

## Lesson Fact Sheet

### POWERPOINT NOTES slides 3 to 22 WHERE HAS THE CONCRETE BEEN GOING? And does it matter?

Excavation work on a **Green Field** site – previously undeveloped land on the outskirts of North Colchester. Agricultural land had been idle for a number of years and the landowner saw a chance to increase his income by selling the land to developers. This is the type of land that Sir Peter Hall refers to as ‘unproductive land’ and constitutes up to **8.5% of rural South East England**. When landowners **speculate** that their land will eventually be covered in concrete, they frequently reduce their own levels of investment.

Why should a farmer invest time and money into the land when it is about to be developed?

The intervening time period between the landowner deciding to ‘sell out’ and developer moving in can cause some difficulties as little farming or maintenance occurs. So the land falls into a state of disrepair and can appear semi-derelict and uncared for as it suffers from ‘**planning blight**’ (waiting for planning permission and developers to move in). Neighbouring residents may eventually be pleased when the developers move in! 21 sq miles of countryside is lost to development each year and around half of this is to housing.

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Since the 1980s the Conservative Government’s ‘Right to Buy’ policy has effectively taken 1.5 million ‘Council Houses’ out of the hands of Local Authorities and helped to create a shortage of affordable housing for people on lower incomes. Local Authorities are not permitted to spend money raised through rent to build new homes, but can subsidise Housing Association developments and set quotas on all new developments.

**Around 15-18%** of all new housing should be made available as **social housing**, but the precise allocation depends on the needs of each area. In 2008 the Government set a target of 30,000 new social housing units per year for the foreseeable future. The picture shows a development of low cost social housing as part of a major housing development in North Colchester. The ‘Roman Fields’ development contains properties for all incomes and aims to create a community of mixed housing.

According to Shelter - households with certain characteristics are over-represented in social housing:

**single parents:** 46% of lone parents live in social housing; **older people:** 22% of people over 65 live in social housing, 26% of people aged 75 or over live in social housing; **disabled people:** 41% of disabled individuals requiring specially adapted accommodation live in social housing; **ethnic minorities:** 27% of ethnic minority households live in social housing **economically inactive:** 68% of social housing tenants are economically inactive - of these, 6% are unemployed, 32% are retired and 30% are otherwise economically inactive; **housing benefit:** 59% of tenants are on housing benefit

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**Life expectancy** at birth in the UK has reached its highest level on record for both males and females. A newborn baby boy could expect to live 77.2 years and a newborn baby girl 81.5 years if mortality rates remain the same as they were in 2005–07.

With more people living longer they are staying in their own homes that would previously have been released onto the open market. An ageing population therefore blocks the housing market and contributes to the ongoing shortages.

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**Suburbanisation** is a process of urban expansion stimulated by **improved transport systems** giving rise to large housing estates around the edges of towns and cities. This has occurred at a pace since more people own their own cars and as a result urban land uses are covering the landscape with concrete. These housing estates are often ‘glued on’ to existing towns and do not have very many of their own facilities, services, job opportunities.

In the past the people who lived in these areas were part of the town as they worked there and shopped there. Now, as **the speaker says in the video Q3** – these suburbs are little more than commuter territories; the residents are not part of the town that they are ‘attached to’ but are part of a commuter town and work elsewhere. Suburbs maybe ‘nice places to live’ but they are no longer sustainable communities. They are ‘disconnected and dislocated places’

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**Decentralisation** involves the movement of employment opportunities, leisure and service activities away from the Central Business Districts and towards green field, spacious and cheaper sites.

**Accessibility** is the key factor and the example of Reading's Green park illustrates the relocation of businesses not only from central Reading but also away from London. Once again swathes of rural land are lost to the developers, but in recent years the planners have sought to combine aspects of **rurality** within the character of these places.

