Advantages and disadvantages of greenfield and brownfield sites

Source: “Issues relating to Greenfield and Brownfield Sites in the UK” by Paul Warburton, *Geofile Online*, No. 421,

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| Greenfield sites | Brownfield sites |
| Greenfield sites have the obviousadvantage of being undeveloped. Thereare no or few buildings to demolish, andthere are no old roads or industrial debristo remove. Such sites are generallycheaper to develop | Government policy is increasinglyfavouring the use of brownfield sites inorder to prevent further loss of rural landand countryside |
| Since at least the 1920s the pattern ofdemand has largely been for new housingto be located in rural or suburban settings.Young families and many retired peoplehave sought the peace and quiet of a morerural location. For a long time there hasbeen an image of the city centre as aplace that is less safe, where there ispollution, congestion, noise, crime and insome cases a physically deterioratingenvironment. | Many urban brownfield sites have becomevacant because they are no longer suitedto their previous industrial uses –industries have changed, moved elsewhereor gone out of business. That being so, itis desirable that alternative use is made ofthese sites, rather than allowing them tostand vacant. |
| Pressure to develop greenfield sites hasbeen part of a pattern of urban change andwhere we choose to live.New out-of-town shopping and leisurecentres, light industrial estates and officedevelopments cater largely for the moremobile and affluent suburban and ruralpopulation. | It is desirable that people should be ableto live close to their places of work,which are usually in town and citycentres. This will relieve congestion onthe roads and transport infrastructuregenerally. |
| It can be harder to obtain planningpermission to develop greenfield land. Atthe edge of a town or city it is likely thatrural land will be part of a green beltwith accompanying restrictions ondevelopment. Rural populations,particularly in suburbanised villages, aregenerally well educated and articulate andwill be likely to oppose newdevelopments that could adversely affecttheir lifestyle. | Some people prefer to live in an urbanenvironment, with its nightlife, culturalfacilities, shops, restaurants, libraries, etc. |
| Environmental standards are usually easierfor developers to comply with forgreenfield than brownfield sites – manybrownfield sites have been exposed tosome level of industrial pollution duringtheir previous usage. | Concern has been expressed aboutpossible dangers where houses have beenbuilt on sites that were formerly dumpsfor waste and were contaminated. Suchland may be cheap, but could pose risksto health and safety |
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