

Brownfield urban regeneration: how to deliver more growth, homes and jobs with the support of communities



Contents

Introduction	4
Why brownfield urban regeneration is the answer	6
Our commitments to supporting brownfield urban regeneration	8
Executive summary	10
Commonplace and the role of community engagement	16
Key findings from this research	18
Case study examples	28
Conclusions	32
Appendix	33



Introduction

The new Labour Government has made clear that its priority mission is to deliver economic growth, part of which includes ambitious plans to significantly increase the number of new homes delivered across the country.

However, there is a tension at the heart of this growth mission with a broad desire of most politicians to do things with the approval of their local communities. While the Labour leadership has made it clear that local communities will be consulted on ‘how, not if’ new development takes place, experience tells us that development can lead to politicians receiving difficult questions from their communities.

Too often and in too many places across the country, the only voices heard in the local debate around housing are from those opposed to development. This often means development is seen as a net negative with outcomes to be avoided – and not something beneficial in its own right.

In this context, the new Government’s ambitions will be tested. It’s therefore up to businesses within the real estate industry to rise to the challenge of ensuring growth can be delivered in line with local aspirations and the support of local communities.

As three such businesses – Berkeley Group, British Land and Landsec – we worked together in 2023 to set out proposals to reform the planning system to generate more growth, more homes and more jobs. We did this by focusing reforms on the principle of brownfield urban regeneration.

Brownfield urban regeneration is the single most significant and efficient opportunity to secure many of the outcomes the UK needs to see. However, we also focused on this area of development because our experience tells us that making the most of brownfield land can be delivered effectively with the support of local communities, as long as time and effort are put into a genuine and two-way engagement process to shape a shared vision. Taken together, the ability of brownfield urban regeneration to meet national and local ambitions is an opportunity which has been missed far too often, and one that the Government cannot afford to miss if it is to meet its ambitious housing mission.

To support the new Government in its mission to unlock housing delivery and economic growth, we have partnered with the UK’s leading digital community engagement platform, Commonplace, to better understand what people want to see happen with brownfield land in their area, and what can be done so that they can support it.

Too often, involvement in placemaking is limited to those who already own their home and have time to participate in planning consultations. It is also assumed that communities aren’t willing to engage in discussions around trade-offs. In our view, this limits the potential for creating successful, sustainable places.



We, therefore, sought to gather data from a broad demographic across a wide range of places, to understand how and when communities would prefer to be consulted, and gauge the appetite for ‘how, not if’ discussions of development.

Through this research, we hope to show policymakers where new development is most likely to be welcomed, and how to maximise this support by working collaboratively with local communities and prioritising the benefits people want to see. For businesses and most importantly local communities, we hope this will provide comfort that development can be done in both the local and national interest, at the same time.

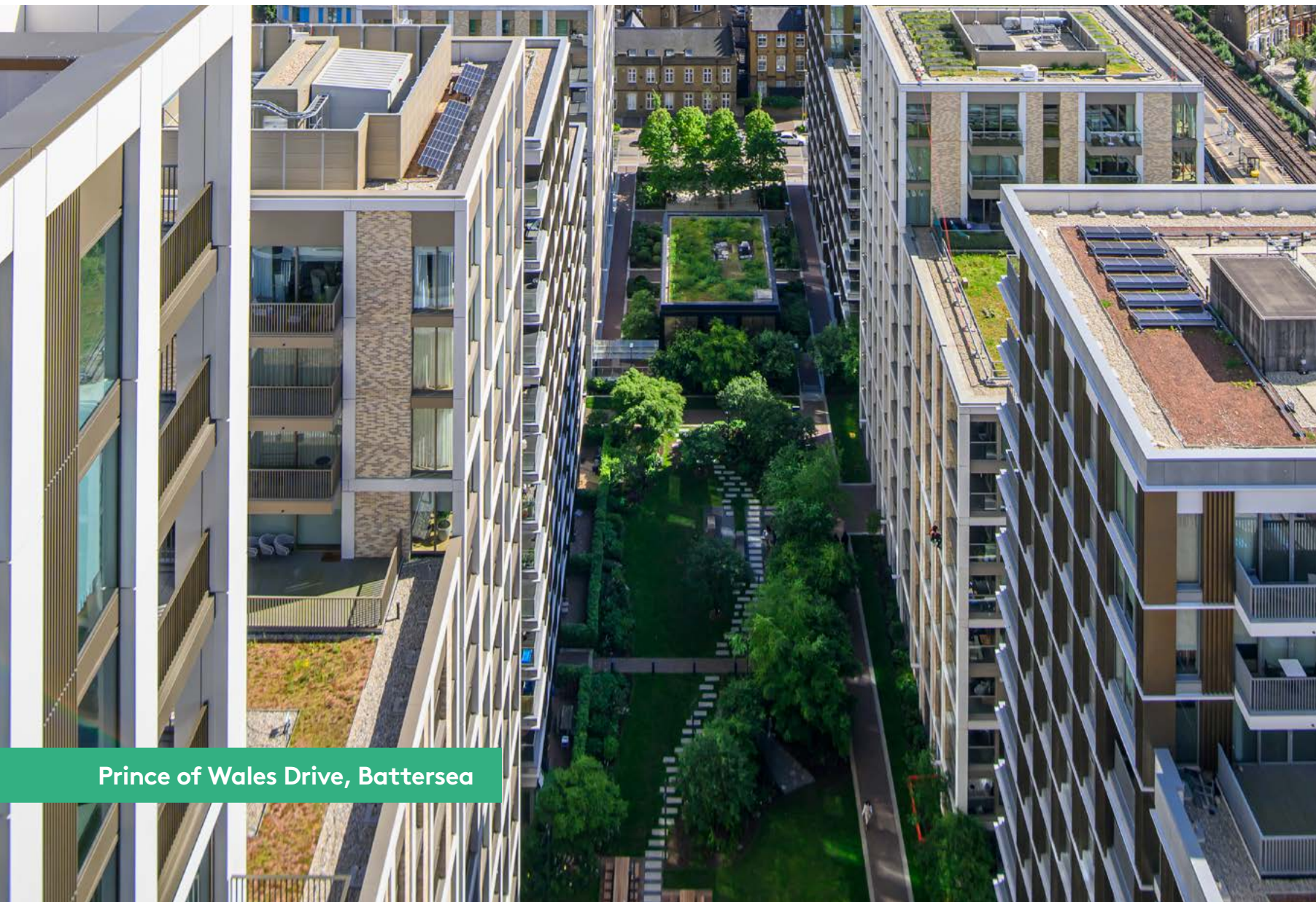


Why brownfield urban regeneration is the answer

The Government's proposed reforms to the planning system point towards brownfield sites in urban areas being a key vehicle through which housing delivery and economic growth will be realised in an efficient and sustainable way.

