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2.1 Green belt in planning practice guidance In March 2014 the Government published new web-based Planning Practice Guidance to accompany and give further detail about the policies in the NPPF. This guidance sets out that unmet housing need in a particular area is unlikely to meet the “very special circumstances” test to justify green belt development: Unmet housing need (including for traveller sites) is unlikely to outweigh the harm to the Green Belt and other harm to constitute the “very special circumstances” justifying inappropriate development on a site within the Green Belt.⁰

1. Purpose of green belt land According to the Government’s National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), the green belt serves five purposes: • to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas; • to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another; • to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment; • to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and • to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.¹ The CPRE (Campaign to Protect Rural England), describes green belts as a buffer between towns, and town and countryside whereby within their boundaries, damaged and derelict land can be improved and nature conservation encouraged.

2.3 Waste facilities on green belt land On 16 October 2014 the then Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government announced that he had “strengthened the policy on planning for waste facilities such as recycling plants making clear that companies and councils looking to build these should first look for suitable sites and areas on brownfield land.” The new wording changes the previous policy, to mean that councils can now no longer give special consideration to locational needs, or wider economic benefits the site could bring, over other considerations, as justification for building waste facilities on green belt land. The Government’s National Planning Policy for Waste was published on 16 October 2014.