

Unit 4 - Pressure at the Rural-Urban Fringe

4.1 How is land use changing at the rural-urban fringe?

The Rural-Urban Fringe (RUF) is the area where the built up urban area meets the open countryside. Usually at the edge of the city, it is part-urban and part-rural.

Within the RUF you would find woodland, fields, housing estates, retail parks, golf courses, country parks, business parks. As the urban area spreads outwards the RUF is under pressure to be redeveloped - this is called urban sprawl.

- **Housing:** suburbanisation is the growth of suburbs - areas of housing estates on the edge of cities. There is increasing demand for houses because people are living longer, families are smaller and more people are living alone. People want somewhere attractive, clean and safe to live - for families this often means in suburbs, which increases urban sprawl.
There is also some growth in villages outside the RUF. This is called counterurbanisation - people choosing to move away from the city to live (although they'll probably drive there to work and shop).
- **Retailing:** increasing numbers of retail parks and out of town shopping centres mean that people are shopping more at the edge of cities. The land here is cheaper and greenfield sites are easier and cheaper to build on than brownfield sites. With increased car ownership and more ring roads, areas on the edge of the city are more accessible today than many CBDs.
- **Leisure:** new leisure developments are springing up on the edge of cities - from multiplex cinemas and bowling alleys, to golf courses, riding stables and farm parks - as well as more extreme activities like paintballing and quad biking.
- **Industry:** modern industry wants pleasant locations with easy access to roads. The RUF is perfect for this - e.g. science park developments such as at Cambridge.
- **Transport:** ring roads, airports and park and ride developments all happen in the RUF.

4.2 What are the impacts of changing land use at the rural-urban fringe?

Both the countryside and the city are effected by development at the RUF - good impacts and bad ones.

Negative effects of development at the RUF	Advantages of development at the RUF
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • loss of countryside - this is valuable as habitats but also for leisure use (walking, horse riding etc...) • change in character - new housing brings new people and new ideas to areas such as old villages • traffic congestion - people need to commute to work or shop in cities • pollution - noise and air pollution from traffic • visual pollution - new development is often an eyesore • creates conflict with incomers • increased risk of flooding - due to impermeable concrete 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • creates employment, leading to the multiplier effect - jobs can be in construction (short-term) and in new developments (longer-term) • increased accessibility - from new roads • improved facilities for people living in rural areas - if more people move there shops and services will open • better lifestyle - cleaner air, new housing and more space provide a better life for people moving out of central areas • cheap and easy to build on greenfield sites

4.3 How can pressure at the rural-urban fringe be managed?

Redevelop Brownfield Sites	...keeps cities attractive and uses up space in the city rather than at the edge	...but brownfield sites are limited, cost more, and are not always suitable. People often prefer not to live in the centre
Environmental Protection	...set up sites as nature reserves, SSSIs (Sites of Special Scientific Interest) or AONBs (Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty), which protect them	...but these are usually small sites and developers can build around them and swallow them up
Green Belts	...bands of land around cities which can not be used for new development	...but development often skips over the greenbelt and happens outside it which leads to even more traffic problems.
New Towns	...brand new settlements complete with services built in the countryside	...but these still develop the RUF and cause the same problems