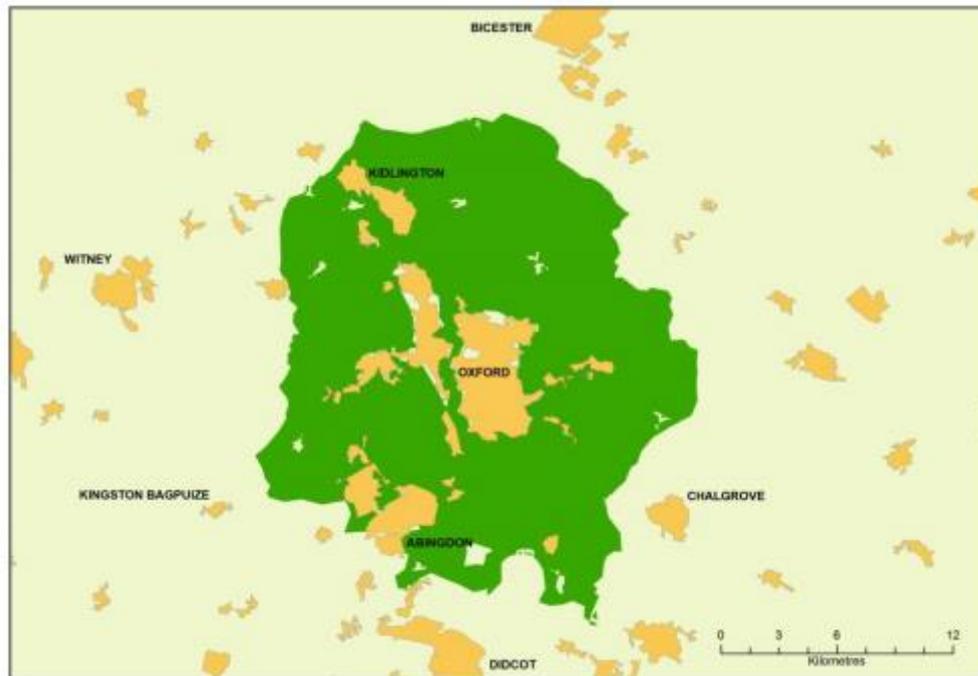


The Oxford Green Belt: Key Facts



The concept of having a 'Green Belt' around London to restrain appalling urban sprawl was promoted by CPRE and others from about 1930. Proposals for the Oxford Green Belt were submitted in 1958 but for various reasons were not formally approved until 1975.

The Green Belt around Oxford covers 66,868 hectares, about 13% of the total area of the county. This is 0.5% of the total land area of England (13,050,388 ha).

What kind of place is the Oxford Green Belt?

In common with all other Green Belts, the primary planning purpose of the Oxford Green Belt is to prevent urban sprawl into the countryside and the coalescence of settlements. It is also intended to protect the setting of the historic City and to encourage the re-use of derelict land (brownfield sites) within it. It also serves as an opportunity for City dwellers to have ready access to the countryside, particularly obviously where the Green Belt to the South of Grenoble Road benefits residents of The Leys to the North. (The five purposes of Green Belts are set out in section 1.5 of [Planning Policy Guidance 2: Green Belts](#))

In planning terms the quality and nature of the land within a Green Belt is irrelevant. However the Oxford Green Belt is almost entirely of high environmental value.

- Agriculture is an important aspect of this Green Belt, with a relatively high proportion being 'Best and Most Versatile' (Grade 1 or 2) quality land. The proportions of land registered as

being in agricultural use, and taken up by Agri-Environment schemes aimed at promoting more environmentally sustainable land management, are also higher than the national average.

- Landscape quality is being 'maintained' in virtually all (99%) of this Green Belt.
- There are important resources in terms of a dense public rights of way network, and a high proportion of broadleaf and ancient woodland.
- This Green Belt has proportionally more land at risk of flooding than any other Green Belt (6920 hectares or 20% of the land area).

Agriculture

19% (compared with 17% of land nationally) is Grade 1 or Grade 2, or the 'best and most versatile' agricultural land.

76% (compared with 71% of land nationally), or 24,253 ha, is currently in agricultural use.

70% (17,810 ha) of the total agricultural land is subject to Natural England funding supporting environmentally sensitive farming ('agri-environment schemes'. 67% of agricultural land nationally, and 53% of all Green Belt agricultural land, is subject to agri-environment schemes).

Landscape Quality

99% of the Oxford Green Belt is being 'maintained' in terms of landscape character. This is largely due to the maintenance of patterns of agriculture as well as land management for wildlife. Only 1 hectare of the Oxford Green Belt coincides with land designated as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).

Nature Conservation

1,754 ha are registered as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). This represents 5% of the Oxford Green Belt, and 0.5% of the national total of SSSI land.

Public Access and Recreation

There are 17 metres of public rights of way for every hectare of land (nationally there are 14 metres per ha) and 241 ha of open access land. The [Oxford Green Belt Way](#), created by CPRE Oxfordshire, provides a 50 mile circular route, well linked to public transport.

113 ha of Country Parks (0.3% of overall Oxford Green Belt area. 0.3%, or 42,135 ha of land nationally is Country Park).

639 ha is Registered (historic) Park and Garden (1.9% of overall Oxford Green Belt area; the national total is 170,734 ha or 1.3% of the total land area).

Broad-Leaf and Mixed Woodland

13% (compared to 8% of land nationally), or 4,304 hectares of the land area is broadleaf and mixed woodland. 5% (compared with 3% of land nationally) or 1,520 hectares is in the national inventory of ancient woodland.

Public Aspirations

Research undertaken by CPRE in 2010 found that when asked what Green Belt activities they would like to undertake in the next twelve months, the public in the wider South East region (of which Oxfordshire is part), most commonly chose:

- Visiting Green Belt land on a day out with friends/family
- Visiting Green Belt land to get peace and quiet
- Buying food grown or produced in the Green Belt

When asked what they would like to see more of in the Green Belt, the public in the South East were keen to see:

- Nature reserves
- Woodland walks
- New Parks

88% of the public in the South East agreed that they would buy food known to have been grown or produced by farmers in the Green Belt local to them rather than buy food produced elsewhere.

Source: ['Green Belts in England: Key Facts'](#), Campaign to Protect Rural England, January 2010.

July 2016