

Report shows there is space for at least 1 million new homes on brownfield sites in England

November 24 2014

A new report - From Wasted Spaces to Living Spaces: the Availability of Brownfield Land for Housing Development in England - prepared for the Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE) by a research team from the University of the West of England (UWE Bristol) shows that there is potential for at least one million new homes on brownfield sites in England.

This is one of the most in-depth analyses of brownfield land availability that has been done, and the report highlights that 40% of this land already has planning permission for development.

In the report foreword leading architect Richard Rogers says that although political parties are paying lip service to the concept of 'brownfield first', 'politicians of all stripes have been talking about new towns and garden cities, threatening a return to the mistakes of the past'. CPRE favours the retrofitting of cities as a more socially beneficial and energy efficient approach to tackling the housing crisis.

Dr Danni Sinnett, Professor Katie Williams and Dr Laurence Carmichael from UWE Bristol are the report authors. Dr Sinnett says, "We compiled data submitted by local authorities to the National Land Use Database of Previously Developed Land (NLUD- PDL) from 2010.

"Our research findings have identified that councils have capacity for at

least 1 million [new homes](#) on brownfield land including sites that already have planning permission for 405,000 homes. 550,000 homes could be built across England on suitable land that is currently derelict and vacant; of these, 146,000 could be located in London."

The data also shows new [brownfield sites](#) replace those that have already been developed. Planning data from 82 local authorities that responded with figures from 2011 and 2012 show that 1,658 hectares of land were redeveloped and removed from the database between 2010 and 2012. At the same time 1,725 hectares were added, which shows a modest increase of 67 hectares of total brownfield land during that period. "The amount of brownfield land is not finite", says Katie Williams. "It is in reality a renewable resource."

So, what is hampering progress?

Dr Laurence Carmichael says, "The report highlighted case studies in seven local planning authorities and found that where some were making great progress in accessing government resources and collaborating with Local Enterprise Partnerships, others found it difficult to overcome complexities of certain sites.

"Interestingly, Bristol City Council delivered almost all of its housing (95%) on brownfield sites between 2006 and 2013, and it plans to continue this approach. It builds relatively high density housing in accessible places, while still protecting valued green spaces, within and outside of the city. The Council has successfully used consultation exercises and partnerships to identify suitable brownfield sites for future development.

"Local Authorities are also aware that the National Planning Policy Framework does not prioritise brownfield development and this opens the door to Green Belt and greenfield development. Additionally the cost

of site remediation and local infrastructure provision makes it difficult for small and medium sized builders who want to enter the market in terms of availability of cheaper sites and lack of data of land and ownership."

The report recommends a reintroduction of a clear and consistent "brownfield first" approach in national planning policy; an effective strategic tier of sub regional or county level planning; and that strong strategic and local plans are encouraged, implemented and updated across the country with greater powers for the Homes and Communities Agency to redevelop large and difficult sites.

Also key is the need to introduce mandatory reporting to the National Land Use Database; a proactive approach to identifying brownfield land, with increased focus on regenerating large sites with multiple owners; and provision of assistance to smaller builders wanting to develop smaller sites.

Paul Miner, planning campaign manager at the Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE), comments, "This research demonstrates the huge existing capacity for housing on brownfield land. At a time when there is great pressure on our green spaces, utilising this land through a brownfield first policy would protect our countryside and regenerate urban areas.

"We want this new, authoritative evidence to lead to a sustained focus on suitable brownfield land. We can and must do more to get these sites redeveloped, whether it be reviving the National Land Use Database or implementing strong local plans to deal with multiple landowners on difficult sites."

Provided by University of the West of England

Citation: Report shows there is space for at least 1 million new homes on brownfield sites in England (2014, November 24) retrieved 20 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2014-11-space-million-homes-brownfield-sites.html>

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