Inner City Problems In The UK Essay, Research Paper

There are a number of pressing urban and rural issues in Britain including inner city problems,urban sprawl and green belt threats. In this essay I will be looking at examples of these and talking about the effects on the enviroment and the population. Some solutions to these problems will also be argued.

These days it seems like shoppers are deserting their local city centre for shopping as it is thought that many fear crime and feel threatened by beggers on the street. Researchers say that 3 times as many town centre users saw crime as a serious problem as did customers in enclosed shopping centres who said they felt safer shopping in them because of the security cameras and security guards on duty. These shopping centres eg Meadow Hall (Sheffield) and Merryhill (Dudley) can offer so much more to the customer. Sufficient car parking,evrything under 1 roof, protection from the weather. They can also offer cheaper prices because of where they are situated. Land which is very close to the central business district (CBD) has a high value whilst land that is further away has a lower value. The money that is saved on land prices is passed on to the customer so prices for goods are cheaper than those in the high street. It is near impossible for the high street to compete with this. An example of a town that has been left for dead is DUdley town centre where all of the big name shops have moved to the Merryhill shopping centre. The town centre is full of empty buildings and family businesses eg Bakers, Butchers that are experiencing a lack of trade. Coming back to the subject of fear, 1 in 7 high street shoppers said they avoided parts of the town centre, mostly around pubs and clubs, compared with 1 in 20 shopping centre shoppers. It has been said that in the future the high streets only regular customers will be the poor, including pensioners, people on benefits and those that aren’t very mobile. Another theory is that the high streets will become a source of ‘top up’ shopping like the corner shop where customers would buy just a pint of milk or a loaf of bread that they forgot to buy from the out of town shopping centre. Some say the high street can survive in the future but a in a different form. It could become dominated by Doctors, Solicitors, Estate agents, restaurants and speciality shops. However almost half of all shoppers asked said they visit the high street regularly and 25% said they visited it occasionally. 64% of out of town shopping centre shoppers said they preferred them because everything is under 1 roof. 58% preferred them because of the ease of parking and 52% said they were attracted by free parking. Nearly half of all shoppers said they would shop in the high street if there were a better choice of shop. Free parking would entice 42% and more big names in the high street would attract 34% of all the shoppers asked.

It is possible that the high street shops of many cities in Britain can be saved. The high street retailers must make a radical change of priorities to stop migration of shoppers to out of town shopping centres. At the moment town centre managers put commercial development of their areas above security of shoppers. A 24 hour city or town centre with people living over businesses and policemen on every street, good lighting at night and save car parks all offer real hope of urban revival. However it is unrealistic to expect town centre managers to deal with the problem without an adaquate budget. The government does claim that it ha saved the high streets of Britain by halting expansion of out of town shopping centres. Many dismiss these claims and say that the government’s action is too little too late.

As more and more people decide to leave large cities, there is a lot of pressure for more development in the urban fringe( the area on the edge of or just beyond the built up zone). Planners are realising that there is risk of new urban developments in time spreading and joining together with existing urban areas (urban sprawl). This would lead to the loss of valuable agricultural and recreational land. Giant conurbations would be created(when cities have grown so big they merge with others). Green belts are areas around the perimeter of cities which inhibit the creation of conurbations as they are protected from planning development. They are mostly open space, agricultural land and woodland. Urban development can however spill over into the restricted area and sometimes beyond it . Green belts are generally recognised as having 5 main uses. To check the spread of further urban development, to keep neighbouring towns seperate, to preserve the character of a town, to assist in urban renewal and to provide an improved enviroment for recreation and leisure. Green belts cover 12% of the total land area in Britain. It is said that green belts have had some success in preventing urban sprawl in Britain. A report however states that they could have outlived their usefulness and highlights the problems associated with them. There is evidence to say that a lot of the green belt land is brown belt land (land that is damaged or degraded). As much as 20% of Londons green belt could consist of this type because the land is used for sewage works and power stations mixed with abandoned weed ridden fields. It has been thought that jobs have been lost as a result of prohibited developments because green belts involve strict regulations on new or expanding development. 100 000 jobs have thought to have been lost in the manufacturing industry since 1945 in the London area. There is pressure to let the green belt land be used for housing. Particularly in nice looking villages or sites close to transport links like motorways,dual carriageways and railway stations. An example of a development idea spilling into the green belt is the National exhibition centre near Birmingham. The problem with this though is it increases pressure for other companies to do the same.

There isn’t much to go on in thinking of solutions for the problem of green belts. Would massive conurbations be a problem anyway? on the other hand it is nice to have peaceful areas where people can enjoy the natural earth. I believe it’s important to have natural looking areas of the country and not to transform them into cities. We shouldn’t be greedy or money dependent.

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