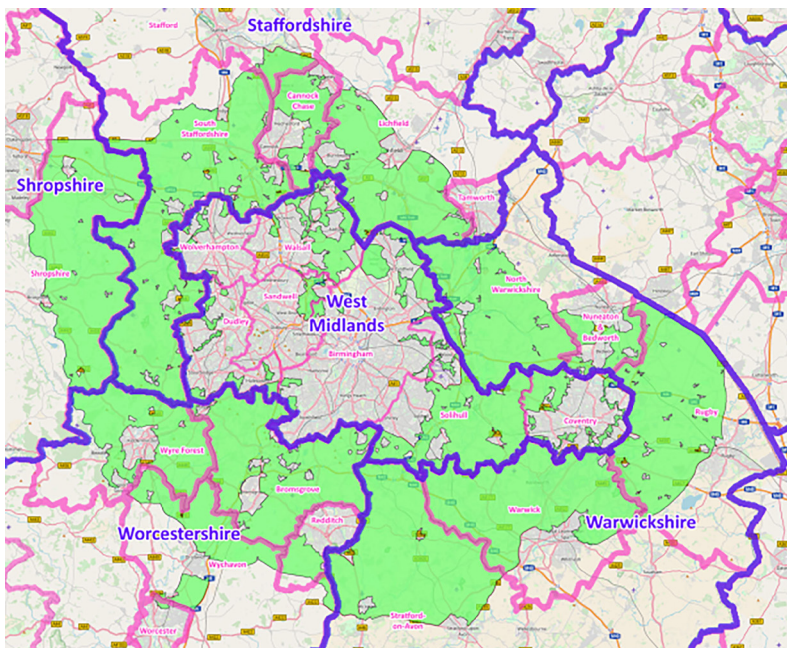


## The West Midlands Green belt



The Countryside Charity  
West Midlands

Campaign to Protect Rural England  
West Midlands Region

Election for Mayor of the West Midlands  
May 2021

Putting right planning for new housing  
a call to election candidates  
April 2021

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The Countryside Charity  
West Midlands



One of our greatest assets, the countryside of the West Midlands, and particularly the Green Belt, is under unprecedented threat.

Under the current system for Local Plans, there is both an over-estimation of housing need (resulting from out-dated figures and artificial 'Uplifts') and under-estimation of supply (particularly from unallocated sites).

This results in artificially high housing requirements which force Local Authorities to allocate housing in unsustainable locations.

And they will impact on the region for decades to come.

The result is a loss of countryside, increased congestion, and higher carbon emissions just at a time when many local authorities are adopting Climate Emergency Strategies.

Most at risk is the Green Belt which the Planning System is meant to protect. The present methods for setting housing numbers runs a high risk of weakening urban regeneration efforts across the West Midlands Combined Authority area, including the pre-COVID goal of delivering 80% of development on Brownfield Land.

On 16 December the Housing Secretary made a clear statement saying that he wanted to see more development in cities because that is where the services are, where land is likely to become available and where development is best located to address the threat of Climate Change.

But the planning system remains stuck. The methods currently required to be used to set housing numbers ignore the huge changes likely to happen to land used for retail and offices in our town and city centres and across the conurbation, which the covid-19 emergency has given added momentum to. Reduced need for retail and office floorspace is likely to free up land now in those uses for new housing and mixed development and so protect the Green Belt.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/changes-to-the-current-planning-system/outcome/government-response-to-the-local-housing-need-proposals-in-changes-to-the-current-planning-system>

And for local communities across the Black Country, Birmingham, Solihull and Coventry it is not an academic issue, it is their countryside which they are having to defend against the well-prepared machine of the development industry.

What the West Midlands urgently needs is:

1. A re-examination of urban capacity for housing
2. A review of the role of town and city centres post COVID
3. Immediate advice to local authorities
4. An urgent review of the need for Green Belt releases.

This issue is now pressing. We urge you to pick up the baton for Sustainable Development and to promise that as the Mayor of the West Midlands you will ensure that the flawed and harmful planning policies local planning authorities are now required to follow on housing are changed to deliver Sustainable Development.

We also ask you to use the powers and status of your elected office to support a change to policies to direct more housing into urban areas, and to end the sustained attack on the countryside around the West Midlands conurbation and Coventry.