



The countryside charity Hampshire

VERSION 1 Sept 2021

Position Statement

Effective Use of Land

CPRE Issue

CPRE strongly supports the use of Previously Developed Land (brownfield land) for new development. Brownfield land is any piece of land that has previously seen development – from car parks to factories to office buildings. While a handful of these sites are valued by local communities and wildlife, the vast majority are wasted space – derelict and unused, ugly and available for regeneration. Contrary to what is often claimed, brownfield land is a renewable resource – as our towns and cities change, so does our use of land, meaning new brownfield land comes forward all the time.

Much brownfield land is located within towns and cities, often in locations to make the most of existing infrastructure, transport and services, and where most people want to live. Building on brownfield land presents opportunity to simultaneously remove local eyesores and breathe new life into urban areas needing regeneration. Done well, it brings homes, jobs and services closer together, reduces car dependence, and enhances communities.

The amount of land in England is finite and limited for the size of population. So, CPRE strongly advocates a brownfield first approach to development in order to recycle land and make the most effective use of what is available. By prioritising the use of suitable brownfield sites over building on our countryside, the homes needed can be built in the places they are needed while at the same time saving the countryside.

Brownfield sites offer the potential for higher density development based around public transport hubs, local services and walking and cycling, adding to the effective use of land. This needn't mean tower blocks in market towns. Terraced housing and mansion blocks can provide high density homes and preserve the unique character of towns. In addition, Brownfield sites can contribute to other community purposes such as recreation, green infrastructure corridors or allotments.



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Guidance

Chapter 11 of NPPF 2019 has quite extensive guidance on making effective use of land in the context of sustainable development and minimising the use of greenfield sites. It says that strategic policies in local plans should set out a clear strategy for accommodating housing requirements in a way that makes as much use as possible of previously developed land. Specific routes to that aim which planning policies should pursue are set out, and these are reflected in the sample policy below.

Planning policies should also pursue efficient use of land and optimising use of land by through higher densities, where appropriate.

Local Planning Authorities are required to keep Brownfield Registers and update them annually, but these tend to rely on sites put forward by developers. CPRE can encourage town and parish councils, and the general public, to identify available sites. However, a comprehensive search of the area for available previously developed land requires an Urban Capacity Assessment or similar.

Local planning authorities should take a proactive role in identifying and helping to bring forward land that may be suitable for meeting development needs, including suitable sites on brownfield registers or held in public ownership, using the full range of powers available to them. This should include identifying opportunities to facilitate land assembly, supported where necessary by compulsory purchase powers, where this can help to bring more land forward for meeting development needs and/or secure better development outcomes

Sample Policy

Making effective use of land

The most effective use of land for new homes and other uses will be promoted by:

- a) giving substantial weight to the value of using suitable brownfield land, and supporting appropriate opportunities to remediate despoiled, degraded, derelict, contaminated and unstable land
- b) promoting and supporting the development of under-utilised land and buildings
- c). supporting opportunities to use the airspace above existing residential and commercial premises where this would be consistent with local character and distinctiveness



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- d) encouraging multiple benefits from both urban and rural land through mixed use schemes
- e) reallocating land for a more deliverable use to meet identified needs where there is no reasonable prospect of an application coming forward for a use allocated in this Plan, and
- f) refusing development which does not propose densities designed to make optimal use of the potential of each site having regard to the constraints of the individual site and local character and distinctiveness

The Council will work proactively to promote the most effective use of land by:

- a). identifying suitable sites on brownfield registers, and on land held in public ownership, along with opportunities to facilitate land assembly
- b) preparing and keeping updated an Urban Capacity Assessment
- c). use of minimum density standards for town centres that are well served by public transport designed to achieve a significant uplift in the average density of residential development within these areas where local character and distinctiveness permit

NB In considering the wording of individual policies in Local Plans, it is important to bear in mind that Local Plans must be looked at as a whole. This means, for example, that policies for the protection of landscape must be applied when considering each and every planning application; and accordingly, there is generally no need for other policies to refer specifically to landscape matters.