As our discussion paper and research identified (2023), there is the potential to deliver over 1.3 million homes and generate over one million jobs by 2035 through the thoughtful densification of brownfield sites in urban areas. Our research shows the public is in favour of taller and denser development on brownfield land when the full benefits of such developments are set out, suggesting that this opportunity may be even larger than previously estimated. To grasp this opportunity, councils and developers must be more confident in articulating the benefits of urban regeneration.

Our businesses each have the experience of working with communities to bring forward development that responds to local priorities, needs and aspirations. We are firm believers that inclusive community participation can engender support.



Prince of Wales Drive, Battersea

Our experience also tells us that attitudes to development in urban areas are different to those elsewhere and provide an opportunity to focus on 'how, not if' development takes place.

When preparing our original discussion paper on reforming the planning system to focus on brownfield urban regeneration, we quoted data from the political scientist Ben Ansell into public attitudes towards housebuilding 'in my local area' (The UK's Political Housing Crisis, 13 January 2023). Through his polling, he found that 55 of 650 parliamentary constituencies in the UK demonstrated net public support for house building in their local area – and importantly the vast majority of these are found in urban areas.

Fuelled by our own experiences of more pronounced community support for brownfield urban regeneration and the data above, we set out to explore these attitudes at a more granular level, conducting extensive research in four different urban areas – the London Boroughs of Camden and Newham and the cities of Cambridge and Manchester.

To support this project, we commissioned the UK's leading community engagement experts - Commonplace - to support us in conducting in-depth primary and secondary research.

Brownfield development has the potential to deliver over 1.3 million homes and generate over one million jobs by 2035.

¹ Labour faces tough task in winning community support for building boom, Financial Times, 04 August 2024



Our commitments to supporting brownfield urban regeneration

This research concludes with a detailed set of policy recommendations which require attention from both national and local government.

However, we know how important it is for developers in the private sector to live up to our responsibilities to communities across the UK. While some of the recommendations provided by this report will hold us to this standard, we also want to take the opportunity to collectively commit to the following actions ahead of any policy change:

- We will review urban brownfield regeneration projects to ensure they are optimised and the benefits urban communities want to see are delivered.
- We will engage proactively with local communities, so they are involved in shaping the opportunities of brownfield land from the outset, as well as during construction and once built.
- We will continue to challenge ourselves and explore new ideas to ensure our engagement is inclusive, representative and equitable.



Mayfield, Manchester



We will continue to challenge ourselves and explore new ideas to ensure our engagement is inclusive, representative and equitable.





Grand Union, Brent

Executive summary

One of the common challenges of building new homes is that development projects do not always attract the support of local people.

By contrast, this research demonstrates that community sentiment towards the regeneration of urban brownfield sites is overwhelmingly positive, with **79% of respondents believing that regenerating previously developed brownfield land would have a 'positive' or 'very positive' impact on their local area**. In fact, the vast majority of people surveyed perceive underdeveloped brownfield sites as 'wasted potential'.

Furthermore, when there is an honest and open public dialogue around the trade-offs between the scale of development and the local infrastructure it unlocks, support for greater building height and housing density increases significantly. Higher density is important in ensuring affordable housing delivery can be maximised as well as allowing local authorities to achieve their newly reinstated housing targets.

Utilising the Commonplace digital engagement platform, **the study surveyed 1,829 individuals across the four diverse urban locations** of Cambridge, Camden, Manchester and Newham. The survey collected data on various aspects of brownfield regeneration, including overall sentiment, perceived opportunities, building height trade-offs and community engagement.

The following summary of our findings and resulting policy recommendations offers an evidence-based roadmap to delivering brownfield development with the support of the community.

1. Communities view brownfield land as wasted potential

- People perceive brownfield land in their area as ugly, dirty and unsafe. Local and national policy should prioritise its development to improve the public's perception of the place they live.
- To avoid the perception of underdeveloped brownfield sites being 'wasted potential', policy should seek to optimise delivery on brownfield sites, which could include more ambitious expectations for the number of homes built on brownfield land.
- Given the higher costs of brownfield relative to greenfield development, greater national policy focus should be given to solving brownfield viability challenges.



2. Strong support for brownfield urban regeneration

The research shows strong public support for brownfield urban regeneration, with 79% believing it would have a positive impact on their local area, and 75% wanting it to be prioritised for development. Given this support, policy should ensure that the necessary costs and time to deliver brownfield development do not become barriers by:

- Reducing policy layering that adds cost and complexity and makes brownfield homes undeliverable.
- Allowing for greater flexibility in urban design to overcome bespoke challenges.
- Providing more grant funding for enabling infrastructure where it could catalyse development.
- Creating investment incentives by allowing the recognition of costs when incurred rather than when the homes are sold. This would use the balance sheet credibility of the UK to increase brownfield investment, particularly by smaller developers with a more expensive cost of capital.

79%
believe brownfield
urban regeneration
would have a
positive impact on
their community

75% would like to see
it prioritised over
other forms of development

The research shows strong public support for the wide benefits of brownfield regeneration, such as the creation of green space, community facilities and affordable homes

- Policy should seek to prioritise the direct and local delivery of these priorities so that benefits are felt and seen locally. This could be achieved by exempting large brownfield projects from Community Infrastructure Levy payments in favour of directly negotiated S106 agreements.
- Building at greater height or density can allow more nature and green space to be included in developments. Blanket limits on the height of development such as London Plan Policy D9 should therefore be avoided as they limit the options available.



3. People prefer density when it unlocks local community benefits

The research is clear that where taller or denser development unlocks greater benefits to the community, local people are prepared to support it over lower rise development.

- Through engagement, open dialogue between communities, councils and developers is required to clearly communicate the additional local benefits unlocked by taller or denser development.
- Policy should ensure that any public realm and social infrastructure investment that is derived from brownfield development is spent locally and clearly attributed to the project.
- Communities should be able to draw a direct link between new development and benefits delivered locally. This can be achieved by prioritising delivery on-site through S106, rather than through CIL contributions, which often remain unspent after the development is completed and/or can be spent in other parts of the Borough away from where the development occurs.

The research shows that the delivery of affordable housing is seen as extremely important by local people in the areas studied. To ensure public support policy should therefore:

- Support the financial capacity of housing associations to purchase S106 affordable homes, and allow them to play their full role in the housing market.
- Increase the level and efficiency of grant funding available for the delivery of affordable homes where they would otherwise not be viable.
- In the absence of any investment incentives or policy flexibility, the Government should focus on the number of affordable homes delivered rather than a percentage of the total on any given site. This would recognise the significant costs of delivering on brownfield sites and ensure communities feel their potential is not being wasted.
- Allow flexibility to provide different affordable housing tenures where this responds to local needs.



