

NEWSLETTER



Planning and Politics

Land use consultation document:

A look at the recently published consultation paper from the UK Government on ensuring the planning system is better equipped to deal with current and future challenges relating to land use transformations.



On the 31st of January, the Government published a consultation with the scope of addressing key challenges faced by a fair land use transition. It is set out in four key parts, the first of which focuses on presenting evidence to underpin decisions, the second sets out draft principles for decision making, the third outlines policy levers that could be developed, and the fourth describes the process of co-creation that will inform the land use framework. A summary of each of these parts is set out in Page 2.

An overview of the consultation:

Key priorities include making space for nature, water management, and emissions reduction to meet legal environmental commitments. Sustainable food production must support farmers' long-term viability and resilience. New housing and infrastructure, including 1.5 million homes, require strategic planning to minimize land trade-offs and integrate development with national objectives.

Long-term economic growth depends on strengthening natural capital and climate resilience. Effective land use change will require collaboration with land managers, businesses, and communities, ensuring the right skills, data, and policies are in place. This consultation begins a broader conversation on optimizing land use for multiple benefits while supporting those responsible for implementation.

Why is this consultation necessary?

- Land in England is changing in response to the climate and biodiversity crises, global shocks, government policy and consumer and business needs.
- Extreme weather events are increasingly impacting valuable farmland.
- Increasing community demand for cleaner rivers, lakes and seas.
- The consultation is seeking to promote a public discussion on how land can deliver on missions for growth and clean energy, boost food security and meet statutory climate and nature targets, meeting the above challenges head on

Discover more [here](#).



Our land is our greatest natural asset - the source of food, the bedrock of nature, the support system of the environment on which we all rely. It is the place we live, work and rest. The people who work on and look after the land, and make decisions about how land should be used, have been pivotal in this country's history and are central to its future. Because these decisions are not marginal, the use of our land underpins everything in our economy and our society

UK Government



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Part 1: Evidence to underpin decisions

- By land area, England is a predominantly rural and agricultural country. 85% of its land area can be classed as rural, providing critical underpinnings for the economy. 67% of England's land is agricultural generating £37bn annually in England alone,
- However, by population 83% of people lived in urban settlements of 10,000 people or more as of 2020.
- Government policy supports maintaining food production alongside land use changes through expected increases in land productivity
- The 1.5 million new homes require just 30kha or 0.2% of land available by the end of parliament.
- All major utilities covered just 0.2% of England's land as of 2022 meaning that homes and infrastructure needed can be built without compromising objectives on food security and environmental targets.

Part 2: Draft principles for decision making

- **Co-design** – Encourage local and regional participation in shaping spatial strategies and assessing fairness in land use changes.
- **Multifunctional Land** – Maximise land benefits based on societal needs (e.g., co-locating homes and nature for health benefits) and environmental pressures (e.g., pollution reduction).
- **Playing to Land Strengths** – Prioritise land use changes where benefits are highest and trade-offs are minimal (e.g., protecting prime agricultural land or considering grid constraints for renewables).
- **Long-term Decision-Making** – Plan with resilience in mind, ensuring developments can withstand future climate impacts (e.g., flood-resistant housing).
- **Responsive by Design** – Adapt policies based on new data, opportunities, and environmental changes.

The consultation ends on the 25th April 2025, again, it can be viewed [here](#).

Part 3: Policy levers that could be developed

Policy focuses on four key themes:

- Aligned incentives
 - Incentivising Long term food security
 - Bringing nature closer to communities
 - Making space for nature
 - increasing private investment into nature based solutions
 - Bringing community spaces back into community ownership
- Joined up decisions on land usage
 - Strategic spatial planning for development and infrastructure
 - Connecting plans and strategies
 - planning for climate resilient land use change
- Accessible High quality data
 - Improving land use data
 - Understanding land's capability
 - Land use data's interaction with other data sets
 - Reducing data costs where it benefits the public or economy
- Ensuring the right skills are in the right places
 - supporting land managers with new skills for changing uses
 - Accelerating the sharing of best practice and evidence
 - Sharing lessons from nature restoration and climate adaptation practice

Part 4: Next steps for co-creation and engagement on a land use framework

Plan for policy co-creation:

- Workshops will be ran in six regions of England during the twelve weeks of consultation. Parallel to this minister led round tables will take place with key stakeholder groups.
- Methodology for a review model is being considered, similar to Scotland's five year land use strategies.

Making government effective in policy co-creation:

- Recognises the requirement for a unified government approach to align land use policies with implementation requiring better cross-department coordination.

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