive the government's dismantling of a metropolitan dimension of public policy and administration.

23. The Green Belt debate was symptomatic of much deeper issues bearing on the land use planning system, and which the present government has brought to the surface; of particular concern is its overt disaffection with strategic planning at the very time when there are powerful forces at play which call out for an overview and a wider focus to tackle the consequences of urban decay.
24. The real significance of the Environment Committee Inquiry was that it questioned the very substance of public land use policy and administration in this country; the Committee took a wealth of evidence, which I commend to students of the system; it made some profound observations, and drew some penetrating and important conclusions about the relationship between the demands for the release of fresh land for development, urban renewal, and Green Belt policy.
25. Beyond the well understood functions of Green Belts to check the unrestricted sprawl of built up areas and to safeguard the surrounding countryside, the Environment Committee came down clearly in support of the view that Green Belts now have the important role also of assisting urban regeneration.
26. The Committee observed that:

"The role of Green Belts is to restrict pressures, often back into urban areas."

27. The Committee concluded that:

"Dereliction is a good indication that a Green Belt is needed. Its existence suggests that, despite planning policies, a town is overstretched, and hence development on peripheral sites is making inefficient use of land.....Green Belts have in recent years taken on a major new function as part of urban renewal planning policies."

The Committee recommended that this should be made explicit in policy.

28. So it is that the final version of the Green Belts circular formally adds this positive function to established Green Belt policy:

"The government continues to attach great importance to Green Belts, which have a broad and positive planning role in checking the unrestricted sprawl of built-up areas, safeguarding the countryside from further encroachment, and assisting in urban regeneration."

29. That is why, in order to debate the future of Green Belt policy in the context of a planning system without a proper metropolitan dimension, that I turn you away from Green Belt policy itself.

30. I do not intend to take you for a pleasant stroll through our Green Belts.

31. Instead, I shall take you to the socially degraded and declining areas of our cities. I shall ask you to consider issues of wider economic and social theory, policy and practice, embracing:

- * The forces of economic and social change.
- * Urban decline and decay.
- * Economic and social regeneration.
- * Urban renewal and containment.
- * The efficient use and management of land resources; and
- * The implications for the planning system of a demand-led economy.

The Forces at Work

32. Let us consider the issues which are today bearing down on Green Belt policy and which, remote though some may seem will finally determine its future as a policy of metropolitan significance.
33. We can at the same time review present government policy on these issues; we will discover conflict and much that has to be resolved.
34. It is no exaggeration to say that the future of Green Belt policy lies deep in the social and economic base of the country.

35. The strong influence of our new relationship with Europe, and the dramatic changes in the world economy over the last two decades, coupled with the problems of energy, the use and conservation of natural resources, food production, ecological balance, and burgeoning technology, have, and will continue to bring about considerable economic and social changes which are manifesting themselves in:

- * A sharp decline in our traditional industrial base.
- * High unemployment - some say structural; combined with a lack of any real mobility of labour; and
- * Growth in new industrial and service sector enterprises in new locations, away from traditional centres of employment.

We are seeing also:

- * Significant changes in social behaviour - exemplified by single parent families and accelerating separate household formation; and
- * A fast decaying housing stock, and a mismatch between that which is available and that which is required.

Nevertheless, there is an underlying trend towards greater wealth, home ownership, shorter working hours and increasing time for leisure and recreation.

36. The results are there for all to see:

- * Considerable areas of wasting urban land, much of it lacking any infrastructure for re-use, and some badly polluted by previous use.
- * Substantial areas of empty industrial buildings, physically obsolete and badly located; simply not suited to the requirements of modern production or business.

- * Extensive industrial and warehouse developments in entirely new locations on the edges of urban areas and close to motorways.
 - * Mechanised farm production resulting in the clearing of familiar landscapes, hedgerows and woodlands and, some say, destroying the natural ecology.
 - * A sharpening of the north/south economic and social divide.
 - * Social discontent and disturbance; vandalism and physical violence; and
 - * Open attacks on the established institutions of society.
37. These powerful stresses, when taken together with the policies of successive governments rightly designed to encourage and set in motion the processes of economic regeneration have been forcing changes in established land use policy over the last ten years.
38. By the end of the 1970's the time was well overdue for a thorough restatement of urban and rural policy.
39. It was a job for central government; only the government of the day can decide such strategy within the framework of its social and economic policy.
40. Give it its due, whether consciously or otherwise, the government did open up the necessary debate; it has now been going on for four years: it remains to be brought to a conclusion.

