

Contaminated land

Building and construction works take place in many different environments, but general descriptions of 'greenfield' and 'brownfield' are commonly used.

Greenfield land refers to a site located in a rural area not previously built on. Increasingly though, the redevelopment of brownfield land previously used for commercial or industrial activities has grown, in recognition of the importance of conserving our rural environment.

Bringing these brownfield sites back into use is also considered a more sustainable option than using greenfield land: however, sites that have had previous industrial occupation should be assumed to be polluted, and tests should be undertaken to ascertain the types of pollutant and their levels of concentration.



Before any work starts on site

- Preliminary investigations and desktop studies of the site and its previous uses must be carried out to identify the risks from contamination, and site investigations carried out to identify the type and extent of any suspected contamination.
- Competent testing companies and accredited laboratories must be engaged to carry out the testing and analysis of any contamination, and advise on proposed remediation strategies to be agreed by the local planning authority and relevant environment agency, where appropriate.
- Environmental permits should be in place for the treatment and remediation of contamination, and discharge consents in place for dealing with contaminated water discharges to foul sewers or tankers.
- The proposed remediation strategy should be agreed by the local planning authority and relevant environment agency, where appropriate.

When work has started on site

- The site induction covers details of contamination, the procedures for working in areas of known contamination, and the procedures in place to ensure that work is stopped and that appropriate reporting must take place if contamination is discovered or accidentally disturbed.
- Areas of contamination are fenced off to prevent vehicles and plant spreading it across the site, and suitable decontamination welfare facilities made available to employees working in the contaminated areas.
- Contaminated materials that need to be stockpiled must be positioned well away from drainage systems or watercourses, and covered with silt fences to prevent run-off and wind-blown contamination. They should be stored in containers or on areas of hardstanding to avoid contaminating the ground and groundwater below.
- Vehicles removing contaminated materials from site should cover the contaminated load with sheets and be secured before leaving site.
- Suitable vehicle washing facilities must be available to adequately clean any contaminated vehicles before leaving site (not just a wheel wash).

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