

# greenfield, brownfield, and the green belt

## Brownfield Vs Greenfield



VS.



This discussion has come about chiefly due to the chronic housing shortage in Britain which has led to ballooning house prices. There is huge pressure upon governments to rectify this situation, and they must consider carefully their approach. Currently our government has set a target of 60% of new houses being built on brownfield sites.

### Brownfield

Areas of land that have been built on previously, but are now vacant or in need of redevelopment.

- + Doesn't consume greenfield spaces
- + Vacant sites are ugly and valuable
- + Prevents urban sprawl
- + Restricts the need to commute, relieving congestion and pollution
- + Positive, sustainable approach; reuse and recycle
- + Trend for gentrification & reurbanisation at present
- + Promotes urban regeneration, positive multiplier effect
- Possible danger of contaminated site
- More expensive, demolition may be required, existing foundations and piping can prove hard
- Funding for brownfield sites has recently been removed as a EU legislative idiocy prohibits funding of urban regeneration schemes.

### Greenfield

Areas of land that have never been used for construction, areas of natural, often grassed, land.

- + Nothing to demolish, and no existing issues
- + Cheaper to develop
- + Demand for rural/suburban housing
- + Easier to comply with environmental standards
- + Profitable for local farmers to sell their land on, and they have a right to do so
- Harder to obtain planning permission
- No amenities in place
- Access may be an issue
- Promotes urban sprawl
- Lack of green space in cities anyway

## Greenbelt

### It is necessary to contain urban areas because:

- Very large cities have numerous associated problems, including pollution, congestion, overcrowding, core/periphery disparity and crime.
- Change in cities is slow, due to the scarcity of cheap land and the multiple layers of bureaucracy
- Decentralisation occurs if urban areas are allowed to expand, with science parks and out of town shopping centres sprawling.

### McLaren factory, Woking, Surrey

- Previously located in a business park
- McLaren wanted a bigger site which would allow everything (design to manufacture) to occur in one place
- After many years of haranguing, they got their greenbelt site

#### Social

- + The existing factory was nearby, so building the plant in this location preserved the employment of the area and allowed the plant to function with minimum disruption. There is also a visitor and learning centre at the plant.
- Many people felt that the development, encroaching upon the greenbelt, constituted a triumph of commercial pressure or even bribery over government legislation

#### Environmental

- + The designers took a great deal of time making the development sustainable, using solar panels and natural light extensively. It's fluid shape with grass roofs and a small lake made it attractive from the air. It won the Stirling prize of 2005 for its beauty.
- Despite this mitigation, the construction was still a greenfield one, disrupting local ecosystems extensively

#### Economic

- + The plant provides a huge number of jobs as well as attracting tourists. A positive multiplier effect could ensue. Designers and manufacturers could work side by side in a more efficient manner. Economic loss should the company have moved elsewhere.

### Greenbelt policy

- Introduced in 1955 to prevent urban sprawl
- Greenbelt acts to define edges of urban areas
- Just 12% of England is green land
- Development must not take place unless under 'exceptional circumstances'
- But people sometimes 'leapfrog' the greenbelt and simply build outside of it.

**'I want to ensure that we achieve our twin aims of urban renaissance and that we hand a green and pleasant land onto future generations'**

**John Prescott**

### Impact of The Greenbelt policy

#### Within the belt

- No development, so no speculation
- Existing settlements are protected, unlikely to change
- Very desirable for residences, so housing prices are high
- This leads to depopulation in some cases
- Still a few developments; golf courses, landfills etc.

#### Inside the greenbelt (I.E the city)

- Finite amounts of land, brownfield development more likely
- Land prices rise due to pressure for brownfield sites
- Building density and vertical expansion increase, urban greenfield sites become vulnerable

#### Outside the belt

- Strict controls needed to prevent leapfrogging
- Commuter housing, causing long travelling times
- Demand for public transport soars