Government Policy for Economic and Social Regeneration

41. This government has of course certain strongly held philosophical beliefs: in the good of market forces; a proper return on investment; enterprise, and ownership, and self reliance; the drawing back of state support and intervention and the encouragement of the private sector; all of which have a bearing on its attitude towards the very notion of planning, land use policy, and its administration.
42. Let us pull together the threads of this government's declared policies on economic regeneration, urban renewal, and urban development.
43. To do this I draw heavily on Circulars, White Papers, draft Circulars, ministerial statements, and evidence put to the Environment Committee, which together provide the bones of an emerging strategy which bears directly on land use policy and its application; but, within which, there are some awkward gaps and potential deficiencies which yet need a good deal more thought.
44. Underlying all, is the government's reaction to the social and economic changes which are afoot.
45. It has expressed itself concerned with rebuilding the economy.

46. To that end it is committed to maintaining a regional policy aimed at easing the process of change in areas which have been dependent on declining industry, and to encourage new businesses in those areas.
47. Apart from regional investment in basic infrastructure and communications, initiatives have included retraining schemes, local enterprise agencies, enterprise zones, and freeports.
48. National policies range over efforts to stimulate innovative development to upgrade technology, support for founding new businesses and the expansion of sound enterprises throughout the country, and means for reducing the burdens on business, so that industry and commerce can flourish with less dependence on public expenditure.
49. The stemming of urban decay, through the urban programme and the use of urban development grants, to stimulate private sector investment in otherwise unattractive areas, also forms part of the government's strategy; so too does the re-use or recycling of urban land - urban renewal is once again an acceptable term in the vocabulary of government policy.
50. That said, the underlying philosophy shows through its approach. Imbalances between areas in employment opportunities should in principle, it believes, be corrected by "natural adjustment of labour market". But

it has recognised that this simply does not happen in practice, and one of the principal reasons is a lack of mobility in the country's workforce. It is the government's policy to encourage greater mobility by "making the planning system more sensitive to changing needs", and through housing policies.

51. It is the government's clear wish to encourage home ownership and to bring this within the reach of as many people as possible.
52. Above all, government has acknowledged that regional and local economic regeneration and development is influenced by a wide range of central and local government policy, partly expressed through the planning system.

The Role of the Planning System

53. The government has made it quite clear that it does not want the land use planning system to interfere with the process of economic and social regeneration, and to that end it has seen fit to redefine the role of the planning system.
54. On the one hand it has declared its commitment to the planning system in unequivocal terms and I quote:

"The planning system balances the protection of the natural and the built environment with the pressures of economic and social change. The need for the planning system is unquestioned and

its workings have brought great and lasting benefits. In each of the countless decisions many compromises are struck."

55. On the other hand it has made it perfectly plain that it believes the vitality of the economy depends on development, and it wants "to make sure that the planning system is as positive and as helpful as it can be to investment in industry and commerce and to the development industry."

56. It is the government's wish that development is only prevented or restricted when to do so serves a "clear planning purpose and the economic effects have been taken into account."

57. Moreover the government considers:

"The planning system should play a helpful part in rebuilding the economy. Development control must avoid placing unjustified obstacles in the way of any development especially if it is for industry, commerce, housing or any other purpose relevant to the economic regeneration of the country. It is, and should be seen to be, part of the process of making things happen in the right place at the right time. Local planning authorities are asked therefore to pay greater regard to time and efficiency; to adopt a more positive attitude to planning applications; to facilitate development; and always to grant planning permission having regard to all material considerations, unless there are sound and clear-cut reasons for refusal. They are also asked

to ensure that their planning policies and practices create the right conditions to enable the house building industry to meet the public's need for housing."

58. It is interesting to see buried there that axiom of land use planning: "the right development, in the right place, at the right time" - whatever "right" may be!
59. These quite fundamental pronouncements, re-defining the role of land use planning, were made in Circular 22/80, which I believe will go down as a watershed in the history of planning in this country.
60. The tenor of the Circular was to push back the influence of the planning system, and it was this that started the debate on the redefinition of the principles of land use planning policy; an attempt by the government of the day to strike a new balance between control and change - in favour of change.
61. It was a bold move in the face of an understandable reluctance on the part of planning authorities and the public alike to accept any such shift, and for that reason it was inevitably clouded by the necessary re-statement of commitment to conservation, including Green Belts.

