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31 August 2015

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Dear Chief Planning Officer,

Green Belt protection and intentional unauthorised development

I attach a planning policy statement on Green Belt protection and intentional unauthorised development which comes into force today.

This statement will also be laid in the house as a written ministerial statement when parliament returns in the autumn.

In addition, the government has cancelled the following documents:

- Guide to effective use of enforcement powers – Part 1 (2006)
- Guide to effective use of enforcement powers – Part 2 (2007)
- Designing Gypsy and Traveller Sites – Good Practice Guide (2008)

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Green Belt protection and intentional unauthorised development

This statement sets out changes to national planning policy to make intentional unauthorised development a material consideration, and also to provide stronger protection for the Green Belt, as set out in the manifesto.

The government is concerned about the harm that is caused where the development of land has been undertaken in advance of obtaining planning permission. In such cases, there is no opportunity to appropriately limit or mitigate the harm that has already taken place. Such cases can involve local planning authorities having to take expensive and time consuming enforcement action.

For these reasons, this statement introduces a planning policy to make intentional unauthorised development a material consideration that would be weighed in the determination of planning applications and appeals. This policy applies to all new planning applications and appeals received from 31 August 2015.

The government is particularly concerned about harm that is caused by intentional unauthorised development in the Green Belt.

For this reason the Planning Inspectorate will monitor all appeal decisions involving unauthorised development in the Green Belt to enable the government to assess the implementation of this policy.

In addition we will consider the recovery of a proportion of relevant appeals in the Green Belt for the Secretary of State's decision to enable him to illustrate how he would like his policy to apply in practice. Such appeals will be considered for recovery under the criterion set out in 2008: "There may on occasion be other cases which merit recovery because of the particular circumstances."

After six months we will review the situation to see whether it is delivering our objective of protecting land from intentional unauthorised development.

The National Planning Policy Framework makes clear that most development in the Green Belt is inappropriate and should be approved only in very special circumstances. Consistent with this, this statement sets out the government's policy that, subject to the best interests of the child, personal circumstances and unmet need are unlikely to clearly outweigh harm to the Green Belt and any other harm so as to establish very special circumstances.