

Theme Area

Green Belt – Development – Housing

Plan Section Y – Green Belt

Summary

There is overwhelming support for maintenance of the Green Belt around Balerno.

There is a prevailing view that regeneration should not extend to any expansion of the built environment. Having said that there is also serious concern about the absence of necessary infrastructure. There is also broad agreement that there has to be development then community benefit is the absolute priority.

Local Context

Balerno is to all intents and purpose surrounded by Green Belt which acts as a real buffer limiting urban development.

A Green Belt in Scotland is a designated land-use planning policy tool designed to manage urban growth by protecting open countryside around cities and towns from development. It aims to prevent urban sprawl, direct development toward suitable brownfield sites, and maintain the identity and landscape setting of settlements.

There is a strong presumption against most development within Green Belts, aiming to keep land permanently open. Green Belts provide access to open space, boost biodiversity, aid in climate change mitigation, and protect agricultural land.

There are 11 Green Belts in Scotland surrounding major urban areas, including Glasgow, Edinburgh, Aberdeen, Dundee, Perth, and Stirling.

Edinburgh's green belt was officially established in **1957** to control urban growth, protect farmland, and preserve the setting of the city. It was formally proposed in the 1948 post-war redevelopment plan prepared by Sir Patrick Abercrombie and David Plumstead, designed to limit the expansion of the city into the surrounding countryside.

Over the decades, the boundaries of Edinburgh's Green Belt have been reviewed and altered to accommodate essential developments, such as the city bypass and specific infrastructure projects, while continuing to serve as a strong boundary for Edinburgh's urban area.

The Green Belt in the Balerno area was formally strengthened through a boundary study approved on 11 March 1998, following the Lothian Structure Plan 1994, which aimed to protect the landscape setting of the village. This boundary was further incorporated into the Rural West Edinburgh Local Plan, which was drafted around 1999–2001 and fully adopted in 2006.

The Edinburgh Green Belt Boundary Study approved in March 1998 solidified the inclusion of land surrounding Balerno, and the area was maintained and further clarified in the Rural West Edinburgh Local Plan.


The Green Belt around Balerno is considered to be under threat from ongoing development pressure. Developers have consistently targeted areas around Balerno for housing, often arguing that such development is necessary to meet housing needs in the Edinburgh region.

Balerno Community Council's current position on protecting the green belt is set out in Ch 3 and p11 of 'Our Village, Our Community' 2019

Updated Summary (All Responses Combined)

1. Overwhelming "No Development" Position (Strengthened)

- An even clearer majority across both questions want:
 - **No development on Green Belt**
 - **Little or no additional development overall**
- "None" / "No" responses dominate the regeneration question.

 Key insight:


This is not just opposition to Green Belt development — it reflects **general development fatigue**.

2. Conditional Support for Regeneration (Clear but Minority View)

Where people *do* support regeneration, it is **highly specific and conditional**:

Supported types of regeneration:

- **Brownfield redevelopment (strong support)**
- **Upgrading existing infrastructure**, especially:
 - High school redevelopment (frequently mentioned)
 - Medical/GP facilities
 - Roads and transport
- **Community facilities:**
 - Youth spaces, recreation, event spaces
 - Sports facilities
- **Local economy:**
 - Small business spaces
 - Local shops (less reliance on Scotmid)
 - Employment opportunities

 Clear pattern:

Improve what exists rather than expand outward

3. Housing – Nuanced but Divided

Views evolved slightly with this question:

Continued concerns:

- Overdevelopment already
- Infrastructure cannot cope
- Too many large/high-end homes

But more specific needs identified:

- **Affordable housing**
- **Starter homes for young people**
- **Downsizing options for older residents**
- Interest in:
 - Mixed housing types

- Smaller, eco-friendly homes

👉 Key tension:

- Recognition of **housing need**
- BUT strong resistance to **where and how it is delivered**

4. Strong Preference for “Regeneration Without Expansion”

Recurring themes:

- Refurbish derelict or unused sites
- Improve existing buildings (schools, shops, facilities)
- Enhance public realm:
 - Paths
 - Play parks
 - Streetscape
 - Tree planting

👉 This is **qualitative regeneration**, not quantitative growth.

