
Mark Pont, Assessment Programme Lead

Sandra Tudor
Head of Profession for Statistics
Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG)
(by email)

15 September 2021

Dear Sandra

Local authority green belt statistics for England

We recently completed our compliance check of the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government's (MHCLG) [Local authority green belt statistics for England](#) against the [Code of Practice for Statistics](#). I am pleased to confirm that these statistics should continue to be designated as National Statistics.

With the UK Government's new planning reforms placing an emphasis on protecting valued green spaces, there is the potential for an increase in user interest in these green belt statistics as well as the related Land Use and Land Use Change statistics, as they provide a valuable insight into the current state of the green belt across England.

Our review found a range of positive features that demonstrate the trustworthiness, quality, and value of the statistics:

- Ensuring the quality of your source data through providing [clear guidance](#) to Local Authorities on their data returns.
- Demonstrating transparency through publishing your quality assurance approach and assessment of data quality; clearly setting out the methodology; and providing information on the extent of revisions and reasons for these revisions.
- Plans to increase the accessibility of the statistics for the next publication through introducing an html version of the statistical release and using Power BI to create an interactive dashboard for the green belt statistics.
- Further plans to develop the statistics such as:
 - providing further granularity by breaking the data down into Parliamentary constituencies in response to user need, and
 - expanding the current range of green belt statistics to include some other categories of [protected land](#), such as national parks and areas of outstanding beauty, and sites of special scientific interest.
- Working with the Geospatial Commission on the [National Land Data Programme](#) – a pilot platform bringing together all datasets on land in to one place. This has the potential to increase the data linkage opportunities between datasets, adding further insight and value to the current range of official statistics. Although the outputs from

this programme this may not be classed as official statistics we strongly advocate [voluntary application](#) of the three pillars from the Code of Practice – Trustworthiness, Quality and Value – in order to provide the public with confidence in the statistics and data. Likewise, we would be happy to review any new outputs against the Code.

- We welcome the creation of a separate GSS Planning Statistics Sub-group earlier this year. This provides a good opportunity for you to strengthen your links with statisticians from the other UK nations, and to share plans and best practices to add further insight to the statistics, for example by improving the published links to the other nations planning statistics.

Our review also identified several ways in which we consider that you could further enhance the trustworthiness, quality, and value of the statistics:

- Refresh the section in the statistical release on the uses of the data to better reflect the wide range of uses, including the increased value of green belt statistics within [local plans](#), and demonstrate the value of the links between local planning and green belt data collection. Linking this section within the release with the department's published [Engagement strategy](#) to meet the needs of statistics users, which your team told us is due to be updated shortly, will provide a channel to communicate to users planned developments for the statistics and allow users to feed in their views.
- As raised in a previous [compliance check of your Land Use Change statistics and Land Use in England](#) we carried out, the team should draw users' attention to details of the [Central Local Information Partnership](#) (CLIP) meetings on the [Knowledge Hub website](#) and consider publishing a summary of the relevant minutes and actions from the CLIP Planning Statistics Subgroup that your team attends, to demonstrate transparency about your approach to engaging with users and to help foster wider user engagement.
- Look to move away from using excel spreadsheets for your production process in order to reduce the chance of any potential manual errors and consider a more automated approach such as Reproducible Analytical Pipelines (RAP). We have published a [review into the use of RAP principles and overcoming barriers](#) which may be useful to your team.

I would like to thank your team for their positive engagement on this review. Please do not hesitate to get in touch if you would like to discuss any aspects of this letter further. I am copying this letter to Andrew Presland and Alexander Reynolds, the responsible statisticians, and Richard Field, head of housing and planning statistics at MHCLG.

Yours sincerely



Mark Pont
Assessment Programme Lead