



The countryside charity
West Midlands

**FEWER HOUSEHOLDS
IN THE BLACK
COUNTRY
MORE LAND FOR
HOUSING
TIME TO SAVE THE
GREEN BELT**

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Why on earth is the Association of Black Country Councils (ABCA) consulting on taking more housing land out of Walsall's Green Belt when the latest evidence shows there are fewer households in the Black Country and more Brownfield land to build on, Countryside Campaigners are asking?

The recent Census results show the number of households in 2021 in the Black Country is 9,000 less than the figures the Councils are using for their new Black Country Plan and projections suggest this could rise to 15,000 less households over the length of the plan¹.

And that excludes the arbitrary 35% extra homes (5,000) added to Wolverhampton's need by Government just to meet its politically driven national housing target².

At the same time, a Study Commissioned by the West Midlands Combined Authority, which examined old industrial land and town centres, has concluded there is significantly more brownfield land. Based on its samples CPRE estimate this could amount to extra supply of between 5,000 and 12,000 homes³.

This would be consistent with the experience in Birmingham where a Plan was completed in 2017 but between 2017 and 2020, they found additional supply and it increased by 27% (almost 14,000 homes)⁴.

If this is the case the Black Country's claim of a shortfall of 28,000 homes to 2039 could be wildly exaggerated⁵. And if that is the case the current proposed building spree would lead to totally unnecessary Green Belt loss around the Black Country and beyond, increased traffic, adding to carbon emissions and destroying valuable wildlife and landscape areas.

The proposed building spree would not lead to houses being built where they are most needed.

Yet, despite large Public Campaigns against controversial sites, such as the proposed Calderfields Farm Estate directly

next to the Walsall Arboretum⁶, one of the premier parks in the sub-region and a gateway to the countryside, the Councils are not reconsidering their plans but seeking to add even more Green Belt sites in their latest Consultation.

Peter King of West Midlands CPRE said; ‘We understand that Councils need to build new housing to support local people, but the evidence shows they can build those homes and keep the countryside. We know that they are constrained by Government’s politically driven and out-of-date housing estimates, but, with this new evidence, the Councils can show the exceptional circumstances needed for Green Belt release simply do not exist.’

Responses to the latest consultation on whether new sites should be added to the Black Country Plan need to be in by September 2022⁷.

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Notes

- 1. Comparison of CENSUS and ONS Projections for the Black Country Boroughs.**

Population				
2021	Census	ONS2014	ONS2016	ONS2018
Dudley	323,500	321,700	321,80	325,147
Sandwell	341,900	335,600	335,000	333,731
Walsall	284,100	285,400	287,400	289,406
Wolverhampton	263,700	263,100	265,200	267,530
Black Country	1,213,200	1,205,800	1,209,400	1,215,814
Difference to Census		7,400	3,800	-2,614
Household				
2021	Census	ONS2014	ONS2016	ONS2018
Dudley	137,100	134,789	134,682	135,821
Sandwell	130,200	134,074	128,790	128,571
Walsall	112,200	115,825	113,626	113,951
Wolverhampton	105,100	108,673	106,757	107,664
Black Country	484,600	493,361	483,855	486,007
Difference to Census		-8,761	745	-1,407
Household Size				
2021	Census	ONS2014	ONS2016	ONS2018
Dudley	2.36	2.39	2.39	2.39
Sandwell	2.63	2.50	2.60	2.60
Walsall	2.53	2.46	2.53	2.54
Wolverhampton	2.51	2.42	2.48	2.48
Black Country	2.50	2.44	2.50	2.50
Difference to Census		0.06	0.00	0.00

2. The Government Planning Statement of 16 Dec 2020 added 35% more housing to the need in the 20 largest cities/towns in England including Wolverhampton with the aim of making the Standard Methodology of housing calculation meet the 300,000 house per annum across England. The statement says it should come from brownfield sites, but has in fact simply added to the supposed 'unmet need' in the Black Country.

3. The Black Country Plan: Assessment of the Potential for Additional Brownfield Land Development Capacity, Chilmark for the West Midlands Combined Authority March 2022.

The table below sets out the theoretical additional supply based on the Chilmark conclusions (as well as using a more up to date windfall calculation). Because of the potential for double-counting and not all results being replicated, this should be considered an upper limit and we have suggested a range of additional housing.

Theoretical Additional Supply from Chilmark/Windfalls

Additional Potential Housing Supply	From Sample in Chilmark	Overall Potential when Multiplied	
Homes above shops in other Boroughs (extending Wolverhampton approach)	812	3	2436
Tier 1 Homes (Based on West Bromwich sample)	910	4	3640
Tier 2 Homes (Based on Willenhall sample)	230	17	3910
Employment Land Existing Discount to 10%	154		154
Employment Land (Additional)	1130	10% discount	960
5 Year Windfall Average (Not advocated in Chilmark)	1104		1104
Theoretical Potential Total			Up To 12,204

4. **GBBCHMA Housing Supply and Need Position Statement 2020 (Table 6: Change in housing capacity (2011-31) by Local Authority 2017 (SGS baseline) to 2019)**

5. **28,325 given in the Black Country Urban Capacity Review Update, May 2021.**

6. **More details of the Arboretum Site at HOME (greenbelt-arbo.co.uk)**

7. **Details at <https://blackcountryplan.dudley.gov.uk/bcp/>**