It is worth looking at the website for [Green Park, Reading](#)

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**Regeneration** is the name given to a process whereby old urban areas are designed to promote positive economic multiplier effects. London's Docklands is one of the most extensive regeneration project ever undertaken in the UK and has transformed the area of derelict dockside land into a secondary business district for London and home to 3 of the world's largest banks.

Over 30,000 homes have been built or refurbished since the development began in 1981. In 1981 around 83% were council properties, whilst today 45% are owner occupied and the resident population has doubled.

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**The Thames Gateway** is Europe's largest regeneration project, stretching 40 miles along the Thames estuary from Canary Wharf in London to Southend in Essex and Sittingbourne in Kent.

- The area includes the largest designated brownfield site in the south of England, which is intended to become a leading eco-region.
- Adding to the 1.5 million people who already live in the region, 160,000 new zero carbon homes and 225,000 jobs are to be created by 2016.
- The Thames Gateway Delivery Plan (2007) outlined a government spending plan of £1.4 billion for hospital provision and £1.2 billion on schools.

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According to **Sir Peter Hall** - In 1998, 85% of new builds were houses and only 15% were flats/apartments. By 2008 a dramatic shift had taken place: **47% were apartments** and of these 35% were two-bedroom (8% 1998). More worryingly, very many of these 2 bedroom apartments are standing empty as they have not been bought as homes. Swathes of central Leeds, Birmingham Hull and London areas contain empty flats- 40% in Manchester alone.

The '**Buy-to-Let Syndrome**', where builders, developers and the financial institutions have encouraged speculative purchasers who 'buy and leave'. It appears that flats are not what people wanted and so the notorious 2-bedded unit stands empty when 50% of people prefer a detached home.

**Martin Crookston** adds that - New urban housing can occur on three relatively unused sites in city centres:

- **Redevelop old housing sites**
- **Develop small open spaces**
- **Develop vacant plots** (White land) that have not been allocated for any specific purpose in the past

In addition there are waves of office conversions to homes and sub-divisions of larger houses and refurbishment of empty stock; all three sources add to availability in brownfield areas. A policy shift has encouraged these movements and led to the **renaissance of urban areas**.

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### Detached Homes

Surveys consistently show that people do not like living in high density city areas. (CABE and MORI).

All backgrounds seem to have the same '**dream homes**' and children regularly aspire to acquire detached homes.

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The acronym **NIMBY** refers to people who often object to new developments close their own homes. They are also accused of practicing the '**drawbridge syndrome**' whereby some are effectively outsiders who have moved away from urban areas to the peace and quiet of the countryside only to find that new developments are about to engulf their newly purchased tranquility. Their home is their castle and when they object to new developments they effectively '**pull up the drawbridge**' around their village and try to keep all additional newcomers out!

Secondary question with bonus point – what does the American acronym **DINKY** refer to and where would these people choose to live?

'**Dual Income No Kids Yet**' often seek apartments in central areas close to places of work and leisure activities.

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**Eco-towns** can address two major problems in Britain today: the shortage of homes and the problem of climate change. The government hopes that eco-towns will be able to respond to these two problems, by providing affordable, sustainable living for thousands of people.

10 eco-towns are to be build all across Britain by 2020. (5 by 2016)

Current plans see the eco-towns being build on a mixture of greenfield and brownfield sites.

Designated the requirements for any eco-town. These requirements are -

- Each eco-town must have between 5, 000 and 20, 000 homes
- Have a 'distinct identity', but still have good links to other nearby towns and cities.
- Have at least 30% to 40% affordable housing
- Be 'zero-carbon' developments, made from recycled materials, use low amounts of energy and be largely car-free.
- Have a variety of facilities and services within the town, including schools and shopping areas.

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Sustainable Development implies careful consideration of all aspects of living – social, economic, and environmental.

Stemming from Gros Brundtland's report of 1981 it seeks to '**meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet theirs**' All new housing needs are effectively to be judged against sustainable criteria.

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An area of extremely mixed and changing land uses surrounding north Colchester illustrates the characteristics of the '**Rural-Urban fringe**' very well.

