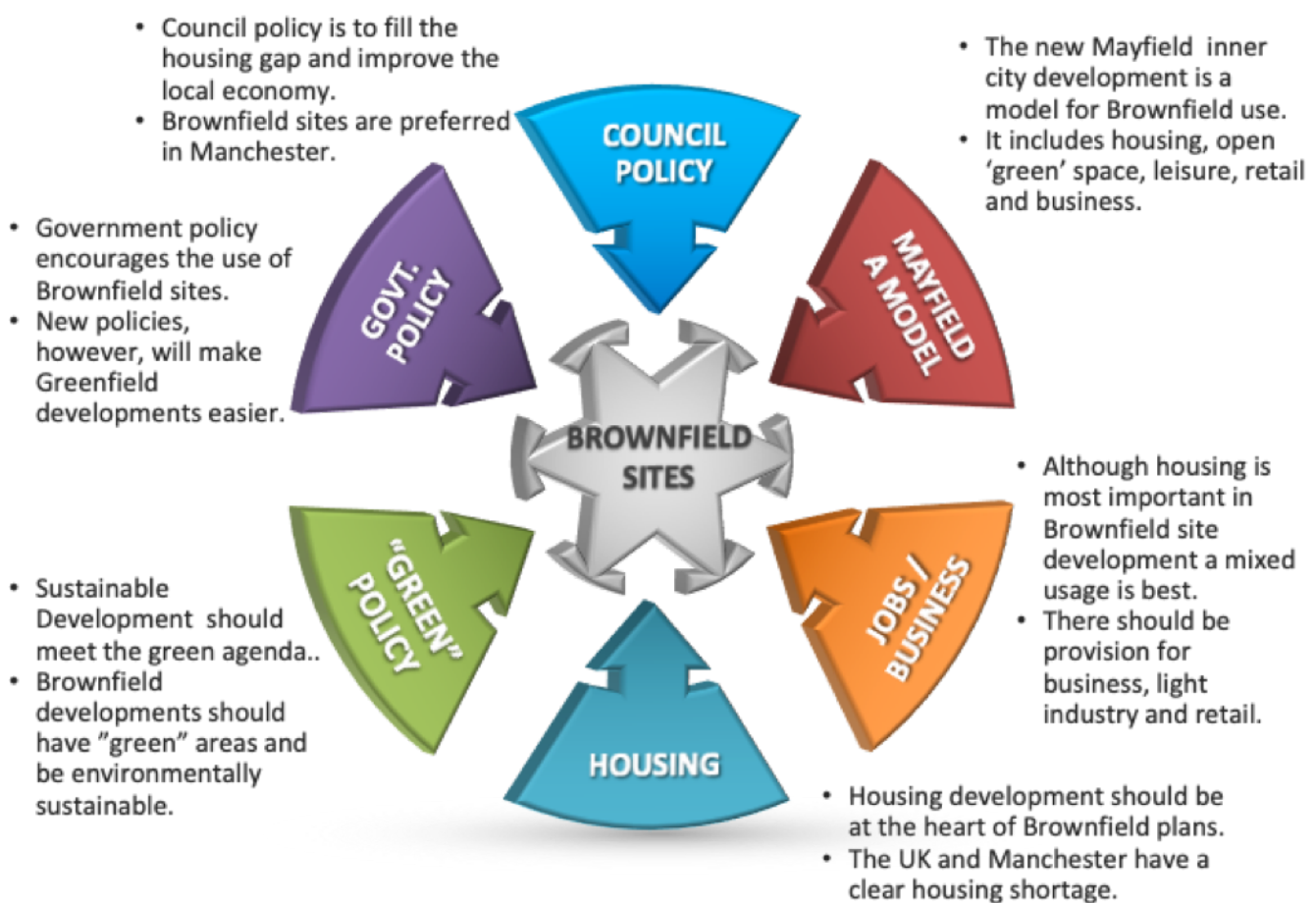


GREATER MANCHESTER : IS BROWNFIELD FIRST BEST?

Each of the 6 themes on the diagram below will be discussed with particular reference to Greater Manchester and it's future development in an attempt to promote the idea that Brownfield is best and should be first when looking to develop a growing post-industrial city like Manchester. The proposed Mayfield regeneration scheme will be outlined as a possible model for all future Brownfield developments. The final, extended, theme will be green/sustainable issues as this is seen by many as the most important consideration.

BROWNFIELD SITES : THEMES AND LINKS



GOVERNMENT POLICIES

- The Government has introduced a National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) which all local authorities must follow. This makes sure they use land effectively and ensures they use Brownfield sites where possible, the 'Brownfield First' policy.
- The framework aims to safeguard the environment and protect Green Belt land, maintain existing habitats and create new habitats where possible.