Kidbrooke Village, Greenwich

4. Effective and inclusive community engagement is key

This report shows that the public sees huge value in participating in the process around development in their area, and supports regeneration far more when they understand the benefits and trade-offs it involves. Greater collaboration and participation could be achieved by:

- Working in partnership with communities from the outset to leverage local expertise and set a shared vision that helps fulfil the potential of their places.
- Linking brownfield passports to a comprehensive community participation programme including digital engagement, which enables a more open dialogue between developers, councils, and communities about the potential benefits development and densification can deliver.
- Reviewing the statutory consultation process to encourage more proactive and accessible community engagement, drawing on examples of best practice from developer consultations and other public services.



White City Living, Hammersmith & Fulham

Commonplace and the role of community engagement

Commonplace is a leading community engagement platform, working with over 80 councils around the UK, central government and some of the country's key private sector developers. Our online tools empower communities to engage with planners, developers and decision-makers. We have helped 9 million people to engage with over 2,700 projects over the past 10 years, enabling quicker, more inclusive and effective decision that have a positive impact on local economies and their communities.

As a B Corp and digital community engagement specialist, we want our data and experience to help inform the Government's plans to accelerate the delivery of housing for the benefit of local communities. In addition to the research presented in this report, the following evidence-based insights drawn from other data and research, point to a recipe for high-quality, consistent engagement that can support these plans.

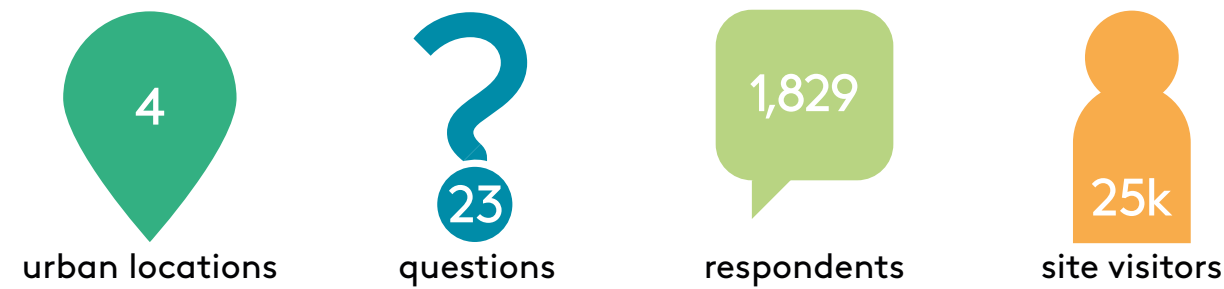
- **The public wants greater, long-term engagement in planning.** In nationwide research Commonplace published in 2021, 76% of the UK population said they wanted 'to be given a greater say over new developments in their local area'. Digital tools can ensure greater breadth and depth of participation to meet this demand and maintain this over long periods of time.
- **The trust deficit between the public on one hand, and developers and local government on the other can be overcome with high-quality, open and inclusive engagement.** This is a consistent finding from both the Commonplace Engaging for the Future report (2021) and Grosvenor's Building Trust report (2019). Only 27% of the public said that local people have the most influence on local development, and 52% believed that planning decisions are taken in private to avoid a public backlash. In contrast, high-quality continuous engagements on Commonplace lead to, on average, two-thirds of people supporting plans being put forward.
- **Successful engagement is a conversation, not a survey - digital tools are excellent at managing these conversations.** Over 500,000 people have asked Commonplace to notify them about updates, changes or news on developments happening in their area. People are 5 times more likely to participate on our platform if they have previously engaged.
- **Support for development is higher in areas where incomes are lower. This is also where the largest concentration of brownfield land exists.** This finding came from Commonplace data in a nationwide study on regeneration commissioned by Trowers and Hamlins (2024), and suggests the role brownfield regeneration can play in delivering equitable growth. The same study found that local residents care most about the scheme itself, including issues such as building characteristics and security. Also, that green spaces and community facilities are two of the three factors that generate the greatest positive sentiment amongst communities.

Overall, our extensive research has shown that effective and inclusive community engagement plays a key role in the success of any urban development project. The importance of involving local people in the regeneration process is once again echoed in the findings of this report.



Key findings from this research

This research offers a comprehensive understanding of community attitudes towards brownfield urban regeneration. Utilising the Commonplace digital engagement platform, the study surveyed 1,829 individuals across the four diverse urban locations of Cambridge, Camden, Manchester and Newham. The survey collected data on various aspects of brownfield regeneration, including overall sentiment, perceived opportunities, building height trade-offs and community engagement. To read a more detailed account of our research process, see our full methodology in the appendix.



This chapter breaks down the results of our brownfield urban regeneration research by presenting key findings from each of the four survey sections. This includes the community's attitudes to both underdeveloped brownfield land and brownfield regeneration, along with findings relating to the trade-offs between community investment and building height and opinions on community involvement in the regeneration process.



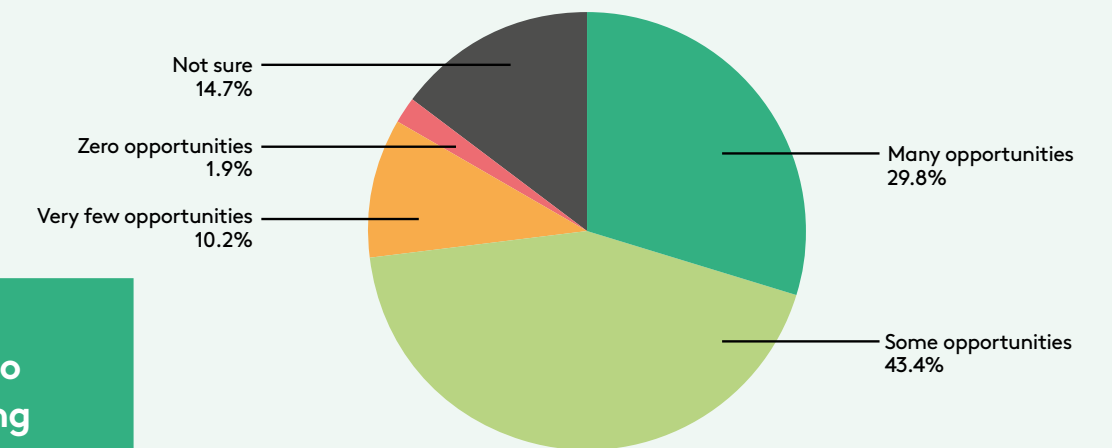
Oval Village, Lambeth

1. Underdeveloped brownfield land is viewed as wasted potential

Communities feel negatively towards underdeveloped brownfield land in their area and view it as a wasted opportunity which should be developed.