The OS map shows mixed agricultural, residential and business uses. A new factory takes advantage of open spaces and transport links, a reservoir provides water for the town's population and a leisure facility whilst a large supermarket gains access to both the suburban and rural market.

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A converted chapel and refurbished housing in Binham, Norfolk illustrate the arrival of new money to a rural area. Properties like these have been bought up as **holiday homes/second homes** are can be empty for long periods of the year. More significantly, the owners are probably on higher incomes than the local population and their presence has effectively taken property out of the local market, creating a shortage of affordable housing and cries for new cheaper homes in rural areas.

Once again concrete is set to spread across the countryside or communities are to be lost. 255,000 English families own a second home in England

Meanwhile there are 240,000 empty homes in London, South East and East of England.

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**Counter-urbanisation** can mean the development of new '**executive**' homes aimed at those people who have decided to **relocate** to Colchester from London and Chelmsford, offer extremely attractive modern properties on the edge of the countryside and yet a few minutes' drive from the mainline station.

Improved local road links to the station make it an even better purchase and the fact that similar properties in Chelmsford and in London are much more expensive, means that those people who are prepared to move can have plenty of cash left over. There is evidence that their presence has an **inflationary impact** on neighbouring, more established properties. This may be good for those who want to sell and downsize or move further outside Colchester, but for the people who work locally and earn less than the local average salary it poses a serious problem.

These areas are virtually dead during the day and as such have earned the reputation of being '**dormitories**'; where people only return to sleep. As a consequence there is no demand for local shops and services during the day and any businesses that previously fulfilled the needs of the traditional residents find it difficult to survive.

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Net **migration** into the UK increased to **237,000 in 2007**, according to the Office for National Statistics.

BBCNews 19 November 2008

What this means is that the UK population rose by almost a quarter of a million in 2007 - the second highest recorded annual increase after 2004 and all of these people added to the pressures on the housing stock.

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**Why is this important now?** Andy McSmith. Tuesday, 5 December 2006 The Independent

In 2003, Tony Blair and Gordon Brown commissioned a senior economist, Kate Barker, to take a long, hard look at the supply of housing. Her report, published in 2004, warned that while demand was rising all the time, there was no matching increase in supply. In 2001, the number of new homes had fallen to the lowest level since the Second World War. In January, Kate Barker was commissioned to write a second report, on whether planning laws hinder house building. Almost every developer says they do. One of many complaints is that too much of the land is a no-go for developers because of the "green belt" that surrounds every major city.

13% of England is Green Belt land, but 55% of England's land area is protected against developers – National Parks, AONB, sites of conservation and SSSIs

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**Out of town developments** – business parks and retail parks are part of the decentralizing trend.

Involving the movement of employment opportunities, leisure and service activities away from the Central Business Districts and towards green field, spacious and cheaper sites in the rural-urban fringe. **Accessibility** is the key factor and the fact that the workers and shoppers all now live away from often expensive and congested the central zone.

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**So what about the Brownfields? Sir Peter Hall:**

The Urban Taskforce 1998 set out to push up the proportion of previously used urban land from 56% to 60% and by 2005 the quotient had reached 77%. There is ample new brown land coming onto the market and in the future as industries – like Ford in Dagenham or Nissan in Sunderland retreat to other countries, as global shifts continue and technology changes old industrial sites will become available. The problem is that it is not always in the right place – it has to relate to the land around it and must become a real place.

Here old industrial dockside warehouses give way to high densities housing in the Isle of Dogs, London,

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**Are High Densities a Problem?**

Not if you can afford them! When flats have been developed as investments and values exceed local affordability then a problem exists, but not because of the density. Investment distorts the picture and turn houses into units rather than homes. As a consequence many can no longer afford to live in central areas. The recent answer has been the development of the single bedroom/studio flat designed for 'solo-occupancy'

These **i-pads** offer affordable living close to places of work and leisure. The illustrated examples both happen to be on redeveloped dockside brown field sites within a short distance of town centres.

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