Finn’s Settlement Explorer: Choosing the Perfect Spot

Learning objective: To understand the geographical factors that influence where human settlements are built, including natural resources, water supply, and transport links.

Finn the dolphin has travelled from the coast up the river to find the best place to start a new settlement. Imagine you are a town planner. Look at the three potential sites below and decide which one is best for a new village. For each site, consider the needs of the settlers: fresh water, protection from flooding, access to trade, and food sources. Fill in the blanks with the correct geographical terminology and provide your justification.

Word bank: confluence · estuary · transport · natural resources · topography · fertile · defense

1. Site A is located on a steep hillside. Explain why the 'topography' of this site might be difficult for building houses and roads. How would the cost of construction be affected? (2 marks)

2. Site B is at the 'confluence' of two rivers. Why is this a historically popular location for early settlers? Think about trade and water access. (2 marks)

3. Site C is located on a apartment, low-lying coastal 'estuary' with very 'fertile' soil. What might happen if sea levels rise? Justify whether this is a safe long-term choice. (2 marks)

4. Compare and contrast Site A and Site B. Which site offers better protection, and which offers better 'transport' links? Explain your reasoning. (2 marks)

5. If you were a settler, why would you prioritise being near 'natural resources' like woodland or stone? How would this affect the cost of building homes in £ (pounds)? (2 marks)

6. Justify your final decision: If you had a budget of £10,000 to start the village, which site would provide the best value for money and the greatest safety for the residents? (2 marks)

Draw: Draw a bird's-eye view map of your chosen settlement site. Include a river, a bridge, a cluster of houses, and a marketplace. Label where you have placed your resources.

Extension challenge: Imagine a new technology allows us to build settlements in extreme environments, such as floating on the sea or underground. Write a short paragraph explaining the geographical challenges of one of these environments and how you would solve them.