The first section of our research focuses on whether communities think there are opportunities for brownfield urban regeneration in their area and how they feel about this underdeveloped brownfield land. Our survey finds that respondents believe there to be a significant number of potential brownfield sites in their communities. In fact, 73% of respondents believe there to be either 'many opportunities' or 'some opportunities' with only 2% of respondents believing there to be 'zero opportunities'.

Do you think there are opportunities for brownfield urban regeneration in your area?

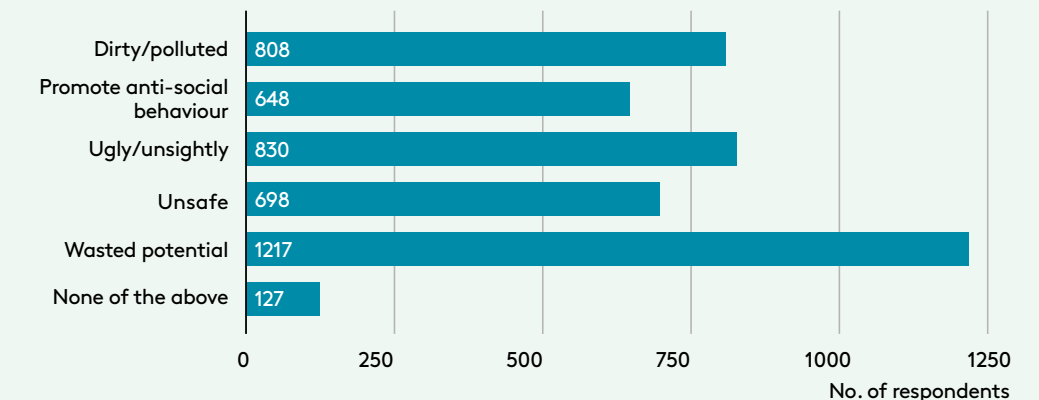


"It's really sad to see the land going to waste when as a country we're so in need of affordable housing and green spaces!"

After understanding the level of perceived opportunity, the survey also asked respondents how this undeveloped brownfield land makes them feel. This research finds that 60% of respondents express a negative feeling towards brownfield land compared to just 18% who expressed positivity. Specifically, the top three most commonly held concerns about brownfield land were that it is 'wasted potential', 'ugly/unsightly' and 'dirty/polluted'.

Out of all the concerns, 'wasted potential' was by far the most commonly cited meaning that there is an opportunity for developers to work with communities to help fulfil the potential of an under-utilised site.

What are your concerns about brownfield land such as examples above?



These research findings highlight that not only do communities see an array of opportunities for brownfield urban regeneration in their local areas but that the existence of underdeveloped brownfield land elicits negative sentiment relating to visual and environmental pollution, safety and, most prominently, wasted potential. Having discovered that communities see a prevalence of underdeveloped brownfield sites in their areas and often feel negative about the existence of such land, the next section focuses on the perception of brownfield urban regeneration itself and the potential benefits it can bring to local areas.

Policy recommendations:

- Policy at local and national levels should **prioritise the regeneration of brownfield sites** in order to improve people's feelings towards their local area and create great places.
- Policy should seek to **optimise delivery on brownfield sites** in order to demonstrate that this opportunity is not wasted. This could include **setting more ambitious expectations for the number of homes which can be built on brownfield land**.
- The higher costs of brownfield housing delivery relative to greenfield often mean that brownfield land sites can lie idle while homes are built on countryside. **Greater focus should be given by national policy makers to solving viability challenges of brownfield land** in order to progress more brownfield regeneration projects.



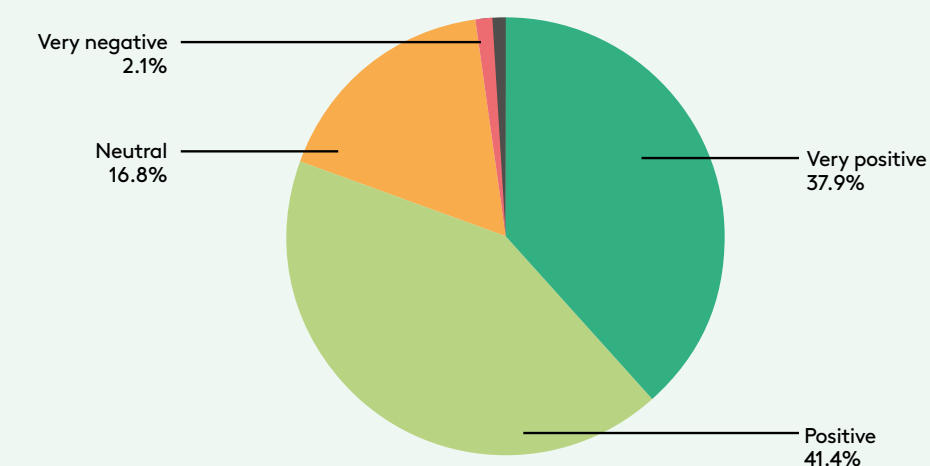
75% of people see underdeveloped brownfield land as 'Wasted Potential'

2. Strong support for brownfield urban regeneration

Brownfield urban regeneration is not only seen as a more acceptable form of development but also as desirable and something that should be optimised.

The second finding is that brownfield urban regeneration is not only seen as a more acceptable form of development but also as desirable and something that should be optimised. This research has uncovered an overwhelmingly positive attitude towards brownfield urban regeneration with 79% of respondents believing that it would have either a 'positive' or 'very positive' impact on their community. What's more, only 5% of respondents believed that brownfield urban regeneration would have a 'negative' or 'very negative' impact on their community.

What impact would brownfield urban regeneration in your city have on you and your community?



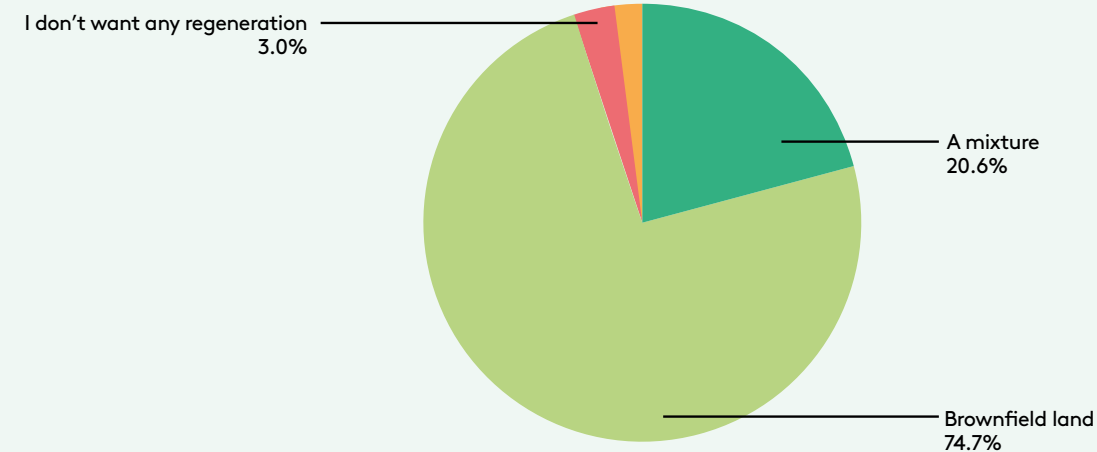
79% believe brownfield urban regeneration would have a positive impact on their community

