



CPRE's policy on brownfield land

CPRE's position

Land is a precious resource, and must be used wisely. Much progress has been made in recent years in making use of previously developed land, or 'brownfield sites', for new development. Around three quarters of new homes are now built on brownfield sites. Overall, this is good news for the countryside, and good news for urban areas which have benefited from regeneration. CPRE supports a 'brownfield first, greenfield last' strategy as a general principle. However, just because a site is brownfield does not mean it should necessarily be developed.

Key brownfield land issues

Wherever possible, it is generally better to use already developed urban land and buildings than to build on green fields. England currently has an estimated 63,000 hectares of previously developed land available for development, nearly half of it suitable for housing. Even at a relatively low density, this is enough for more than a million homes. Around 700,000 homes are currently empty; many more buildings are under-used. It usually takes less energy and fewer resources to refurbish existing buildings than to build new ones. As land and buildings are continually falling out of use, brownfield sites provide a renewable resource. CPRE believes we need to tap this potential while protecting the character and quality of existing residential areas.

Key issues for the countryside

It makes social, environmental and economic sense for most new development to occur in built-up areas, where infrastructure and services are already in place, or can easily be provided, rather than in the countryside. Brownfield development is essential for urban regeneration. Done well, it brings homes, jobs and services closer together, reduces car dependence and enhances communities. However, not all previously developed sites should be considered suitable for development. Land important for wildlife, historically significant or that provides valuable open space should be safeguarded from inappropriate development.

What CPRE wants

- A 'brownfield first, greenfield last' approach – to protect the countryside and regenerate urban areas.
- Removal of obstacles to brownfield development - financial support for remediating contaminated

land and recognition in policy of the important role played by windfall sites.

- A plan-led approach which responds to the needs and aspirations of local communities.
- Better use of existing buildings – reduction of VAT on building repairs, which deters responsible maintenance and favours demolition and development on greenfields over building re-use and refurbishment.
- Higher densities and mixed use development to secure efficient use of land and reduce the need to travel.
- Effective monitoring and controls over inappropriate development in gardens.
- Protection for urban open spaces, wildlife habitats and sites of historic importance.
- Local brownfield strategies to tackle brownfield blight, identify opportunities for regeneration and ways to overcome obstacles to brownfield development.
- A national target of at least 75% of residential development and 85% of commercial development to take place on brownfield sites.

What people can do

1. Find out what your local authority is doing to identify brownfield sites of all sizes and types, and whether it has a brownfield strategy and empty properties strategy in place.
2. Respond to planning consultations in your area calling for brownfield land to be given priority when allocating land for development
3. Lobby the Government to allow planning authorities to take windfall sites into account when deciding how much land to allocate for development.