62. Again I quote:

"The Government's concern for positive attitudes and efficiency in development control does not mean that their commitment to conservation is in any way weakened: in particular, they remain committed to the need to conserve and improve the countryside, natural habitats and areas of architectural, natural historical or scientific interest and listed buildings. There is no change in the policies on national parks, areas of outstanding natural beauty or conservation areas. The Government continue to attach great importance to the use of green belts to contain the sprawl of built-up areas and to safeguard the neighbouring countryside from encroachment and there must continue to be a general presumption against any inappropriate development within them. Nor will the Government allow more than the essential minimum of agricultural land to be diverted to development, nor land of a higher agricultural quality to be taken where land of a lower quality could reasonably be used instead."

63. It was left to the Department of the Environment to try to define the new balance; to influence the decisions of the planning authorities; and to set the parameters for the current round of structure plan reviews, and thus the basis for local plan policies.

64. It was around the definition of this balance that the debate on Green Belts focused. Clearly, the first draft circulars on Green Belts and on land for housing went too far for public acceptance, and although the emphasis was on the issue of land for housing, the principles applied equally to land resources for all development.
65. Where will the balance be struck? Is it capable of definition?
66. Let us look at the basic principles which the government wishes now to be weighed in the balance. These are drawn from the evidence put by the Department of the Environment to the Commons Environment Committee:
- * Established policies to protect good agricultural land, areas of outstanding natural beauty and national parks are to be firmly maintained.
 - * The bulk of future development must take place both by re-building within existing towns and by expanding the towns within the limits of employment of local community capacity e.g. infrastructure and social facilities. In considering proposals for development which involve the expansion of an existing town, regard should first be had to the amount of suitable cleared but undeveloped land within the town.

- * It is particularly important to bring back into use neglected, derelict or wasting land, and to recycle urban land, including obsolete industrial sites unlikely to be used again for their original purpose.

- * In short, full and effective use must be made of existing urban land through inner city, and general urban renewal and regeneration.

- * Expansion of a town into the surrounding countryside is objectionable on planning grounds if it creates ribbons or isolated pockets of development or reverses accepted policies for separating villages from towns, or if it conflicts with national policies for the protection of the environment such as those for safeguarding green belts, national parks, good farming land, areas of outstanding natural beauty or high landscape value, or for nature conservation, or those relating to flood plains, run off problems, proximity to industry or noise, water or air pollution. Such an objection would normally rule out development unless the circumstances of the case are such that there is an exceptional need to make land available for housing.

- * That said, there must be an adequate and continuous supply of land, suitable and available for immediate development to meet market demand, both for housing and for the requirements of industry and commerce.

- * New land, beyond existing urban areas will have to be allocated to meet these demands.

- * The government considers that it is not appropriate for it to make forecasts of housing demand and need at either national or regional levels.

- * A more practical approach, it argues, is to ask whether the planning system is proving responsive to present and prospective market demand, or whether it is likely to impose undue constraints on housing output in the next few years.

- * In all areas plans need to be kept up to date. The assumptions and forecasts on which approved plans are based need to be reassessed in relation to 1981 census results and demographic trends, including household formation and migration. They should also take account of economic development in the region, changing patterns of employment and travel to work, the current trends in market demand for housing requirement now met by the private sector, such as single persons, small households and the elderly. In the light of such reassessment, any necessary alterations to structure plans need to be prepared, and this process is now getting under way.

- * National policies set out in White Papers and Departmental Circulars provide general policy guidance and local planning authorities have to have regard to such policies when preparing their plans and in exercising control. In addition, where he has considered it necessary, the Secretary of State has issued strategic guidance to provide the regional context for land use planning. Advice has been issued by the Government for the West Midlands and South East regions, and draft advice has recently been published on the impact of the M25.

- * The Government does not intend to designate any more new towns; nor does it believe that market demand can be accommodated or directed effectively away from pressure points on the scale which was envisaged for example, in the South East Strategy.

- * New allocations of land must be made in places well related to current economic and demographic trends and prospective market demand.

- * Local authorities must take the initiative in making allocations and deciding how they want to cater for development in substantial growth points.

- * Countryside protection and enhancement is not a primary objective of Green Belts.

* Green Belts are part of wider planning policies including urban requirements and provision for new development.

67. The themes and contradictions are clear; on the one hand planning policies must continue to preserve and conserve, on the other a market-led approach must be satisfied.
68. Is it little wonder that there has been a raging debate? Is it little wonder that there has been a large degree of confusion? Is it little wonder that Green Belts, once considered the bastion of protection against crude demand, and there in the interests of the wider public good, were considered under threat.
69. Above all perhaps, it is the stress which the government is placing on demand and the need for planning authorities to comprehend market forces, and to take account of the economic consequences of their actions, that is causing most confusion.
70. Many of the issues turn on the balance to be struck between demand and need - that fundamental distinction of land use policy - which one detects the present government intends should be tipped very much in favour of market or demand-led policies, designed to meet the theory of "acceptable choice".