When compared to recent YouGov polling (Ansell, 2023), we find that the percentage of people who believe brownfield urban regeneration would have a positive impact on their local area more than double national support for generic house building across the UK. Therefore, as the new Labour Government pledges to "Get Britain Building" by setting ambitious new housing targets, regenerating brownfield land should be seen as an effective way to show results without facing considerable local opposition or political backlash.

Our survey also finds that 74.7% of people would prefer to see the regeneration of 'brownfield land' compared to 1.8% of people who would prefer development to take place on 'other sites (eg. green spaces)' with only 3% of respondents answering 'I don't want any regeneration'. These findings once again illustrate overwhelming support for regeneration from the surveyed urban populations, especially that of brownfield urban regeneration.

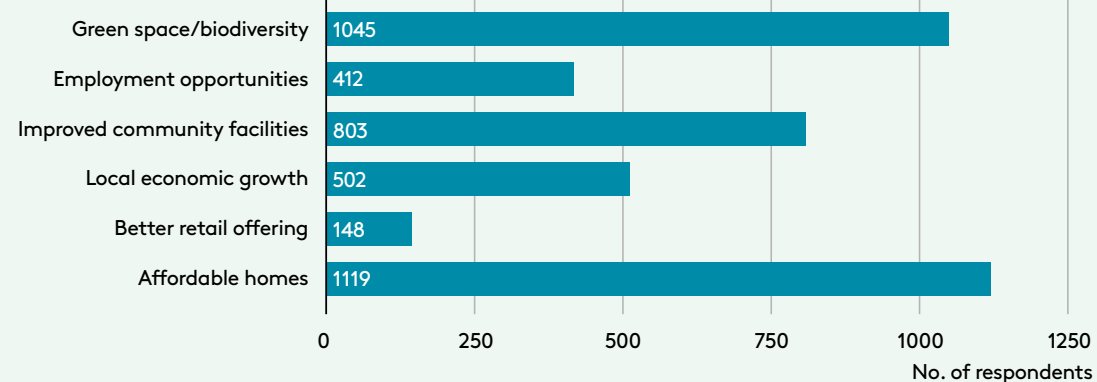
"Given the housing crisis we are experiencing we should be prioritising redevelopment of brownfield sites."

Would you prefer to see regeneration of brownfield land or other land that hasn't previously been built on?



Communities not only express positive sentiment for brownfield urban regeneration but they also refer to a variety of benefits associated with this type of development. Respondents cited 'Affordable Homes' as the most important perceived benefit, followed by 'Green Space/Biodiversity' and 'Improved Community Facilities'. Therefore, brownfield urban regeneration projects should aim to maximise the provision of these three benefits in particular and work closely with the community to determine how these benefits can meet specific local needs. Furthermore, according to the communities we surveyed, 'Local economic growth' is also perceived as a significant benefit of such regeneration efforts.

What would you think are the most important benefits of brownfield urban regeneration?



Overall, the findings of this survey show that communities believe that more brownfield urban regeneration would have a positive impact on their local area. It also suggests that brownfield regeneration is by far the most popular type of development and that communities recognise the benefits of building on previously developed land.

However, the layering of planning costs, changes to building regulations and design standards as well as additional taxes on residential development are making schemes more economically challenging to deliver and increasingly unviable.

The next section of the findings suggests a potential appetite for increased development height and density if trade-offs are clearly communicated and communities feel the direct benefits of this local investment. When combined with our policy recommendations, it's hoped these findings will go some way to increasing the viability of brownfield urban regeneration projects.

Policy recommendations:

- **Reduce policy layering that adds cost and complexity** that can make brownfield homes undeliverable.
- **Allow for greater flexibility in design** of urban development to allow design-led solutions to overcome bespoke challenges.
- Provide **more grant funding for enabling infrastructure** where it could catalyse development.
- **Create investment incentives to promote the remediation of brownfield sites**, by allowing the recognition of costs when they are incurred rather than when the homes are sold. This would use the balance sheet credibility of the UK to drive investment into all brownfield projects, particularly those being progressed by smaller developers which have the most expensive cost of capital.
- Policy should seek to prioritise the direct delivery of these benefits wherever possible, so they align with local priorities and are felt and seen locally. This could be achieved by **exempting large brownfield projects from Community Infrastructure Levy payments in favour of directly negotiated S106 agreements** that prioritise the direct delivery of these benefits.
- Building at greater height or density can allow for more nature and green space to be included in developments without compromising the number of homes delivered. **Blanket limits on the height of development such as London Plan Policy D9 should therefore be avoided** as they limit the options available.
- In order for these benefits to be maximised **policy should seek to facilitate denser developments** that stimulate and grow local economies.



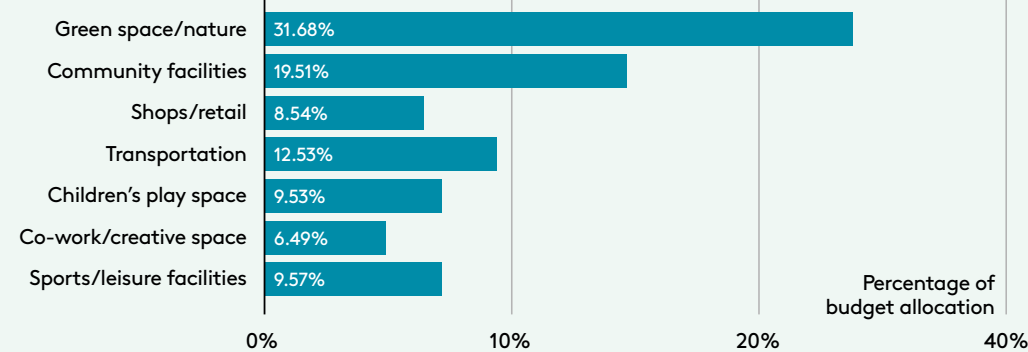
3. People prefer density when it unlocks local community benefits

Urban communities recognise the benefits that development can deliver, and are comfortable balancing viability trade-offs so long as these are clearly understood.

