

As requested by ExA please find attached the Green Belt Survey commissioned by CPRE Oxfordshire. Headlines from the survey:

- Over two thirds of respondents claimed to know 'little or nothing' about Green Belts. With one in five respondents saying they'd never heard of the Green Belt.
- Over four in five respondents believed the Green Belt surrounding Oxford should remain open and undeveloped, with nearly two thirds of respondents strongly agreeing with this.
- The most serious threats to Green Belts were largely seen as house building, with other types of developments (incl. factories, offices, warehouses, and out of town shopping centres) and road building also being considered as serious threats to the Green Belt.
- Respondents have mixed feelings about the definition of 'Exceptional Circumstances', with a fairly equal split amongst those who agree and disagree. Although nearly a third of respondents strongly disagree with the statement.
- Feelings towards the building of Solar Farms on Green Belt land are also varied. Respondents were balanced in their feelings for and against Solar Farms on Green Belt land (38% agree vs. 41% disagree), with also nearly 1 in 5 having no clear opinion either way.



**CPRE Oxfordshire**  
**Survey on attitudes towards Green Belts**  
**June 2024**  
**Summary Report**

Prepared for: CPRE Oxfordshire



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June 2024

Contents

Background..... 3

Executive Summary..... 4

Key Findings..... 5

    Awareness of Green Belts..... 6

    Development on Green Belt land..... 8

    Threats to Green Belts..... 10

    Definition of Exceptional Circumstances..... 12

    Solar Panels on Green Belt Land..... 14

Appendices..... 16

    Methodology..... 17

    Sample..... 17

    Analysis..... 18

    Questionnaire..... 19

## Background

This report details the findings of a survey of Oxfordshire residents' attitudes carried out by Touchstone Partners Ltd in May 2024 on behalf of Campaign to Protect Rural England (The Countryside Charity) Oxfordshire branch. The findings are detailed below and a separate document of results has been provided.

A sample of 434 Oxfordshire residents took part in the survey, with 210 people being interviewed face-to-face in street interviews conducted in: Abingdon, Botley, Kidlington, Summertown and Thame. The remaining 224 residents of Oxfordshire were collected via an online survey.

The survey was comprised of five main questions regarding residents' knowledge and attitudes towards the Green Belt and the threats they face. This questionnaire was a repetition of a previous 2015 study conducted for CPRE Oxfordshire, with the addition of questions 4 and 5.

## Executive Summary:

- Over two thirds of respondents claimed to know ‘little or nothing’ about Green Belts. With one in five respondents saying they’d never heard of the Green Belt.
- Over four in five respondents believed the Green Belt surrounding Oxford should remain open and undeveloped, with nearly two thirds of respondents strongly agreeing with this.
- The most serious threats to Green Belts were largely seen as house building, with other types of developments (incl. factories, offices, warehouses, and out of town shopping centres) and road building also being considered as serious threats to the Green Belt.
- Respondents have mixed feelings about the definition of ‘Exceptional Circumstances’, with a fairly equal split amongst those who agree and disagree. Although nearly a third of respondents strongly disagree with the statement.
- Feelings towards the building of Solar Farms on Green Belt land are also varied. Respondents were balanced in their feelings for and against Solar Farms on Green Belt land (38% agree vs. 41% disagree), with also nearly 1 in 5 having no clear opinion either way.