71. The government's attitude has been that these conflicts can be reconciled satisfactorily, but has failed to give any real lead as to how.

72. The issues need to be considered and decided at a strategic level; but the government's regional policy guidance is laughable, and its relationship with the non-executive standing conferences of the South East and West Midlands is suspect.

73. Moreover, and fundamentally, the last few years have seen this government bent upon weakening the position of the strategic shire authorities and devolving decisions on local planning policies entirely to the local level where the wider issues cannot and will not be taken into account; and it is now about to destroy the GLC and the Metropolitan Counties for overt political reasons under the guise of "Streamlining the Cities". It has no feeling for strategic planning, as is evident from its case for change:

"The reorganisation of the 1960's and early 1970's were typical of their time. It was a time when resources seemed to be freely available, and when it was assumed that growth would automatically provide the funds for ever increasing expenditure. It was also the heyday of a certain fashion for strategic planning, the confidence in which now appears exaggerated. It is perhaps not surprising that, in this climate, structural reform was approached with too little regard for economy, and that the structures created in that era tend sometimes to give inadequate weight to the need to obtain value for money."

THE MISSING METROPOLITAN DIMENSION

74. Very few are persuaded by the government's case so far put for sweeping away the metropolitan dimension. Even The Times has been prompted to thunder:

"The government ought quickly to produce, well before the publication of the main bill, more evidence that abolishing the Greater London Council and the metropolitan counties will both simplify administration and economize. Last autumn's white paper was one of Whitehall's shoddier products. A convincing case for abolition has yet to be made with intellectual rigour and sufficient fact."

75. Certainly, as regards planning at the metropolitan level, there has been neither a convincing case for abolition, nor any argument of intellectual rigour supported by facts to justify the proposed reallocation of functions, seemingly designed at a late date to cobble together again a semblance of a metropolitan dimension.
76. The metropolitan dimension is to become the responsibility of the Secretary of State, advised by the London Planning Commission and the Conferences of the Metropolitan Districts and adjoining authorities.
77. Where does that leave the effective combination of policies for urban renewal and Green Belts? Where does that leave the effective management

of Green Belts to provide for their use for agricultural, recreation and amenity, and to conserve, enhance and rectify disuse, abuse and neglect?

78. The Environment Committee may have said "The planning system is an attempt to reconcile the irreconcilable", but that did not preclude it from recognising:

* Green Belts have a broad and positive planning role: that of open spaces whose presumption against development can better shape urban areas, particularly at a regional scale. (My emphasis, but a point carefully ignored in the final Green Belt circular); and that

* To protect Green Belts three factors are crucial. First, boundaries must be defensible, and in the long term sacrosanct. Second, proper land-use policies should encourage positive use. Third, urban areas must be developed to their maximum - this last factor being of great importance in that it raises the twin questions of the provision of adequate new sites for development and the maximum use of derelict land.

79. The Committee was convinced that such considerations had to be perceived in a wide dimension which required an open recognition by government of regional issues which cannot be resolved except in a regional framework.

80. There is, the Committee said, a clear duty on government to guide local authorities through clearly stated regional strategy.

81. It could be argued that the government's proposals for replacing the strategic plans of the metropolitan authorities with unitary plans based on the Secretary of State's "regional guidance", in turn based on the advice of the metropolitan planning conferences and the London Planning Commission, will meet the need for a metropolitan overview.
82. But how, for example, can this plainly superficial approach possibly be reconciled with the 6 years of work reportedly put into defining the policies for the Greater Manchester Green Belt, which resulted in nearly half of Greater Manchester's 500 sq.miles being embraced by Green Belt?
83. Who, for the unitary plans, is to assess the consequences of there being over a million dwellings in England's conurbations which are unfit to live in, and the same number which are in an abysmal state of repair.
84. Who is to be responsible for establishing the facts of the extent of the acres of underused, and derelict urban land and its consequences for policies?
85. Who is to assess the real extent of the many millions of square feet of empty and obsolete industrial and other buildings which simply have to be swept away to enable land to be reused.
86. Who in the metropolitan areas is to evaluate the potential of all this urban land for reuse and determine the consequential policies?

