

LAND FORUM – THE FUTURE

The UK generally does not have a Land Use strategy and yet:-

We have unprecedented demand for new housing land, accompanied by endless – often ill informed – debate about where this housing should be provided, and perhaps more importantly on what “type” of land.

Brownfield versus greenfield is endlessly debated, with the underlying assumption it seems, that brownfield land has no value to society unless concreted over, whilst greenfield land is portrayed as ecologically important and must be protected at all costs.

Overlaying this, is of course, the market. We live and operate in an open market where sellers develop goods in response to demand.

Developers will not develop in areas where the market does not exist, or is not yet proven.

The Government used to be able to address this (in England) as an example through the use of the English Partnerships (HCA) partnership investment programme, whereby EP would assist with costs of cleaning up brownfield land in areas where market demand was low, compared with costs.

Unfortunately this scheme was stopped by the EU in the early 2000's as being illegal State Aid. (Although it was clearly not).

Questions

1. Is there a role for the Land Forum to consult and advise the UK Government on a replacement for this scheme, to help developers tackle more problematic land?
2. Should the Land Forum, manoeuvre to become more of a policy voice on Land Use.
 - Look at issues around greenfield v brownfield.
 - What role brownfield sites in towns and cities could play in climate change mitigation – a factor always ignored in debate about brownfield development.
3. How much land is needed for housing? But don't forget we still need land for commercial, retail and industrial! Much brownfield land in cities/towns is industrial. Do we still need this?

A lot of unanswered questions but ones where the Forum could start developing a “neutral” voice, particularly around the brownfield v greenfield debate.

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