## Key Findings:

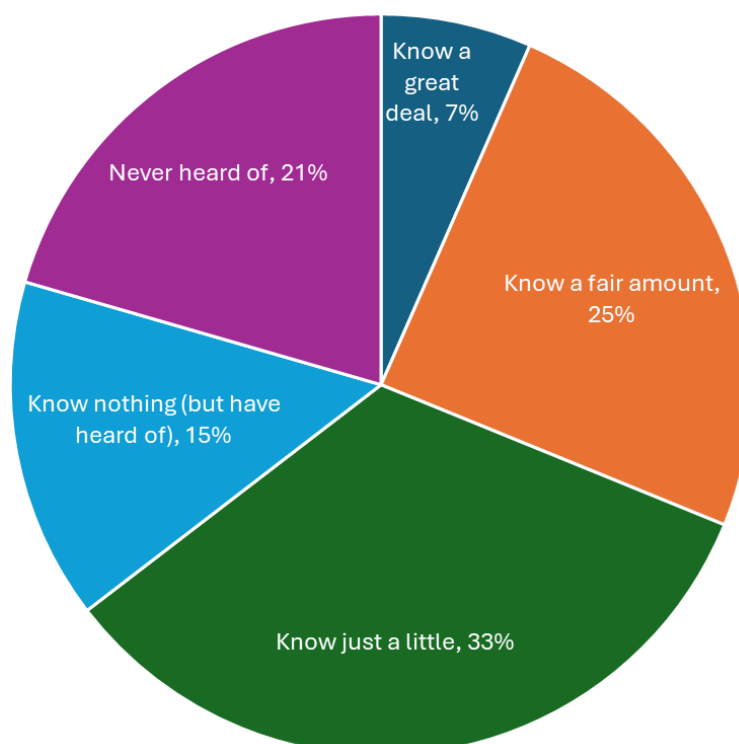
*Results are shown in the form of a percentage (50%) for sample sizes over 100, with fractions also included throughout (e.g. 1 in 5 respondents).*

*Statistically significant results are reported throughout the report, results are reported at a 99% level of confidence (CL) for responses over 25+ responses. Slightly less significant differences at 95% CL were also gathered. Findings in the report referred to as 'significant' are reported at 99% CL level.*

## Awareness of Green Belts

Respondents were asked how much they knew about Green Belts, choosing from a list of 5 options ranging from know a great deal to never heard of.

**Q1. Thinking about Oxford Green Belt, how much, if at all, do you know about Green Belts?**



Base= All Respondents (n=434)

More than two thirds of respondents claimed they knew little to nothing about Green Belts (69%). Majority of people claimed to know just a little (31%) with only a few claiming to know a great deal about the Green Belt (7%). These findings are broadly aligned with the 2015 findings, where 68% of respondents claimed to know little to nothing about Green Belts.

21% of respondents had claimed to 'never heard of' Oxford Green Belt, younger respondents aged 18-34 were significantly more likely to report never hearing of the Green Belt (46%) in comparison to the older age groups. On the whole, over four in five 18-34-year-olds knew little to nothing about the Green Belt, this also fits with the 2015 findings.

Similarly to the previous 2015 report, homeowners were significantly more likely to report knowing a 'great deal/ fair amount' (40%) in comparison to 18% of non-homeowners.