5. Infrastructure Still the Critical Constraint

Reinforced concerns:

- Roads already congested
- Public transport needs improvement
- Schools and healthcare overstretched

New suggestions include:

- Train station
- Better bus journey times

👉 Clear message:

Infrastructure is a prerequisite, not an afterthought

6. Community Benefit as a Deciding Factor

Where development is accepted, it must:

- Benefit **the whole community**
- Be **inclusive** (not serving a narrow group)
- Deliver tangible improvements

Examples supported:

- Schools
- Medical centres
- Parks
- (Some support for community buildings, but mixed views on church)

7. Environmental Enhancements (Not Just Protection)

New element from this question:

- Interest in **positive environmental regeneration**, e.g.:
 - Tree planting
 - Orchards
 - Better maintenance of green spaces

👉 Shift from “protect” → “protect + enhance”

8. Local Character & Identity

- Strong desire to:
 - Preserve Balerno’s **village feel**
 - Avoid becoming a commuter suburb
 - Concern that regeneration must not:
 - Urbanise the area
 - Damage views or landscape
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9. Continued Distrust in Planning & Delivery

Reinforced concerns:

- Sites left unused (e.g. derelict/idle land)
 - Perceived poor decision-making
 - Lack of follow-through
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Updated Proposals

A. Strategic Direction: “Improve, Don’t Expand”

1. Adopt a “Regeneration First, Expansion Last” Policy
 - Prioritise:
 - Upgrading existing assets
 - Brownfield redevelopment
 - Explicitly limit outward growth into Green Belt
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B. Green Belt Policy (Strengthened)

2. Formal Presumption Against Development
 - Reinforce “no development” stance
 - Exceptions only if ALL conditions met:
 - Essential community infrastructure
 - No viable alternative sites
 - Demonstrable majority local support
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C. Regeneration Priorities (Community-Led)

3. Focus Investment on Existing Infrastructure

Priority areas:

- High school redevelopment
 - Healthcare (GP/dental facilities)
 - Transport improvements
 - Roads and congestion mitigation
4. Upgrade Community Facilities
 - Youth hubs
 - Recreation/sports facilities
 - Event/community spaces
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D. Local Economy & Services

5. Support Small-Scale Commercial Growth

- Spaces for local businesses
 - Improved retail offering (beyond current limited options)
 - Encourage local employment opportunities
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E. Housing Strategy (Targeted, Not Volume-Based)

6. Shift from Volume to Need-Based Housing

Prioritise:

- Affordable housing
- Starter homes
- Downsizing properties (e.g. bungalows)

7. Restrict Large-Scale / High-End Developments

- Avoid further imbalance in housing mix

8. Brownfield-Only Housing Policy (Preferred)

- No Green Belt housing unless exceptional case
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F. Environmental Enhancement

9. Move to “Protect and Enhance” Model

- Tree planting programmes
 - Community orchards
 - Biodiversity improvements
 - Maintenance of existing green spaces
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G. Public Realm Improvements

10. Invest in Everyday Environment

- Paths and walkability
 - Play parks
 - Streetscape and public furniture
 - Maintenance of woodland and open spaces
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H. Infrastructure-First Rule (Reinforced)

11. No Development Without Capacity

- Schools, roads, healthcare must:
 - Exist first, or
 - Be delivered upfront
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I. Community Benefit Test (Tightened)

12. Mandatory “Whole Community Benefit” Requirement

- Must serve broad population
 - Reject niche or exclusive-use developments
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J. Governance & Trust

13. Stronger Oversight of Land Use

- Address stalled/unused sites
- Encourage timely development of approved land

14. Transparent, Inclusive Engagement

- Widely communicated consultation
 - Offline + online engagement
 - Clear explanation of decisions
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Key Overall Insight

Across both questions, the community is **not anti-change**, but clearly:

👉 Anti-expansion, pro-improvement

They support:

- Better schools, healthcare, facilities
- Affordable and appropriate housing
- Environmental enhancement

They oppose:

- Green Belt development
- Large-scale housing growth
- Infrastructure lagging behind development