In the previous section, we found that communities recognise the potential benefits of 'improved community facilities' and 'greenspace/biodiversity' that can be achieved through such projects. This section therefore aims to dig deeper into this topic of local infrastructure and understand how people feel about common trade-offs between building height, density, local infrastructure and greenspace.

Our first question asked people to allocate a hypothetical 'community investment budget' between a number of potential uses. This participatory budgeting exercise found that the three most popular community investment allocations were: 'greenspace/nature' (32%), 'community facilities' (20%) and 'transportation' (13%). This echoes our previous findings relating to the most important perceived benefits of brownfield urban regeneration.

How would you choose to allocate your investment on community benefits?

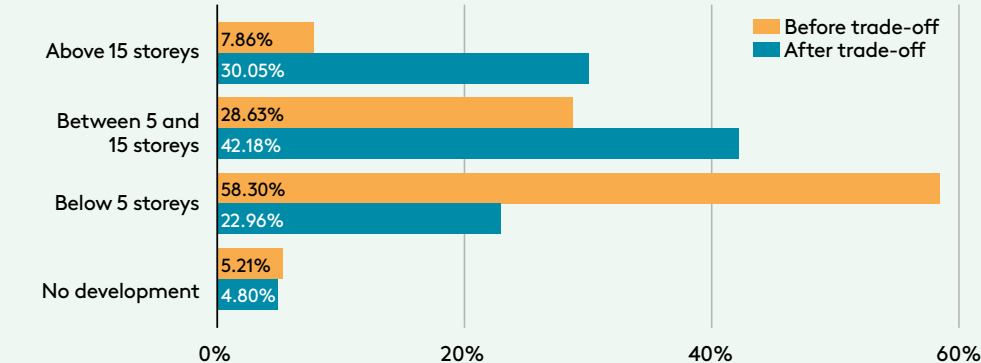


"If taller buildings directly unlock community and infrastructure investment, then these are welcome into the mix."

The research then surveyed respondents' attitudes towards the height of brownfield urban regeneration projects. This first used an image poll to ask respondents what size of brownfield development they would prefer to see built in their local area without introducing the community investment trade-off. Here 58% of respondents preferred 'Below 5 storeys' with only 8% opting for 'Above 15 storeys'.

The survey then introduced the idea that, in general, the larger the scale of a development on a brownfield site, the greater the amount of investment it can unlock for the community. Once this trade-off was introduced and hypothetical levels of community investment were attached to each building height option, support for the tallest development option more than tripled (from 8% to 31%). What's more, the most popular development height increased from 'Below 5 storeys' to 'Between 5 and 15 storeys'.

Building height preference before and after local infrastructure trade-offs



Support for tall buildings increases more than 3-fold when building height is connected to greater local infrastructure investment.

This suggests that engaging openly with communities about the trade-offs facing developers during the design phase of a project can significantly increase support for taller and denser buildings. Also, people are eager to be involved in the allocation of community investment and can help developers understand local priorities and challenges.

Unfortunately, it is increasingly difficult to draw a direct link between development and the benefits delivered to the local community, especially when developer contributions are dominated by the Community Infrastructure Levy. This is likely a significant factor in the default opposition that many developments experience across the UK. The next set of research findings relate to how developers and planning authorities can best engage with communities to achieve more widespread local support.

Policy recommendations:

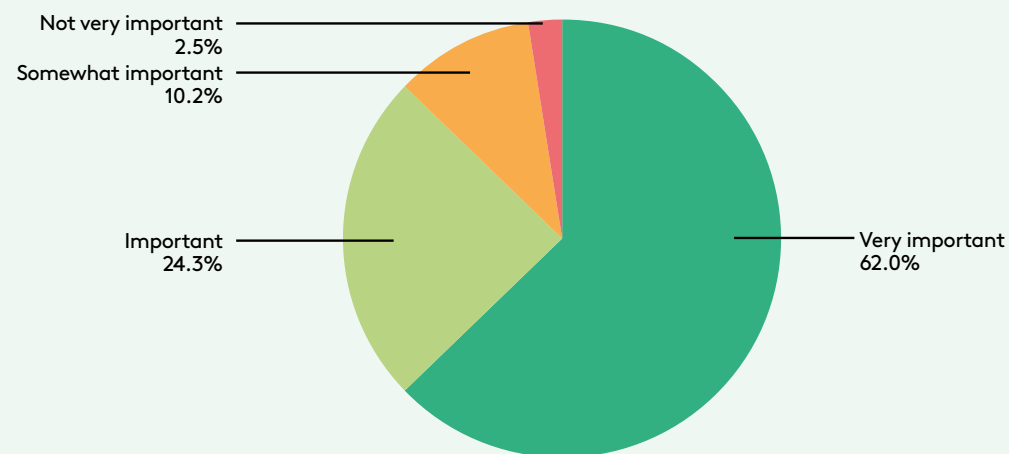
- Creating an open dialogue between communities, local authorities and developers is required to clearly communicate the additional local benefits unlocked by allowing taller or denser development.
- Ensure that any public realm and social infrastructure investment that is derived from brownfield development is spent locally and clearly attributed to the project.
- Prioritise delivery on-site through S106, rather than through CIL contributions, which often remain unspent after the development is completed and/or can be spent in other parts of the Borough away from where the development occurs.
- Support the financial capacity of housing associations to purchase S106 affordable homes, and allow them to play their full role in the housing market.
- Increase the level and efficiency of grant funding available for the delivery of affordable homes where they would otherwise not be viable.
- Focus on the number of affordable homes delivered rather than a percentage of the total on any given site in order to recognise the significant costs of delivering on brownfield sites.
- Allow flexibility to provide different affordable housing tenures where this responds to local needs.

4. Effective and inclusive community engagement is key

Communities know what they want to see – and should be more involved early in the planning and development process.

In this final section of our survey respondents were asked people about the topic of community engagement during the brownfield urban regeneration process. The first key finding is that the vast majority of respondents see immense value in involving communities in the development process. In fact, 86% of people feel that community involvement is either 'very important' or 'important' with just 2% believing it to be 'not important'.