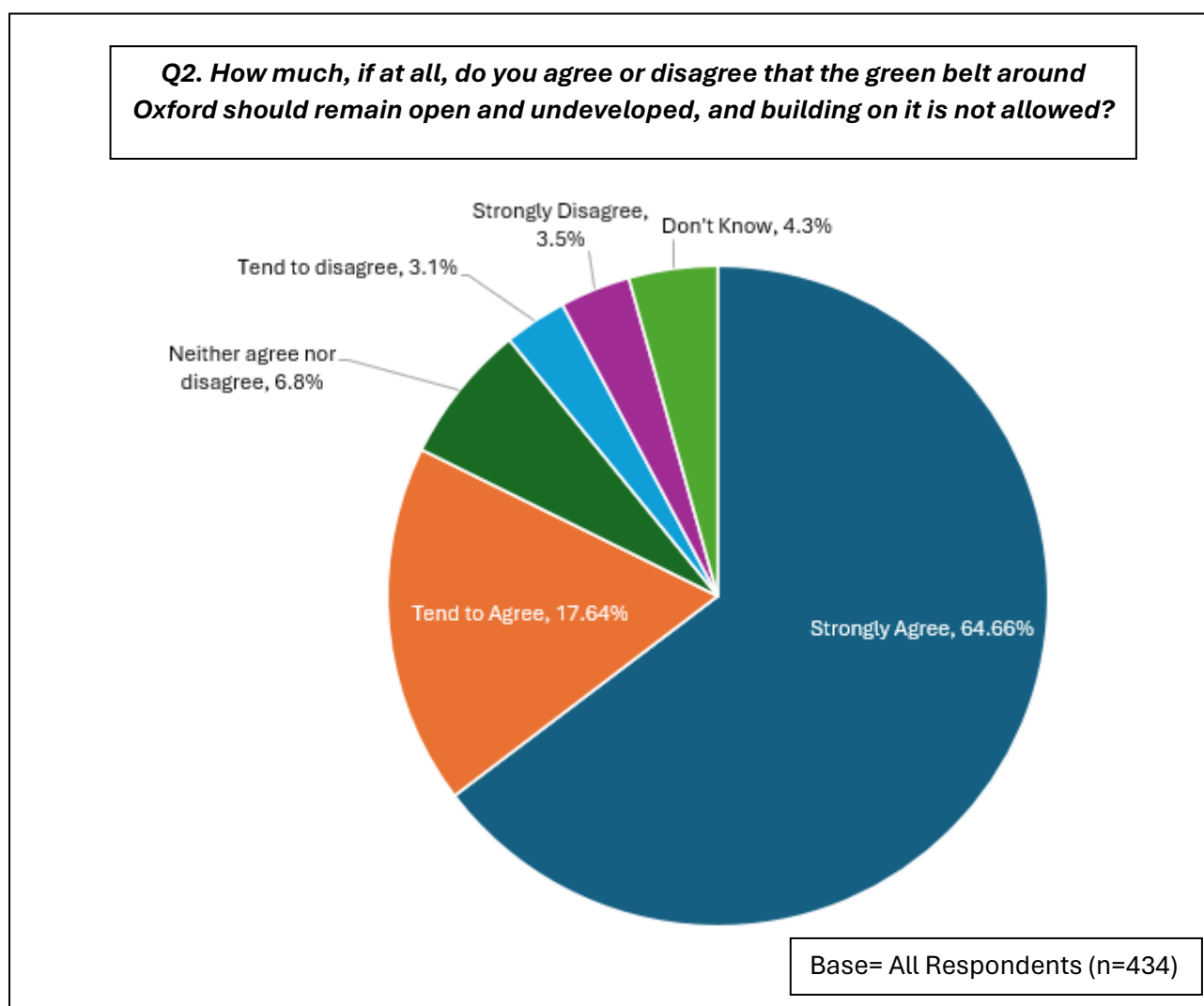


## Development on Green Belt Land

Respondents were given the following definition of Green Belt Land:

*“Green Belts are defined areas of countryside surrounding our largest towns and cities including Oxford where building of houses, out-of-town shopping centres, offices, warehouses and other kinds of development is usually not allowed. According to legislation the key reason green belts exist is to prevent urban areas spreading out across the countryside and eventually joining up. But some would argue that Green Belts are preventing necessary development from happening in the best place.”*

They were asked to what extent they agreed or disagreed with development on the Oxford Green Belt.



