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 obvious  advantage of being undeveloped. There  are no or few buildings to demolish, and  there are no old roads or industrial debris  to remove. Such sites are generally  cheaper to develop | Government policy is increasingly  favouring the use of brownfield sites in  order to prevent further loss of rural land  and countryside |
| Since at least the 1920s the pattern of  demand has largely been for new housing  to be located in rural or suburban settings.  Young families and many retired people  have sought the peace and quiet of a more  rural location. For a long time there has  been an image of the city centre as a  place that is less safe, where there is  pollution, congestion, noise, crime and in  some cases a physically deteriorating  environment. | Many urban brownfield sites have become  vacant because they are no longer suited  to their previous industrial uses –  industries have changed, moved elsewhere  or gone out of business. That being so, it  is desirable that alternative use is made of  these sites, rather than allowing them to  stand vacant. |
| Pressure to develop greenfield sites has  been part of a pattern of urban change and  where we choose to live.  New out-of-town shopping and leisure  centres, light industrial estates and office  developments cater largely for the more  mobile and affluent suburban and rural  population. | It is desirable that people should be able  to live close to their places of work,  which are usually in town and city  centres. This will relieve congestion on  the roads and transport infrastructure  generally. |
| It can be harder to obtain planning  permission to develop greenfield land. At  the edge of a town or city it is likely that  rural land will be part of a green belt  with accompanying restrictions on  development. Rural populations,  particularly in suburbanised villages, are  generally well educated and articulate and  will be likely to oppose new  developments that could adversely affect  their lifestyle. | Some people prefer to live in an urban  environment, with its nightlife, cultural  facilities, shops, restaurants, libraries, etc. |
| Environmental standards are usually easier  for developers to comply with for  greenfield than brownfield sites – many  brownfield sites have been exposed to  some level of industrial pollution during  their previous usage. | Concern has been expressed about  possible dangers where houses have been  built on sites that were formerly dumps  for waste and were contaminated. Such  land may be cheap, but could pose risks  to health and safety |
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