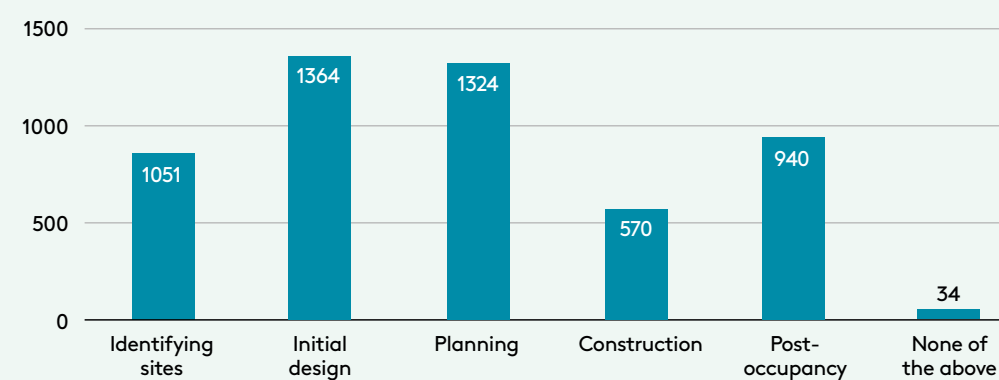
How important is it for communities to be involved in the planning/development process of brownfield sites?



"The local communities usually know what's needed in the area better than planners."

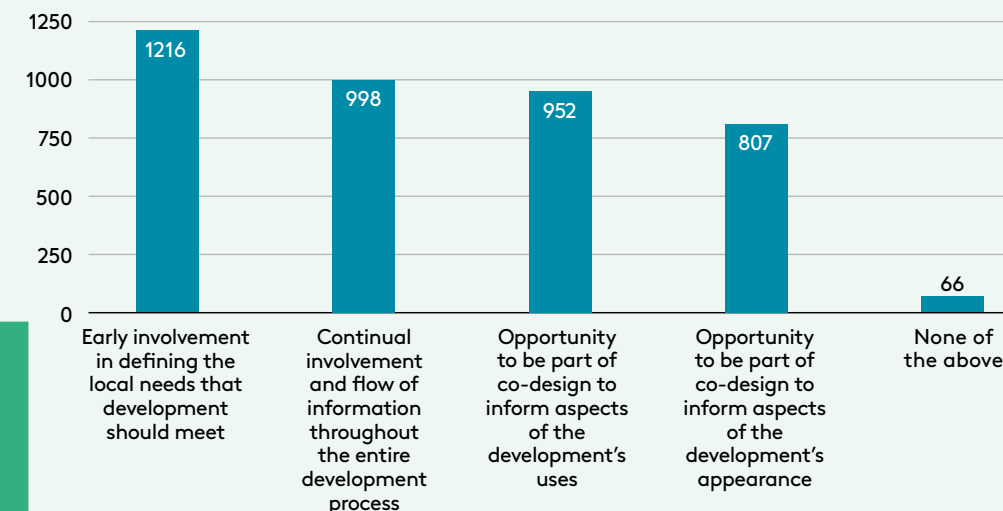
Respondents were then asked which stages of the development process they believe it is important to involve the community. Once again, this research found a widespread desire for community involvement at almost all stages of the development cycle. However, the three most popular stages for involvement are 'identifying sites', 'initial design' and 'planning'. This shows a desire for early, meaningful community engagement. Conversely, the stage that is least popular with the respondents is 'construction' suggesting that residents are less likely to engage once they feel their opportunity to meaningfully influence the development's design has gone.

At what stages of the brownfield urban regeneration process do you think it is important for communities to be involved?



Finally, we asked people whether certain specific types of community engagement would be likely to increase their support for a brownfield regeneration project. Once again we see widespread support for all of the community engagement methods we suggested, the most popular being 'early involvement in defining local needs'. However, our research shows that communities would appreciate the opportunity to help co-design certain aspects of the development's uses and appearance.

Would any of the following increase your support for development of brownfield sites?



"It is not only about involving the community in a tokenistic way but actually listening and acting on what they say the needs of the community are."

To summarise, the final section of our survey uncovered a huge appetite for community involvement during the brownfield urban regeneration process with 62% of people believing it to be 'Very important'. These findings support and build upon our previous discovery around communicating community investment trade-offs to highlight a series of opportunities for developers to work constructively with communities to generate local insights and support for their regeneration project.

62% believe that it is 'Very Important' to involve the community during brownfield urban regeneration

Policy recommendations:

- **Work in partnership with communities from the outset** to leverage local expertise and set a shared vision that helps fulfil the potential of their places.
- **Brownfield passports should be linked to a comprehensive community participation programme**, which enables a more open dialogue between developers, in partnership with the local authority, and communities about the potential benefits development and densification can deliver.
- The Government and local authorities should **review the statutory consultation process to enable more proactive and accessible community engagement**, drawing on examples of best practice from developer consultations and other public services.

Case study example:

Canada Water, London

Covering 53 acres, British Land's Canada Water development will deliver c.3,000 new homes, of which over 35% will be affordable, circa two million sq. ft of workspace for up to 20,000 workers, and around one million sq. ft of retail, leisure, entertainment and community space including a new council leisure centre and 3.5-acre park.

A joint vision for the neighbourhood was developed during over four years of local engagement involving over 5,000 individuals at over 120 consultation and outreach events. Local feedback directly influenced the designs and local infrastructure that will be provided. Construction is now underway, and local engagement continues to be at the heart of the project, such as through Canada Water Connect, a service that provides local residents with access to skills, training and employment opportunities. It recently celebrated reaching the milestone of supporting 100 local residents to access jobs on the project.



Canada Water



Case study example:

Mayfield, Manchester

As part of a joint venture with Manchester City Council, Transport for Greater Manchester and LCR, Landsec is funding and delivering the transformational £1.5bn regeneration project in Manchester city centre, adjacent to the city's mainline Piccadilly train station on a former industrial wasteland. The scheme will create over 13,000 new jobs, 1,500 homes, and will bring 1.9m sq ft of commercial, leisure and retail space to the area; delivering a GVA of £1.4bn. The first phase of the project has delivered Manchester's first city centre park in 100 years.



