*Insights from open question*

At the end of the survey, respondents were given the opportunity to “let us know if there is anything else you would like to say about this topic (e.g. brownfield sites, undeveloped sites, use of the land in the UK, etc.)”. Answers given in response to this provide a number of useful insights that reflect and reinforce our main findings, or highlight other areas for consideration.

Lots of respondents used this to highlight the complexity of the issues under consideration, with comments like:

* “A difficult balance between repurposing and protecting wildlife”
* “Affordable housing is necessary but not at detriment to environment and natural wildlife”
* “Answers very much depend on where you live”
* “Brownfield sites are complex and each one is different. Trying to standardise them is a lost cause”
* “The land in question and local area would need to be the driving factor”
* “Each individual case should be considered on its merits, [with] a bias towards nature preservation, because it is easy to destroy natural sites but hard and sometimes impossible to restore them”
* “The definition of a ‘brownfield site’ encompasses too large a range of possible attributes of an area of land to be useful in designating how land should be redeveloped, for e.g. setting a target on the number of brownfield sites to be redeveloped”

Some specifically highlighted a distinction between urban brownfield sites and those in rural areas; however, the direction of their preference was not consistent:

* “Brownfield sites in cities and towns should be used before ones in more open areas where there is rich wildlife”
* “Brownfield sites should be prioritised for redevelopment by distance from city centres, nearer to the centre first”
* “I perceive brownfield sites as previous [sic] used sites within an urban area. The sites shown in the survey appear to be on the whole wild sites with public access”
* “It seems sensible to develop urban brownfields especially for housing - but it is a different matter in the countryside. Every single site has its own qualities and there should be no blanket policies applied everywhere”
* “Many brownfield sites, near large urban areas, would be better turned into green spaces to add nature and wildlife to heavily built up areas”

A substantial number expressed the view that brownfields should always be developed to spare green belts, even though this was at odds with our analyses:

* “Brownfield sites should always be the preference for development over other land”
* “Brownfield sites should be the first to be redeveloped rather than building on green belt land which should be protected at all costs”

But others more closely reflected our main finding:

* “Brownfield sites should be used first where there is no important biodiversity at risk”
* “Brownfield sites should be used sensitively with awareness of wildlife, flora and fauna. Research should be carefully undertaken before using such sites”
* “Brownfield sites should, in most situations, be used before greenfield sites, unless the brownfield site has had time to become an important wildlife area and of value to the local population, compared to a monoculture type landscape”
* “It is important to take into context the wildlife and plant life of the local area surrounding the brownfield site rather than classing them as always fit to be developed”
* “If the area is rich in wildlife, developed or not, it should be preserved for wildlife”

Or otherwise gave anecdotes highlighting the potential community value of open space that brownfield sites can provide:

* “The last 12 months has shown how much people appreciate places to walk when they live in a highly populated area, and one of these places locally was a brownfield site”
* “I live in an area with many brownfield sites that have been turned into nature reserves and country parks. They are wonderful places and heavily used by the local communities”

Some directly or indirectly highlighted misconceptions/stereotypes about brownfield sites:

* “I am a supporter of developing brownfield sites in city centres, but the images tended to indicate more rural locations which I would be less supportive to see turned into housing or an industrial estate”
* “I wasn’t aware that brownfield sites had often been repossessed by nature!”
* “Some sites described as brownfield sites have been reclaimed by nature (e.g. old quarries) [so] perhaps the definition of ‘brownfield’ needs revising”
* “The name brownfield is misleading - brownfield [sites] can be green and greenfield sites brown!”
* “Sites where there are remnants of the original development (abandoned buildings, debris etc.)... cause most concern. None of the sites in the photos was an eyesore”

Finally, there were plenty of comments that depressed me which I won’t reproduce here (like the multiple people who used a survey about brownfield sites to rant about immigrants), but these made me smile:

* “I know more about brownfield sites now after taking this survey and feel more positive about them”
* “I think brownfield sites can be rich in wildlife and of great value, but it massively depends! Thanks for the interesting survey”