

drops off proportionally the further apart potentially synergistic uses are placed from one another.

Sites that are large enough to provide a full range of opportunities to residents and workers, an optimal balance in the relative magnitudes of the respective use types—each tailored to suite the development’s market profile—and blending compatible uses throughout the mixed-use site are essential ingredients for minimizing traffic generation. **U**

JERRY WALTERS is a principal with Fehr & Peers, a transportation consultancy based in Walnut Creek, California, and leader of the firm’s smart growth discipline.

REID EWING is a research professor at the National Center for Smart Growth at the University of Maryland in College Park, Maryland, and he is an academic fellow of the Urban Land Institute.

Greenbelts as Planning Tools

VISHAL PANDEY

Greenbelts can be strengthened as a policy tool and used for strategic planning. Five Scottish cities show evidence of successes—and challenges—in the use of greenbelts.

CHANGING SOCIOECONOMIC lifestyle patterns, an increasing number of households, and more service-oriented industries are increasing the demand for land for expansion in and around cities and towns in Scotland. The Scottish Greenbelt Alliance is fighting the notion that growth-related problems should affect greenbelts, but from a planning perspective that cannot always be accommodated.

Though in theory, greenbelts can never be developed, debates have continued over whether they should be made available for housing or should continue to be preserved. Greenbelt land often has been redesignated and developed. Some of this change in status has been planned, some has been in response to planning permissions, and some has been market led. All of this has resulted in the belief that greenbelt policy is an urban and countryside planning tool that helps contain urban growth.

A greenbelt is designated open land around, beside, or within an urban area protected from development. The idea of a greenbelt—open land encircling a major city and embracing both small- and medium-sized settlements located in the hinterland of a “core” city—is one of the main philosophical and practical underpinnings



GORDON DOUGHTY/CLYDEBELT/SCOTTISH GREEN BELTS ALLIANCE

of British and Scottish town and country planning. The public thinks of greenbelts as land used to protect the countryside from urban development, but, in reality, they are tools for urban settlement and control. They are used in strategic planning and not merely as local “land banks.” They need to be strengthened through regulations and used strategically by planning authorities, councils, and municipalities.

The idea of greenbelts is not new to Scotland. The original concept developed in Britain during the late 19th century when the Garden City Movement introduced the idea of a network of towns and cities, each surrounded by a “green back cloth” of farmland, forests, and parks. This concept was further developed in the 1930s and 1940s by Raymond Unwin and Patrick Abercrombie, whose ideas about a “green girdle” for London, and greenbelts around London, Glasgow, and Edinburgh aimed to provide for the recreational needs of urban dwellers. Greenbelts were first identified in Scotland in 1955 as open areas used to limit the spread of built-up areas and to preserve the character of historic towns. Greenbelts currently exist in Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire, Argyll and Bute, Ayr and Prestwick, Clackmannanshire, Edinburgh and Midlothian, Falkirk and Grangemouth, Glasgow and the Clyde Valley, and Stirling. Three greenbelts for St. Andrews, Dunfermline, and Perth have been approved in principle. There was a greenbelt around Dundee until the 1980s, when it was abandoned and replaced by countryside policies that are specific to geographic areas.

Even though the Scottish population is expected to decline from 5.01 million in 2000 to 4.91 million by 2014, the number of households is likely to increase by 12 percent (260,000) over the same period, from 2.20 million to 2.46 million, which will tend to increase pressure on greenbelts directly or indirectly. It is not clear whether this depletion of greenbelts will occur chiefly in certain greenbelt areas, in particular local authority areas (areas that do not fall under the category of cities and towns but that have greenbelts), or solely in more economically vibrant cities, towns, and communities.

According to the Scottish Planning Policy (SPP) 21, greenbelts are areas of land designated for the purpose of managing the long-

term growth of a town or city. They are to be used to direct development to suitable locations, not to prevent development from happening in general. Greenbelts should

- ▷ maintain the identities of towns by establishing a clear definition of their physical boundaries and preventing coalescence;
- ▷ provide countryside for recreation or institutional purposes of various kinds; and
- ▷ provide landscaped settings for towns.

In March 2002, memorandum NPPG 3—Planning for Housing suggested the following policy on greenbelts:

“The Scottish Executive looks to planning authorities to maintain the effectiveness of existing greenbelts, safeguard the character and amenity of the countryside, and protect the settings of existing settlements. However, in areas where there is demonstrable requirement for additional housing, greenbelt boundaries may be reviewed through the development plan as part of a long-term sustainable settlement strategy. Sites that are no longer making a significant contribution to the purpose of the greenbelt, and which can be readily accessed by a range of transport, may be released for housing development, provided this will not undermine the overall effectiveness and integrity of the greenbelt.”

In 2006, SPP 21 stated the following 20-year objectives for greenbelts:

- ▷ to direct planned growth to the most appropriate locations and to support regeneration;
- ▷ to protect and enhance the character, landscape setting, and identity of towns and cities; and
- ▷ to provide open space within and around towns and cities as part of the wider structure of green space.

Common criticisms of greenbelt policies include their lack of emphasis and clarity on the environment, conservation of heritage sites, guidelines for expansion of housing in existing greenbelt areas, circumstances under which greenbelts can be used, clearly defined boundaries, and the creation of new greenbelts. Another common criticism is that greenbelt policies do not address managing and conserving the actual countryside within greenbelt boundaries.