Mayfield, Manchester

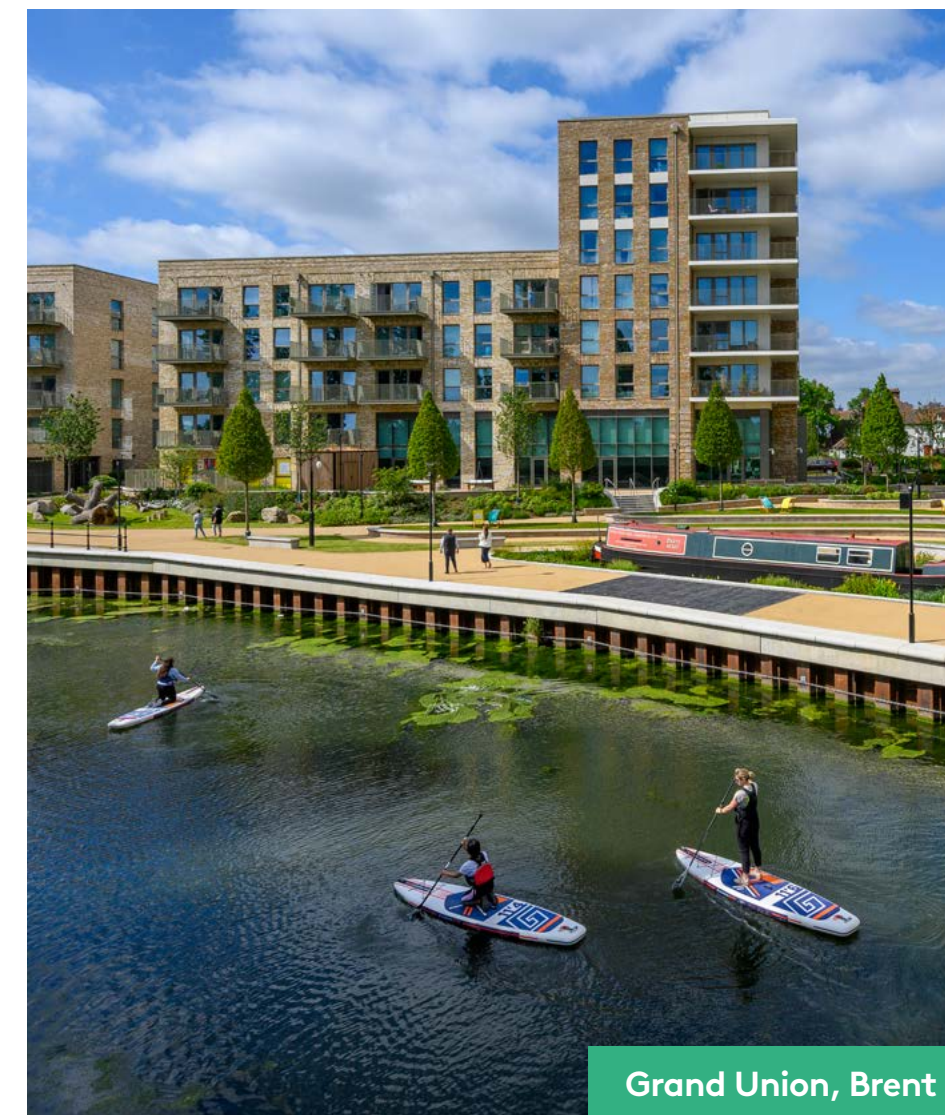
In addition to community engagement during earlier planning stages, activities to keep people in touch with the project and its connection to them has continued in recent years. Mayfield Park, which has since won a prestigious green flag award, and the surrounding railway buildings recently hosted an event by the Royal Horticultural Society. The four-day show attracted over 5,000 people to the site, with numerous activities designed to educate participants about Mayfield's history and encourage them to tell us how they would like to see the area develop in the future. This comes ahead of future planning applications relating to the future of the site, ensuring a continuous approach to engagement.

Case study example:

Grand Union, Brent

The long derelict Northfield Industrial Estate is being transformed into Grand Union, a welcoming mixed-use neighbourhood with 3,350 homes (1,170 of which are affordable), 600 permanent new jobs and 11 acres of public open space. Delivered in partnership by St George (a Berkeley Group company), the London Borough of Brent and the Greater London Authority, unlocking this complex 22-acre site required an upfront capital investment of £170 million.

The masterplan has been shaped through a wide-ranging community engagement programme, with key outcomes including a 5,000 sq ft community centre co-designed by local people, a café, NHS health centre, children's plays pace, shops, restaurants and a 240% biodiversity net gain through re-greening the site with a mix of natural habitats and open spaces. The creation of the Grand Union Development Trust, which includes local trustees, gives the community an ongoing stake in the neighbourhood. An innovative six-storey light-industrial building, designed by St George, has been delivered on a part of the site through a partnership with SEGRO, creating 134,500 sq ft of high-quality floorspace from just a 1.7-acre site footprint.



Grand Union, Brent

Conclusions

Given the abundance of brownfield land that is located in existing urban centres with their own established communities and infrastructure, brownfield urban regeneration should be viewed as not only the most popular but also the most sustainable and efficient way for the Government to achieve its aim to “get Britain building”.

This research also finds that engaging with communities about the inherent trade-offs between building height, density, affordable housing and local infrastructure can massively increase the support for larger brownfield developments. What’s more, if the community investment benefits of developments are clearly communicated and local residents have the opportunity to participate in the allocation of this investment, then people’s support for building taller, denser housing on brownfield land hugely increases.

Lastly, this research finds that there is a huge demand from the community for early and continuous involvement in the development process. Such involvement can significantly increase the levels of local approval and opens up an array of opportunities for accessible, engaging and innovative approaches.

By adopting our policy recommendations to reduce development friction, maximise local benefits and encourage high-quality community involvement, this report shows that brownfield urban regeneration can provide an effective and popular solution to many of the Government’s housing and growth challenges.



Appendix

Methodology

This research has used a combination of primary and secondary data-collection methods to provide representative and robust insights into community attitudes towards brownfield urban regeneration. The project’s digitally-focused, ‘big conversation’ approach has delivered one of the largest and most comprehensive studies of community attitudes towards brownfield urban regeneration.

The primary data collection for this research was led by Commonplace and utilised their innovative community engagement platform. Four Commonplace engagement sites were created, one for each of the four locations of interest. The locations of Cambridge, Camden, Manchester and Newham were selected to represent a variety of different urban settings with a diverse range of demographic make-ups, built environments and industrial pasts. Respondent demographics were closely monitored throughout the data collection process to ensure representative feedback from each place.

The survey collected responses from a total of 1,829 people from across the four locations of interest. The survey consisted of 23 questions split across five sections including: Attitudes to Brownfield Regeneration, Attitudes to Brownfield Land, Community Investment Trade-Offs, Opinions on Community Engagement and Demographics. In each of these sections, a variety of question types were used ranging from traditional multiple-choice and free-text questions to more innovative and visually engaging rank-choice and budget sliders.

The four Commonplace engagement sites were promoted using a variety of digital marketing methods. This includes a promotional to Commonplace’s substantial audience, a large-scale, geo-targeted social media campaign (largely using Meta platforms) and direct stakeholder outreach to a series of relevant community organisations in each of the four areas. Overall, the brownfield urban regeneration research campaign reached over 500,000 people and generated 25,000 visitors to the engagement sites.

Once the data was collected, a variety of quantitative and qualitative analysis techniques were used to generate insights. This includes the use of pivot charts, the Commonplace dashboard and Trends AI, an innovative natural language processing tool that is included on the Commonplace platform.

Alongside the primary survey data collection, this research project also draws on secondary data sources. This included anonymised responses to previous regeneration consultations hosted on the Commonplace platform as well as the findings of previous reports produced by Commonplace and the other project partners.