- The protected Green Belts around cities such as Manchester conserve green space, prevent urban sprawl and the merging of towns, and safeguards the countryside.
- ‘Exceptional Circumstances’ are needed if a local authority wishes to change Green Belts and allow development.
- Local Authorities must develop a Brownfield Register of available sites within the urban area. This will also allow the remediation of despoiled, degraded, derelict and contaminated land.
- A recent speech by Michael Gove the minister for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities outlined the new policies of the NPPF and the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023. He stressed the need to streamline planning and urban regeneration in cities and this may help cities like Manchester speed up the planning and implementation of the development of Brownfield sites.
- The Regeneration Act also addresses the geographical/regional disparities that exist in the UK which should incentivise urban regeneration and offer funding opportunities for Northern cities such as Manchester.
- This act proposes to simplify the local planning process by outlining National Development Management Policies that local areas must follow. One of these suggests that a new National policy would explicitly encourage and support the development of housing in built-up areas that are accessible and connected by sustainable transport modes. Local plans frequently contain this sort of policy, so creating a National Development Management Policy for this could help standardise expectations across the country and deliver more housing in suitable areas. This could be included in a general policy about housing on brownfield land, space above shops, or town centres
- The Government is under some pressure at the moment to relax planning regulations in Green Belts particularly to allow the building of starter homes. A future Labour government policy suggests relaxation of those regulations to help kickstart home building to help reduce the housing shortage.
- Local government officers and officials must be aware, however, that political expediency at the national level to keep MP’s on board in the run up to a general election may outweigh more important economic, environmental and social issues.

GREATER MANCHESTER BROWNFIELD POLICY

- In line with the NPPF Greater Manchester promotes the use of Brownfield sites and, along with all authorities, has produced a Brownfield register, an up to date list of previously used land suitable for new housing.

- The 2023 Manchester Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment has developed a 5 year housing supply statement of future housing needs and Brownfield sites will be needed to reach the targets.
- The 2021 Greater Manchester Combined Authority - Place For Everyone stresses the need to protect Green Belt land and preferentially use Brownfield sites to produce housing and jobs for everyone in a future zero-carbon economy.
- The economy of Greater Manchester continues to grow, causing an 11% overall population growth, with 38% growth in the inner area, in the last 15 years. 42% of this growth in population has been in the 18-29 age group.
- This suggests that a diverse range of affordable housing will be needed in the future, and as smaller households become more prevalent, more apartments.
- The target of 36,000 more affordable, social sector homes by 2032 means that Brownfield sites will need to be the main focus for new developments.
- The Manchester policy aims to maintain Green Belts, enhance biodiversity, develop a Green Infrastructure and maintain/enhance river habitats.
- Brownfield site development must be at the forefront of this policy as it proposes that 80% of new homes will be built on Brownfield sites by 2032. The aim is to bring higher densities, more diverse, liveable neighbourhoods that help to address the zero-carbon target.

HOUSING

- The UK has a housing shortage. The Affordable Homes Programme of 2021 suggested that 180,000 new homes per year were needed outside London over the next 4-5 years.
- A House of Commons paper in 2023 gave the Government an ambitious target of 300,000 homes per year by the mid 2020's. Some research suggests nearer 340,000 new homes per year are needed.
- In the year 2021-22 only 233,000 new homes were built, supply is not meeting demand.
- The Manchester Housing Strategy 2022-32 stated that only 68,000 social rented homes were available at the moment, with owner occupation declining and the largest sector being privately rented at 39%.
- To reach these targets in the Greater Manchester area it is essential that Brownfield sites are fully utilised. Local government and the private sector must work together to build a wide variety of affordable homes to a higher density than previous developments to allow for sufficient green space, environmental sustainability and leisure facilities.

JOBS/BUSINESS/ECONOMY/LEISURE/HOMES : MIXED USAGE

- Housing should be the focus of most Brownfield development to allow Manchester to address its housing shortage, its future housing needs and changing housing needs, as it tries to reduce homelessness and increase social renting and owner occupation.
- Brownfield development, however, needs to have a mixed usage approach. By combining a partnership of private sector companies and enterprises, and local and national government agencies a sustainable, liveable environment can be created.
- A variety of housing types, styles and sizes is required, and higher density and higher rise housing will leave more space for mixed usage to include workplaces, open/green space, leisure facilities and retail outlets.
- A Government research paper in 2020 looked at Brownfield Development Values. It surveyed people to find that they valued affordability, quality of place, green space, nature and play areas as essential 'additional features' in housing led regeneration.
- Housing should be a catalyst for regeneration of new economic sectors. This should be 'Smart Growth', integrating homes, business, light manufacturing and leisure helping to produce an 'Industrious City' rather than an Industrial City. This will give residents the opportunity to live, work and socialise in the area.

