

New Homes Built on Previously-Developed Land

Indicator

The percentage of all new homes (completions) built on previously developed land.

Status



The percentage of new homes built on previously-developed land in Worcestershire is good, and is remaining broadly level.

Overview

This indicator is based on data on the proportion of development occurring on previously developed land (PDL – also known as 'brownfield land'). Development on brownfield land has traditionally been considered as more sustainable than that on greenfield sites, as it preserves unspoilt countryside, limits urban sprawl, and encourages remediation of poor quality and contaminated land. Within this overarching assumption, however, it is recognised that some districts will have a greater capacity for brownfield development than others, based on historic patterns of development. Kidderminster's industrial heritage, for example, has left a legacy of significant amounts of brownfield land in and around the town.

It can be over-simplistic to consider all development on brownfield land to be automatically more favourable to development on greenfield. Whilst PDL can be of poor environmental quality, there can also be significant areas of PDL providing an important biodiversity resource. Whilst land may technically have been 'previously developed', it may well since have been 'reclaimed by nature'.

The long-established targets for the proportion of new housing that should be built on previously-developed land are being revoked. The coalition government announced in the HM Treasury/BIS Budget document '[The Plan for Growth](#)' (March 2011) that "The Government will localise choice about the use of previously developed land, removing nationally imposed targets". This is just one of a number of measures to reform the planning system, including a "presumption in favour of sustainable development, so that the default answer to development is 'yes'". Collectively, these changes could see the historic trends of high proportions of brownfield development being reversed.

In June 2010, residential garden land was expressly excluded from the definition of brownfield land in [Planning Policy Statement 3](#), which is likely to see a further reduction in the proportion of development on brownfield land. Minimum density targets have also been removed, which could increase land-take from new housing development – including on greenfield land.

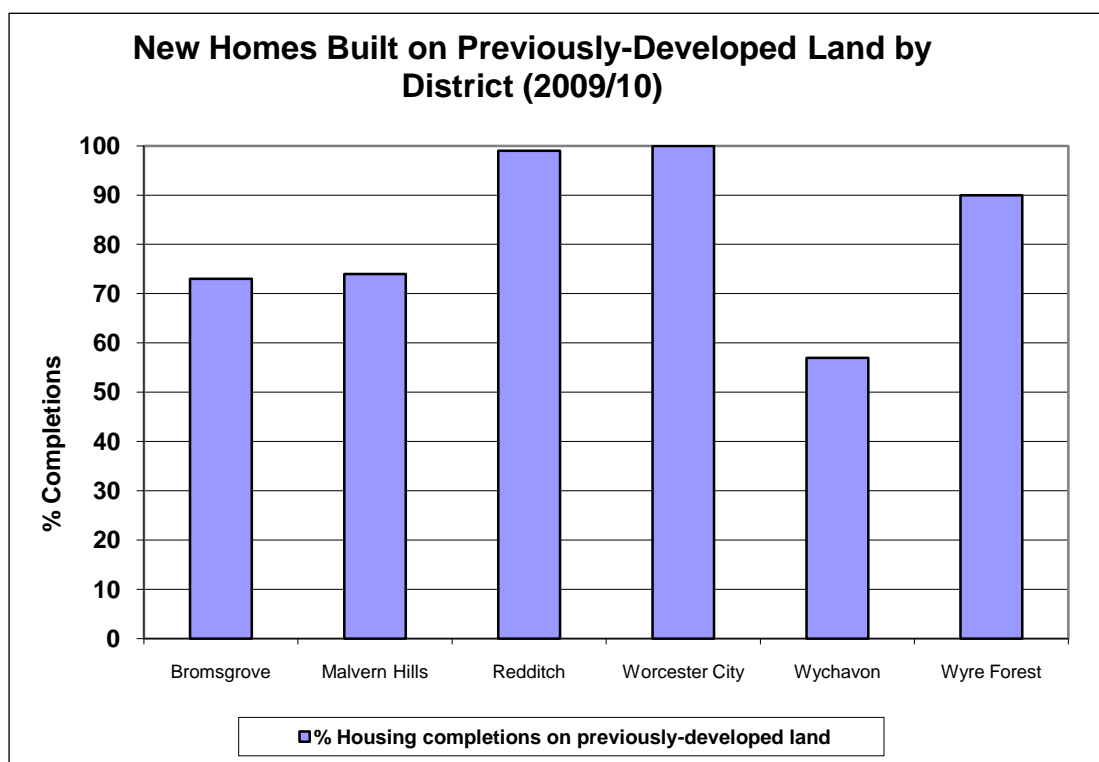
For this 2011/2012 edition of the State of the Environment report, the latest available statistics are from 2009/2010. This means that the statistics reflect development that had taken place under the 'old' policy context.

Performance

During 2009/10, 85% of new housing completions in Worcestershire were built on previously-developed land. This is slightly below the proportion in 2008/09 (88), and level with the proportion in 2007/08.

| Authority | Total dwellings completed 2009/10 | Dwellings completed on PDL | % of new dwellings completed on PDL | 2008/09 % for comparison |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Bromsgrove | 72 | 53 | 73% | 95% |
| Malvern Hills ¹ | 245 | 181 | 74% | 87% |
| Redditch | 171 | 169 | 99% | 82% |
| Worcester City ¹ | 342 | 342 | 100% | 94% |
| Wychavon ¹ | 178 | 102 | 57% | 70% |
| Wyre Forest | 217 | 195 | 90% | 96% |
| Worcestershire | 1,225 | 1,042 | 85% | 88% |

Note: figures may not round exactly. ¹ Includes new and converted dwellings.



Geographical Context

Worcestershire's average proportion of development of new dwellings on PDL is above the average rate for PDL development nationally; DCLG have published provisional statistics showing that 80% of all dwellings were completed on previously-developed land in 2009.

Worcestershire's rate of 85% of housing completions on previously-developed land is well ahead of the 70% target set out in the West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy (WMRSS) Phase 2 Preferred Option. Due to the proposed revocation of Regional Strategies, work on the WMRSS has now ceased, and monitoring has been dramatically reduced. It is therefore not possible to provide up-to-date figures for regional greenfield/brownfield development.

Actions

Districts are including policies within their Local Development Framework to maximise the proportion of new dwellings built on previously developed land. This may change in light of the government's policy shift away from prescribing where housing must be developed (although Wyre Forest's Core Strategy, which was adopted in December 2010, already strongly supports development on brownfield land).

Further Information

Information on the type and number of completions in each district can be found in their respective Annual Monitoring Reports, available online. Work on the Regional Strategy has ceased, following the government's intention to abolish this tier of policy through the Localism Bill, but evidence base material and monitoring work remains available on the [West Midlands Regional Assembly](#) website. National statistics can be found on the [DCLG](#) website.