87. Who is to set those facts and policies in the context of declining city populations expected over the remainder of this century?
88. Who is to strike the overall balance between urban renewal in our conurbations and the release of fresh land for development, and thereby define the extent of the embracing Green Belts?
89. Who is to promote the positive management and use of these metropolitan Green Belts?
90. There can be absolutely no doubt that these are metropolitan issues requiring a metropolitan focus, a vigorous coordination of metropolitan effort, a metropolitan strategy, and metropolitan management in no way matched by the governments proposals for unitary development plans.
91. The Metropolitan Districts, credited by their attitude as being largely responsible for offering the government the opportunity to bring down the metropolitan county authorities, quite obviously lack the necessary wider viewpoint to deal with any of these issues effectively; and that viewpoint is not likely to be created simply by bringing them together with the outer metropolitan authorities in "conferences", with neither resources, nor executive responsibility, nor power.

92. Nor in the past has the Department of the Environment shown any stomach for such matters, and nothing it has done recently suggests it intends to make any more of a contribution to the expression and application of effective regional or metropolitan policies than before.
93. And to date, the Secretary of State and his Ministers have failed to give any real guidance on national or regional strategy. Perhaps the commitment to do so for the unitary plans, and the suggestion that this guidance will be prepared by the Department on the Secretary of State's behalf, is the single benefit that may be derived from the whole matter.
94. It has been suggested that:
- "The future historian, however, may well find it necessary to place the present turmoil about city government in the broader context of major change in the cities themselves. Those analysts who regard inner city decline as a product of centrifugal planning and economic policies, will interpret the abolition proposals as wilful destruction of the only local administration units capable of reversing the trends and organising the salvation of the Victorian industrial conurbations. Those who believe the disintegration process to be inevitable, and even desirable, will perceive a certain logic in the removal of an administrative tier whose boundaries and powers were always inappropriate to the evolving city region." - The Planner, March 1984

95. But whatever the historians may make of it one wonders whether the government and for that matter the DOE fully comprehend the burden of responsibility which they must now shoulder; one wonders how they will perform in the open comprehensive expression of national and regional policy required to provide a sensible context for the unitary plans which they have spawned.
96. Whatever the outcome there can be very little doubt that the Green Belts of London, Greater Manchester, Merseyside, South Yorkshire, Tyne and Wear, West Midlands and West Yorkshire are to be placed at severe risk without the protection of the GLC and the six metropolitan counties.

IN CONCLUSION

97. Green Belts are a residual notion, but their purpose is clear, namely:
to check the future growth and merging of large urban areas,
to which we should add: to assist urban regeneration and
provide those who live in our conurbations and cities with
easily accessible open countryside for relaxation and leisure.

It is equally clear, that if they are to be sustained, Green Belts must be regarded as inviolate and as permanent as anything can ever be; their very existence pre-supposes pressures which are being contained unnaturally - any weakness will be exploited.

98. But the precise extent of Green Belts depends on wider policy considerations which remain largely undetermined; in particular:

- * To what extent can urban areas absorb demands for land for housing and other development through the processes of urban renewal? and
- * How far is government prepared to go in committing public sector agencies to the management and acceleration of urban renewal, and in the provision of finance and powers to that end?

It is decisions on these questions which will determine the real future of our Green Belts.

99. To arrive at such decisions requires a good deal more fact about the true extent of our urban problems.

100. It is task for government, supported by strategic planning authorities with the resources for research and the powers to put policies into practice at the metropolitan level.

101. But the present government is bent upon destroying the very strategic authorities whose task it should be, and is devolving the planning system, to a level which has neither the capacity nor the political will to address the issues.

102. Therein lies a fundamental dilemma. The lack of any metropolitan overview, the lack of any metropolitan resolve, will be seen as a weakness the result of which will almost certainly be a series of challenges aimed at securing the release of Green Belt land, forcing on the government ad hoc decisions through the appeal process.
103. The first of these can be expected to come from one or more of the proposals for new settlements in London's Green Belt threatened by Consortium Developments, followed no doubt by proposals for development to meet the needs of industry, commerce, distribution and retailing at strategic points around the M25.
104. Other challenges are bound to follow with the demise of the metropolitan authorities.
105. Whereas the future of Green Belt policy is guaranteed, the future of Green Belts is not; for they stand at the pivot of the balance of all the urban issues which are currently faced, and on which fundamental decisions have yet to be made just at a time when those metropolitan authorities with clear and defensible policies for established Green Belts are to be swept away.
106. That is the risk; that is the threat; that is the problem!