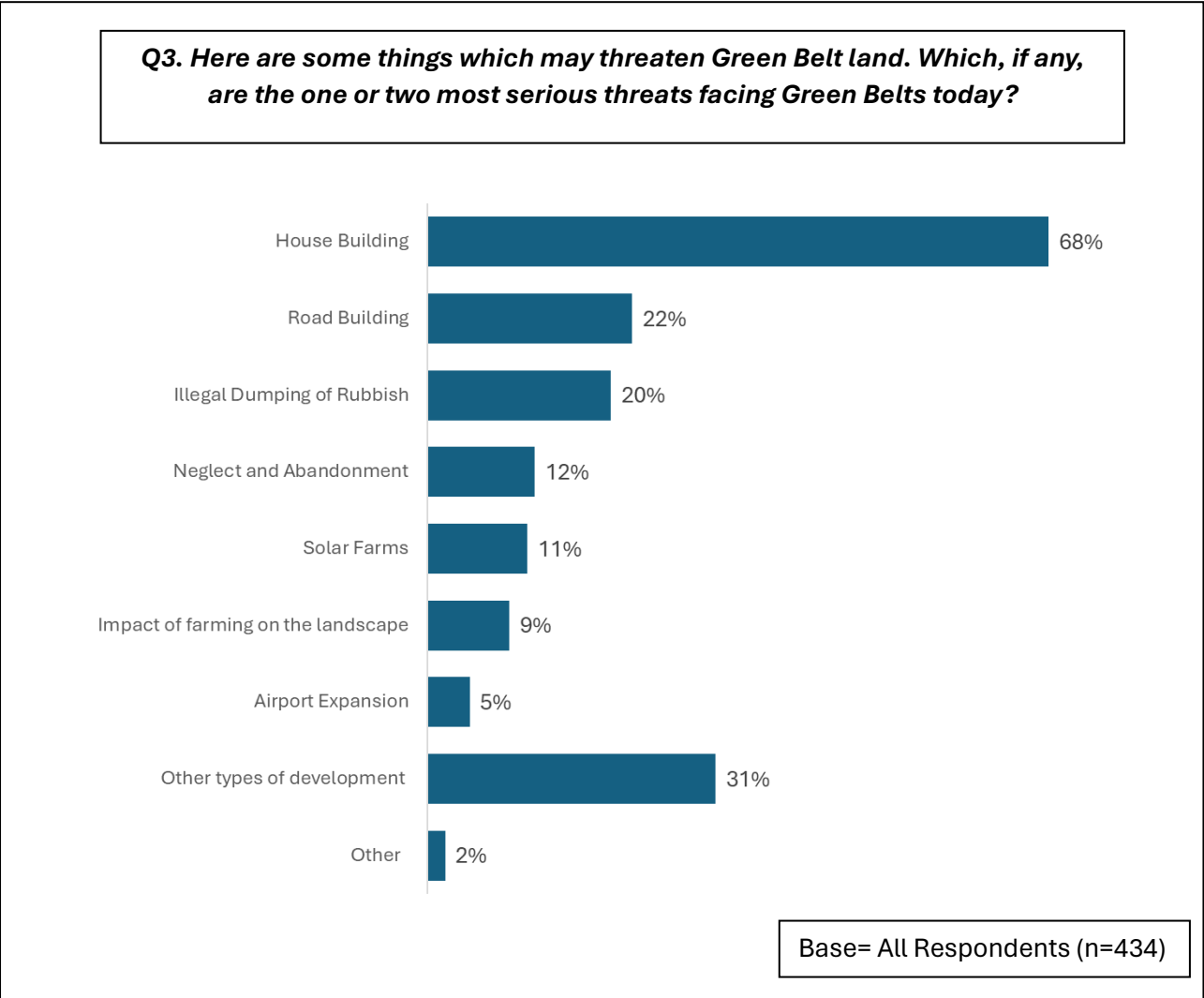
82% of people agreed that the Green Belt surrounding Oxford should remain open and undeveloped, with 65% of these strongly agreeing it should remain open. This is a 16% increase from the 2015 report (48% Strongly Agree). Overall, only 7% disagreed that the Green Belt should remain open and undeveloped, which is broadly in line with the 2015 report.

Those who claimed to possess prior knowledge regarding the Green Belt around Oxford were significantly more likely to agree that it would remain untouched in comparison to those who claimed to know little to nothing (90% vs 79%).

One in ten males disagree that the Green Belt should remain open and undeveloped which is significantly more than females (3%), this again is in accordance with the 2015 results where males were significantly more likely to disagree that the Green Belt should remain open. There were no other significant differences amongst different demographic groups in their attitudes towards the development on the Green Belt.

## Threats to Green Belts

Respondents were presented with a list of threats that Green Belt land could potentially face. (Respondents could pick up to 2 options which they deemed to be the most serious).



Overall, the results for this question are aligned with that of the 2015 report, with the addition of solar panel farms added this time around, which 11% saw as a serious threat.

Over two-thirds of respondents felt that House Building was the biggest threat that Green Belt land could face (68%). This is consistent with the previous 2015 report, where it was also reported two-thirds of respondents (66%) deemed the building of houses as the biggest threat to Green Belt land.

Following on from this, those who have a good amount of knowledge of the Green Belt (81%) in comparison to those who do not (62%) and also do not want development on Green Belt land (74%) versus 31% who are in favour of development on the Green Belt are significantly more likely to think the building of houses are a serious threat.

Furthermore, there are regional differences with respondents living in S/E Oxford and West Oxfordshire being significantly more likely to see house building as a serious threat to the Green Belt.

