



**xford Green Belt
Network**

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Editor

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Sir,

It is disingenuous for the City Council to say it has no choice but to either destroy the City's green spaces to accommodate yet more development, or dismantle the Green Belt, a process which, once begun, will be inexorable. It is the habit of expansionists to call each demand their last, but history shows that yielding to one demand only encourages another.

There is another option.

The Green Belt was put in place fifty years ago to prevent exactly the kind of reckless expansion of the City on which City Councillors, abetted by greedy landowners, are now engaged.

It was recognised then, and remains the case now, that the unique intimate character of Oxford will not survive unconstrained expansion, and neither will the individual characters of the surrounding villages survive Oxford sprawling out over them, as unconstrained Birmingham has destroyed its own hinterland.

There is not just a soft cultural and aesthetic value in continuing to constrain Oxford with the Green Belt, important though that is, but a hard commercial value too. Even apart from the income from tourism, one of the primary magnets for enterprise is the character of Oxford and its countryside, which we damage at our peril.

Of course there must be development, as there must be economic growth, and of course some Oxford institutions are a seedbed for innovation.

But these opportunities can and should be realised elsewhere. Instead of increasingly concentrating economic development and wealth in this one place, it would be better for everyone, City included, to spread it around the County.

That way the City Council's expansionist tendencies can continue to be curbed, and Oxford's green spaces and Green Belt both protected, to the benefit of all of us, whether we live in the City or the countryside that surrounds it.

Yours

Michael Tyce, Oxford Green Belt Network