Following is a look at how the greenbelt containment policy has been implemented in five cities.

Greenbelts in Scotland are credited with helping to maintain the identity of towns and provide a setting for them, preventing coalescence, providing access to the countryside for most people, acting as a check on urban sprawl, improving the quality of town fringe countryside, and safeguarding natural and built heritage for future generations.

City of Edinburgh. The key aims of the Edinburgh greenbelt policy have been to limit city expansion, prevent built-up areas from merging, prevent use of agricultural land for development, provide countryside for recreation, and preserve and enhance the landscape settings of the capital city.

With its booming economy and population growth, Edinburgh is expected to experience major pressure to release greenbelt land for transport, industrial, and housing development. This would lead to increased “leapfrogging” and commuting, but from an economic perspective may lead to development around the green wedges and transport corridors, taking advantage of Edinburgh’s success.

A Vision for Capital Growth: 2020–2040, published March 2006 (in Edinburgh by the City of Edinburgh Council), proposed the need for development corridors through Edinburgh’s greenbelt by splitting it into various zones to enable the capital to accommodate growth. “It was advocated that a ‘finger plan’ of expansion, in which corridors of development unfurl down new and existing public transportation lines, would lead to attracting new businesses and workers. Six potential growth corridors, some of which already have transportation plans in place, would alternate against spokes of large ‘green’ wedges. Each corridor would be planned for housing or industries such as tourism, bioscience, or computer technology and be served by a tram or rail line with several hubs of housing and businesses built around stations.”

Glasgow and the Clyde Valley (G&CV). The key aims of the G&CV greenbelt policy have been to emphasize the importance of urban regeneration, maintain the character of towns including landscape settings, provide for recreational use of the countryside, and support greenbelt development. Glasgow’s major decline in manufacturing resulted in large numbers of available brownfield sites. The council of Glasgow wants to use considerable



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amounts of brownfield land to accommodate future growth. The Glasgow and the Clyde Valley Joint Structure Plan has been fairly successful in containing the greenbelts, but going forward, better cooperation and enforcement will be required to successfully implement a greenbelt policy aimed at integrating land use, transportation, and housing.

Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire. Development pressures in the city of Aberdeen have radically changed the thinking about how its greenbelt policy has to be shaped. Development of the western peripheral road (WPR) around Aberdeen by 2011 would change the dynamics and future long-term sustainability of the city for the better. The *Aberdeen Green Belt Review 2001–2002 (AGBR)* acknowledged that the greenbelt helped

The evolution of the Scottish greenbelt policy has led to more emphasis on urban regeneration and overall sustainable development, creating higher-density development and more compact cities in Scotland.

in preventing sprawl, which in turn helped to regenerate the few brownfield sites available in Aberdeen. A more sustainable pattern of development required focusing on urban brownfields, urban edge areas, transport corridors, and new settlements. Given Aberdeen's population growth, housing crossed over the greenbelt while jobs remained largely in the city. As a result, Aberdeen is investing in city-region transport—hence, the western peripheral road around Aberdeen—across greenbelts as people commute to cities. The Aberdeen Greenbelt Alliance continues to oppose the proposed location of the WPR through a greenbelt.

Dundee. It has been argued that Dundee gave up its greenbelt because of limited demand from the city and lack of growth. The earlier greenbelt policy resulted in creating unnecessary pressure on the city of Dundee, which caused leapfrogging as development

shifted beyond the greenbelt without a purpose.

St. Andrews. A small town with a population of just about 15,000, St. Andrews believed that greenbelts were the best means to protect the town's character, define its physical boundaries, maintain its attractiveness, and preserve the landscape setting from ongoing development. In 1995, the St. Andrews Preservation Trust and the Community Council proposed setting up a greenbelt to prevent the town from inappropriate and continued development. The council proposed establishing the greenbelt in 1997. Many argued that the greenbelt was ineffective because of the topography of St. Andrews (sandwiched between upland and the sea) and also because the greenbelt's insufficient depth would not help prevent leapfrogging.

Greenbelt policies have been used as effective tools for planning in some instances, but have acted as land banks in other instances, and have been misused for short-term unsustainable planning. Development in greenbelts has led to an increase in travel time (due to leapfrogging), more pressure on infrastructure, and an increase in pollution and environmental degradation.

"There is a real need to refresh the greenbelt policy," notes Scottish Communities Minister Margaret Curran, "so that [greenbelts] continue to play a key role in supporting our aspirations for healthy and vibrant cities, towns, and countryside, and in protecting valued green space."

Thus, in the long term, greenbelts are being used as planning tools for urban development and not as land banks as they are sometimes thought to be. Though they have not been managed and implemented too well in the past, in them lie the future of a planned Scotland. **UL**

VISHAL PANDEY completed an MSc in real estate and regeneration at the University of Glasgow in 2007, and currently lives in Dubai.

Car Sharing

LARRY O. HOUSTOUN, JR.

A red, top-down convertible was spotted northbound on the interstate from Center City Philadelphia on a fall day. Its distinguishing feature was a logo on the side that identified it as the property of a nonprofit corporation presently serving more than 55,000 Philadelphians who prefer to use vehicles only when needed.