Similarly, to the previous report, other types of development (e.g. factories, offices, warehouses, and out of town shopping centres) were considered the second most serious threat to the Green Belt (31% in 2024 vs. 29% in 2015).

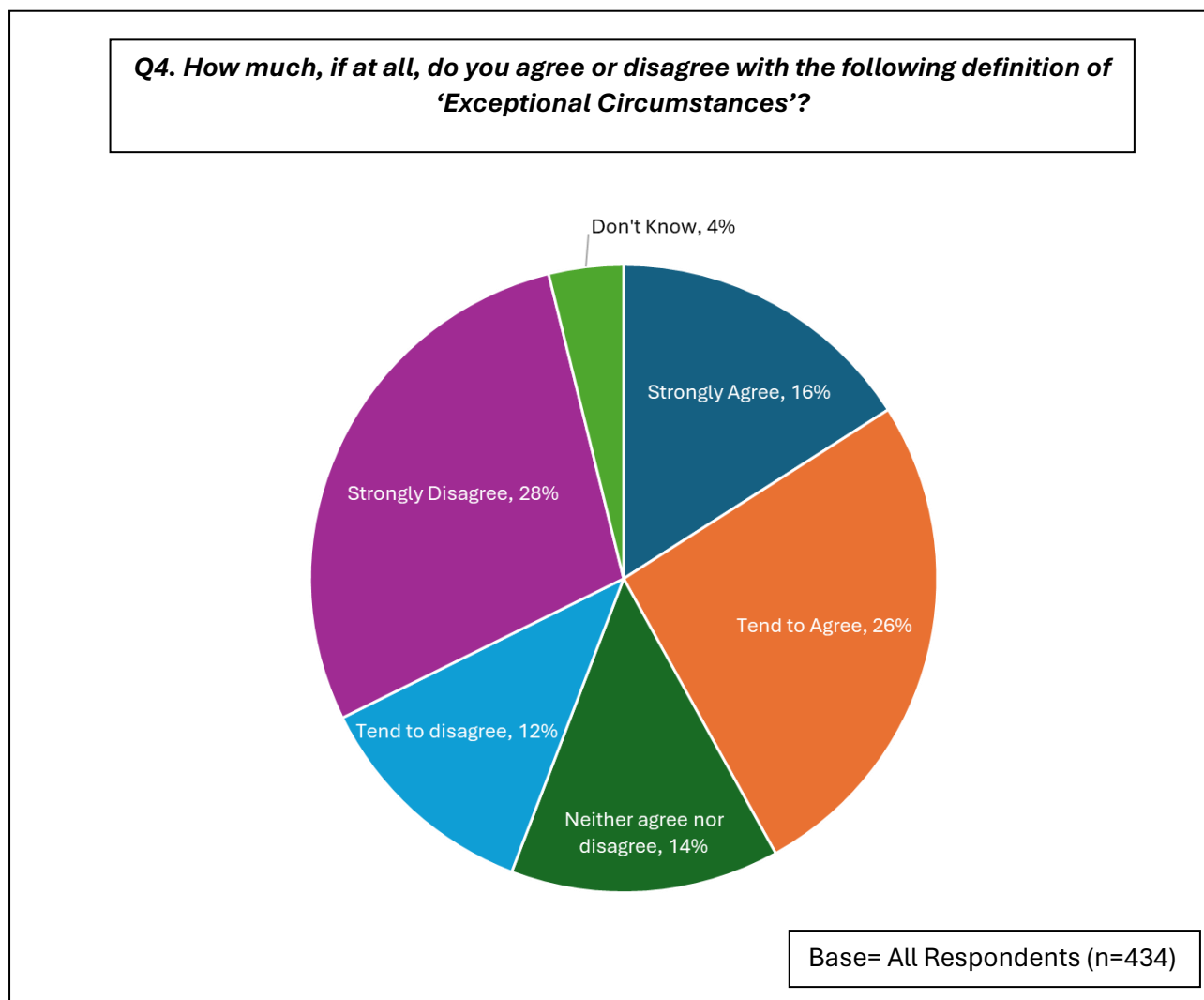
Those who live in villages/rural areas are more likely to think solar farms are a serious threat to Green Belt land (18%) compared to those who live in Urban areas (5%) and towns (7%), this is likely due to the fact they live closer to Green Belt land.