MAYFIELD : A MODEL BROWNFIELD DEVELOPMENT?

- The Mayfield Brownfield development proposes to transform an area near Manchester city centre adjacent to Piccadilly Railway Station. It involves a partnership between the private sector and the local council with the latter acting as facilitators and as a possible conduit for funding.
- The proposals for this development take on board most of the ideas suggested for sustainable Brownfield regeneration and it may be seen as a model or template for future developments on Brownfield sites in the Greater Manchester area.
- At its heart will be Mayfield Park, a green space and leisure area around a rejuvenated and partially re-wilded river Medlock. This combines the open space with enhanced biodiversity, flood prevention and helps address the zero carbon target.
- Mayfield embodies the mixed usage approach, combining open space with housing, leisure facilities, retail and work spaces. It aims to promote a dynamic private sector and a growing creative sector.
- 1500 new homes will be sustainably built along with local community amenities in an attempt to attract the business and professional workforce needed in the tertiary and quaternary sectors of a developing post-

industrial/post-modern economy. A number of historic buildings will be retained to keep some aspects of the heritage of the site and liveability/quality of place will be important concepts.

- Policies will be introduced to reduce car usage within the site by incorporating walkways and cycleways, and integrating homes with retail and leisure. The site itself, however, has excellent connectivity with the rest of Greater Manchester, and the rest of the UK and the world being sited adjacent to local rail, bus and metro hubs that also give access to Manchester Airport.

GREEN AGENDA

- The development and regeneration of Brownfield sites within cities like Manchester can go some way to addressing the Green Agenda as proposed by bodies such as the UN, the EU and the UK Government. It will also reduce the need to use Greenfield sites on the edge of cities like Manchester.
- These sites will also help to address the UN Sustainability Goals, especially goal 11, promoting the growth of sustainable cities and goal 17, concerning sustainable development.
- Sensitive development of Brownfield sites within Manchester will help the city to hit its zero carbon emissions target by 2038.
- The latest NPPF is clear about the need for sustainable development, saying that plans and provision should apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development. The Framework states that ‘all plans should promote a sustainable pattern of development that seeks to: meet the development needs of their area; align growth and infrastructure; improve the environment; mitigate climate change (including by making effective use of land in urban areas) and adapt to its effects.’
- The NPPF outlines 3 main areas that should be addressed in all planning decisions; an economic objective – to help build a strong, responsive and competitive economy, a social objective – to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities, and importantly an environmental objective - to protect and enhance our natural, built and historic environment; including making effective use of land, improving biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy.
- A mixed usage approach to Brownfield developments is essential to integrate green space and leisure space with housing and business. The development of some sites within the city may concentrate entirely on nature and ecological enhancement as at the proposed 86 acre Salford nature reserve and “biodiversity bank” on an old landfill site. A 113 acre green park, the River Park is also planned on a Brownfield site as part of the Victoria North regeneration scheme near the centre of Manchester.

- The addition of green spaces and nature will improve infiltration of rainwater, reduce runoff and aid in flood prevention. This may involve the re-wilding of rivers to increase biodiversity and re-introduce natural features.
- Buildings, both residential and business, within Brownfield developments should be sustainably built with sustainably resourced materials. They should be energy efficient, use heat pumps and integrate micro-generation of electricity by photo-voltaic cells and/or wind turbines. The addition of green roofing systems will also reduce water runoff and improve biodiversity.
- Mixed usage, as at the Mayfield site, will integrate residential dwellings with business, retail, entertainment and leisure facilities. In some places this may include educational facilities to help further reduce the need for long commuter journeys and break the dependence on cars. The addition of walkways and cycleways within developments can also help cut journey times, the need for cars and carbon emissions.
- Brownfield sites near existing transport routes, especially more sustainable ones such as railways and trams should be preferentially chosen as at Mayfield to make journeys beyond the site itself environmentally sustainable.
- The development of Brownfield sites will have the added benefit of replacing old, polluted and derelict industrial areas with more green space, housing and business as the city completes its transition from an industrial to a post-industrial, post-modern city.
- Regeneration of Brownfield sites should draw on UK Government policies for Eco-Towns and make them into Eco-Villages or Eco-Neighbourhoods within the city.
- The Developments should have zero waste targets, promote re-use and recycling and have no negative impact on climate change.
- It is important to model the impact of any buildings, particularly high rise, on incoming solar radiation and outgoing long wave radiation. The developments should reduce the chances of excessive urban heating, the 'heat island' effect, with its associated negative impacts on health and urban rainfall totals and intensities.
- Sunlight hours and intensities should be modelled to allow green spaces and re-wilded areas to flourish within the development. The impact of high rise building on wind direction, intensity and wind tunnel effects can also be assessed prior to the construction phase.