



Fact sheet 7: Homes and different land types - brownfield, greenfield and Green Belt

This fact sheet explains the different types of land in England and where new homes are built. If you are reading this online, please click on the hyperlinks for further information. See the full New Homes Fact Sheets series [here](#).

How much land in England is used for housing?

The latest [Government data](#) published in October 2022 shows that across England, 1.3% of all land is residential and a further 4.9% is classified as residential gardens.

What types of land can be used for housing?

Housebuilding takes place on both brownfield and greenfield land. When new homes are built on greenfield land, the land is then reclassified as developed, brownfield land.



Brownfield land:

The Government defines brownfield land as developed land, that is, or was previously, [occupied by a permanent structure](#).

Brownfield land accounts for [8.7%](#) of land in England and [54%](#) of all new homes in 2021/22 were built on brownfield land.

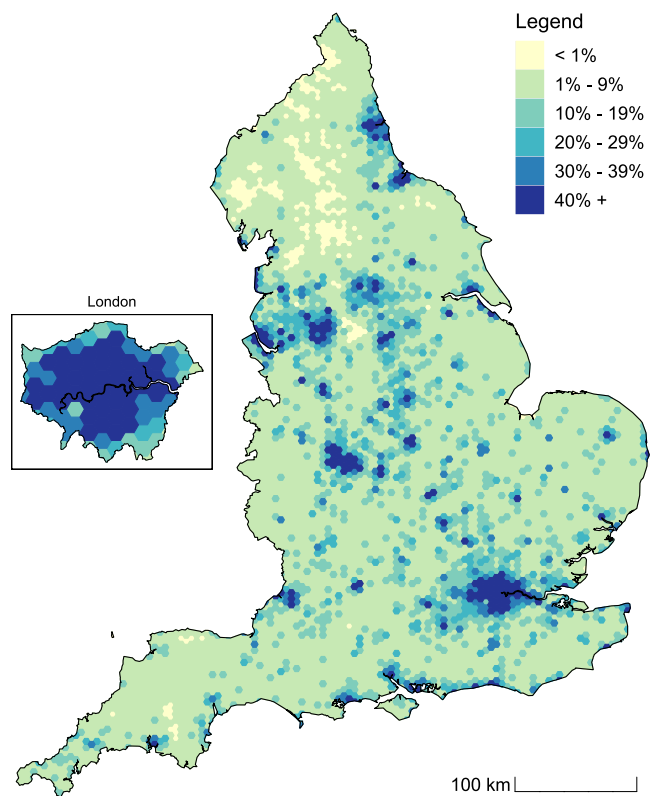
The [National Planning Policy Framework \(NPPF\)](#) and Homes England's [Strategic Plan 2023-2028](#) prioritise brownfield development to better utilise existing land in built-up areas and to preserve undeveloped land.



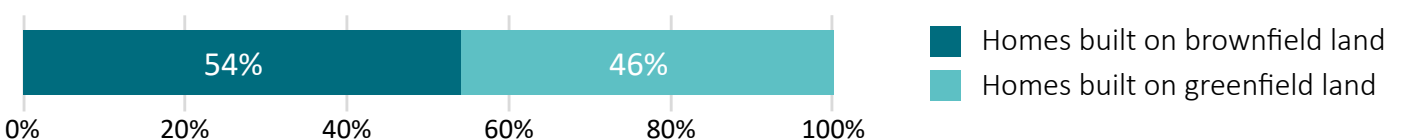
Greenfield land:

Greenfield typically refers to land which has not been developed. The vast majority of land in England is greenfield land, accounting for [91.1%](#) of land across the country. In 2021/22, [46%](#) of new homes were built on greenfield land.

Based on Government data, the [map](#) below shows the proportion of land that is of developed use, for England in 2022.



Type of land used for new homes in 2021/2022





Are there types of protected land where building new homes is restricted?

Across England, there are several types of protected land where building new homes is restricted. Protected land types are established for a range of different reasons, such as environmental protection or conserving heritage assets. Some examples are:

- Green Belt
- Designated greenspace
- National Parks
- Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)
- Sites of Special Interest (SSSI)
- Irreplaceable habitats
- Designated heritage assets

Local authorities present the locations of designated areas in their Local Plans and communities can comment on this as part of the planning process. For further information, please refer to the [Fact sheet 2: How new homes are planned](#).

What is the Green Belt?



The Government attaches great importance to the [Green Belt](#) and the fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open.

Green Belt serves 5 purposes:

1. To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas
2. To prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another
3. To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment
4. To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns
5. To assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.

The Green Belt includes both greenfield and brownfield land.

As of 2021/22, [58%](#) of English local authorities had some Green Belt land in their local area.

How has the amount of Green Belt land changed over time?



Since the data was first collected, the amount of Green Belt land has reduced by 0.9% from [1,652,310](#) hectares in 1997 to [1,638,150](#) hectares in 2021/22.

Since 1997, while some of the Green Belt has been used for development, other areas of land have been newly designated as Green Belt. In 2021/22 the Green Belt increased in size for the first time in 8 years and accounted for [12.6%](#) of all land in England.



Is Green Belt land used for new homes?

The Government's [National Planning Policy Framework](#) (NPPF) provides guidance on how the Green Belt land should be [protected and in what situations development may be 'appropriate' or 'inappropriate'](#).

The [latest data published in 2022](#) shows that of all new homes built in England in 2021/22, 2.5% were on Green Belt land, of which 51% were built on brownfield land and 49% were built on greenfield land.

What land uses are in Green Belt land?



There are [many uses for Green Belt land](#) and in 2022 the majority (65.0%) was used for 'Agriculture' and a further 18.9% was categorised as 'Forest, open land and water'. Residential uses accounted for 3.2% for Green Belt land.