## Exceptional Circumstances

Respondents were presented with a definition of ‘exceptional circumstances’ as follows:

*“A development which is widely accepted as being in the public interest and when it could only achieve its purpose if it were located on Green Belt land”.*

They were asked to give their level of agreement on a scale of strongly agree to strongly disagree.



On the whole, there are mixed results for this question in terms of levels of agreement.

42% of respondents agree with the statement and 40% of respondents disagree with the statement. On closer inspection, those who disagree with the statement are more likely to be those who know a great/fair amount about the Green Belt (50%) compared to those who know little or nothing (36%). Likewise, those who do not want development on the Green Belt (44%) contrasted to those who are neutral/in favour of development on Green Belts. Informal discussions between the interviewers and some of those who

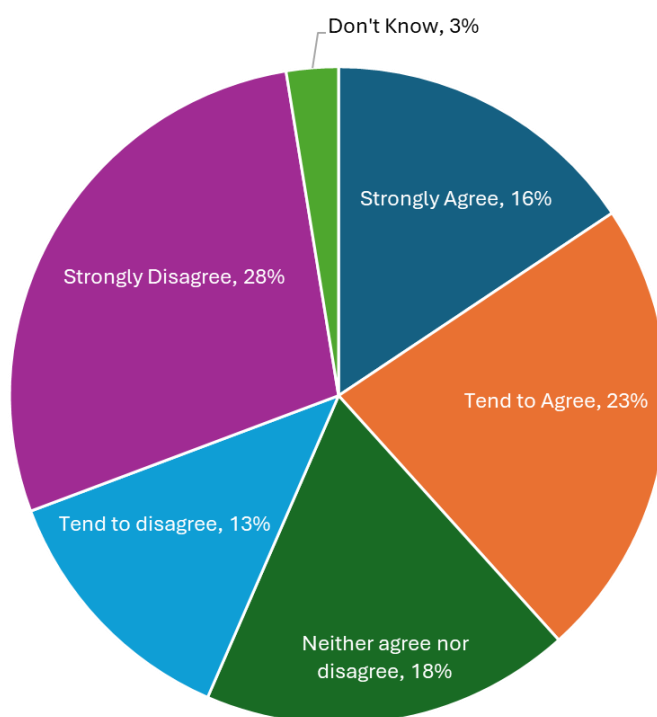
disagreed with this definition would suggest that they felt the policy was not restrictive enough and/or there should be no Green Belt development under any circumstances.

There was also significant variation between both 35-54 year olds (49%) and 55+ year olds (43%), who were more likely to disagree with the exceptional circumstances definition compared to 18-34 years olds (30%).

## SOLAR FARMS ON GREEN BELT LAND

Respondents were presented with a question regarding the circumstances for building Solar Farms on Green Belt land. They were asked to what extent do they agree or disagree with the building of Solar Farms on Green Belt land.

**Q5. Current guidelines state that very special circumstances need to be demonstrated if Solar Farms are to be built on Green Belt land. How much, if at all, do you agree or disagree with the building of Solar Farms on Green Belt land given that solar energy is deemed essential, yet it's not a necessity for these projects to be situated within the Green Belt?**



Base= All Respondents (n=434)

Similarly, to the previous question, there are fairly high levels of disagreement. The nature of the question may have caused conflict between those who believe Solar Farms are essential for renewable energy and those who believe the Green Belt should be protected and remain undeveloped. 41% of respondents disagreed with the building of Solar Farms on Green Belt land, with 28% of these strongly disagreeing. On closer inspection, those who were significantly more likely to disagree with the statement are those who know a great deal/fair amount about the Green Belt in comparison to those who know little or nothing (56% vs 34%).

When looking at age sub-groups, just under half of respondents aged 18-34 agreed with the building of Solar Farms on Green Belt land, this is significantly higher compared to 35-54 year-olds (30%) and those aged 55 and over (39%).

Furthermore, those who are homeowners are nearly 20% significantly more likely to strongly disagree with the building of Solar Farms on Green Belt land (36%) in comparison to those who do not own a home outright (18%).



## **APPENDICES**

*Methodology*

*Sample*

*Analysis*

*Questionnaire*

## Methodology

The questions included in this Green Belt study replicated that of the 2015 Survey conducted for CPRE Oxfordshire. There were two additional questions added regarding ‘exceptional circumstances’ and solar farms. Demographic data was also collected to match the 2015 survey including: age, gender, SEG, habitation, postcode and homeownership.

In May 2024 (15<sup>th</sup>-30<sup>th</sup> May), we completed 210 face-to-face interviews in Oxford and surrounding areas. These covered off Abingdon (n=41), Botley (n=48), Kidlington (n=40), Summertown (n=41) and Thame (n=39). These interviews were carried out over a two-week period varying by day (week day/weekend) and time.

The online survey was also completed in May 2024 and recruited via social media platforms in line with the Oxfordshire population (n=224).

## Sample

There were 434 responses to the survey in total: 224 respondents from the online panel, which were recruited using a niche sampling method and 210 respondents from the face-to-face survey. Sample quotas were set in line with Oxfordshire population statistics (<http://insight.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/> 2022), based on age and gender.

	<i>% in final sample</i>
Male	45%
Female	49%
Other Gender (incl. Transgender, non-binary, prefer not to say)	6%
Aged 18-34	33%
Aged 35-54	31%
Aged 55+	37%
Lives in an urban area [self-defined]	19%
Lives in a suburban area [self-defined]	21%
Lives in a town [self-defined]	29%
Lives in a village or predominantly rural area [self-defined]	31%
Owns own home	58%
Doesn't own a home outright/with mortgage	42%
ABC1	54%
C2DE	46%
Lives in Oxford (OX1-OX4)	39%
Lives in postcode adjacent to Oxford (OX5, 13, 14, 29, 33, 44)	28%
Lives further out (Other OX postcodes, RG8, SN7, HP11, HP18, HP22)	33%

## Analysis

All data was cleaned throughout, respondents were removed if they failed quality controls.

Results for the sub-groups above have been highlighted in the report where they are statistically significantly different (at 99% CL) between sub-groups where there are 25+ respondents.

There were quotas set out for both the online and face-to-face interviews to be representative of the Oxfordshire population. However, there were slight differences in achieved responses vs target quotas. Corrective weighting was applied (see below weights).

Group	Achieved Response	Target Response	Weight Applied
Males 18-34 y/o	66	64	0.991
Males 35-54 y/o	62	60	0.989
Males 55+ y/o	85	68	0.818
Females 18-34 y/o	69	64	0.948
Females 35-54 y/o	58	64	1.128
Females 55+ y/o	69	80	1.185
Other gender (Trans, non-binary + prefer not to say)	25	-	1.000

[https://public.tableau.com/views/OxfordshirePopulationEstimatesONS/OxfordshirePopulationEstimatesONS?embed=y:display\\_count=no&:showVizHome=no](https://public.tableau.com/views/OxfordshirePopulationEstimatesONS/OxfordshirePopulationEstimatesONS?embed=y:display_count=no&:showVizHome=no)

## **Questionnaire**

Intro: "Hello. I'm working for an independent research company, Touchstone Partners Ltd. We're doing a survey to find out about your opinions on the local area."

### **QS. Screening Question:**

Can I just check, do you live in Oxfordshire?

1. Yes (Continue)
2. No (Thank you and CLOSE)

### **Q1. Thinking about the Oxford Green Belt, how much, if at all, do you know about Green Belts?**

1. Know a great deal
2. Know a fair amount
3. Know just a little
4. Know nothing (but have heard of)
5. Never heard of

### **Q2. SHOWCARD- Show to respondent on tablet**

"Green Belts are defined areas of countryside surrounding our largest towns and cities including Oxford where building of houses, out-of-town shopping centres, offices, warehouses and other kinds of development is usually not allowed. According to legislation the key reason green belts exist is to prevent urban areas spreading out across the countryside and eventually joining up. But some would argue that Green Belts are preventing necessary development from happening in the best place."

**How much, if at all, do you agree or disagree that the Green Belt around Oxford should remain open and undeveloped, and building on it not allowed?**

1. Strongly Agree
2. Tend to Agree
3. Neither agree nor disagree
4. Tend to Disagree
5. Strongly Disagree
6. Don't Know

### **Q3. Here are some things which may threaten Green Belt land. Which, if any, are the one or two most serious threats facing Green Belts today? (MAX 2 RESPONSES)**

1. Impact of farming on the landscape
2. Neglect and abandonment
3. House building
4. Road building
5. Airport expansion
6. Solar Farms
7. Other types of development (e.g. factories, offices, warehouses, and out of town shopping centres)
8. Illegal dumping of rubbish
9. Don't know

10. Other (please specify)

11. No, Green Belts are not under threat (*Option for street interview only*)

**Q4. Legislation states that our local authorities should only allow development on Green Belt land in exceptional circumstances. How much, if at all, do you agree or disagree with the following definition of 'Exceptional Circumstances'?**

**READ OUT: "A development which is widely accepted as being in the public interest and when it could only achieve its purpose if it were located on Green Belt land."**

1. Strongly Agree
2. Tend to Agree
3. Neither agree nor disagree
4. Tend to Disagree
5. Strongly Disagree
6. Don't Know

**Q5. Current guidelines state that very special circumstances need to be demonstrated if Solar Farms are to be built on Green Belt land. How much, if at all, do you agree or disagree with the building of Solar Farms on Green Belt land given that solar energy is deemed essential, yet it's not a necessity for these projects to be situated within the Green Belt?**

1. Strongly Agree
2. Tend to Agree
3. Neither agree nor disagree
4. Tend to Disagree
5. Strongly Disagree
6. Don't Know

## **DEMOGRAPHICS**

**Finally we'd like to ask some questions about you.**

**QA. Are you...**

1. Female
2. Male
3. Transgender
4. Non-Binary
5. Prefer not to say
6. Prefer to self-describe: (please write in)

**QB. How old are you?**

1. 18-24
2. 25-34
3. 35-44
4. 45-54
5. 55-64
6. 65-74
7. 75+

8. Refused (*Option for street interview only*)

**QC. How would you describe the area where you live?**

1. In an urban area
2. In a suburban area
3. In a town
4. In a village or predominantly rural area
5. Don't know/ refused (*Option for street interview only*)

**QD. Do you own your own home (either outright or with a mortgage)?**

1. Yes
2. No
3. Refused (*Option for street interview only*)

**QE. For classification purposes, could you tell us what the profession of the chief income earner in your household is?**

*That's the person with the highest income, whether that be from employment, pensions, state benefits, investments or other sources.*

1. Higher managerial/ professional/ administrative (e.g. established doctor, solicitor, board director in a large organisation (200+ employees, top level civil servant/public service employee) **(CODE A)**
2. Intermediate managerial/ professional/ administrative (e.g. newly qualified (under 3 years) doctor, solicitor, board director small organisation, middle manager in a large organisation, principal officer in civil service/local government). **(CODE B)**
3. Supervisory or clerical/junior managerial/ professional/ administrative (e.g. Office worker, student doctor, foreman with 25+ employees, salesperson etc) **(CODE C1)**
4. Student **(CODE E)**
5. Skilled manual worker (e.g. Skilled bricklayer, carpenter, plumber, painter, Bus/ambulance driver, HGV driver, pub/bar worker etc) **(CODE C2)**
6. Semi or unskilled manual worker (e.g. Manual workers, all apprentices to be skilled trades, caretaker, park keeper, non-HGV driver, shop assistant) **(CODE D)**
7. Casual worker – not in permanent employment **(CODE E)**
8. Housewife/ Homemaker **(CODE E)**
9. Retired and living on state pension **(CODE E)**
10. Unemployed or not working due to long-term sickness **(CODE E)**
11. Full-time carer of other household member **(CODE E)**

**QF. Respondent's postcode (write in- first half of postcode only):**

*(This will be used for analysis purposes only)*

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**QG. Respondents name and telephone number (street interview only)**

*(For quality control purposes only)*

**QH. Record Interview Location**

1. Abingdon
2. Botley
3. Kidlington
4. Summertown
5. Thame

**THANK YOU AND CLOSE.**