



## **Consultation Response from Surrey Nature Partnership to the Land Use Consultation**

[Submission via online questionnaire]

### **Overview**

The Government is consulting on our vision for land use in England and how to deliver it. This consultation will inform the development of a Land Use Framework and develop the principles used to assess what should go where.

### ***1 To what extent do you agree or disagree with our assessment of the scale and type of land use change needed, as set out in this consultation and the Analytical Annex?***

Agree

#### ***Please explain your answer:***

Our main concerns for Surrey is the impact of so much development on a small county that does not fit the England average. Total agricultural land is only 37%. Woodland cover is around 25%, which along with golf courses and equestrian land gives the county a green countryside. 30% is urban with only 70% rural. The SE has a congested infrastructure and failing water system. We agree that everyone should have a good quality home, however not be at the expense of the green infrastructure and our food security. It is vital that whole regions are considered together to get a realistic balance in land use. 74 % Greenbelt influences the use of land, more development is outside the greenbelt increasing pressure on land. The review of Green belt land is welcomed.

In order to maintain that essential link between people and nature for health and wellbeing the population of the SE needs access to green space that is not overcrowded and degraded. That access must, as much as possible, be on foot, by bike and via public transport rather than private cars. Agricultural land will form an important part of that greenspace.

### ***2. Do you agree or disagree with the land use principles proposed?***

Agree

#### ***Please explain your answer:***

Generally agree but would like to see more emphasis on Local Nature Recovery Strategies and Local Environmental Improvement Plans, allowing the communities in local areas to decide on use of the principles. As outline above Surrey does not fit the average and is densely populated because of the proximity to London, employment, transport hubs and the unique quality of the habitats created from its geological variety.

We should always play to the strengths of the land but be guided by the need now and in the future as well. Most land is very versatile if treated properly but locations can be very specific by need of the population or unique factors of the land. In Surrey's case the land provides limited locations for vineyards but grows good grass and trees, land is limited for hungrier crops and its location has overridden the agricultural use in favour of development, some of which are large estates on the edge of London.

“Our vision is to see a healthy natural environment supporting economic and social benefits throughout Surrey”

[surreynaturepartnership.org](http://surreynaturepartnership.org)

**3. Beyond Government departments in England, which other decision makers do you think would benefit from applying these principles?**

**Combined and local authorities (including local planning authorities) Please explain your answer:**

They have the knowledge of their needs of the populations and the planning history and need of the area.

With larger local authorities resulting from Local Government Re-organisation, devolution has the opportunity to provide a better more integrated planning system and use of land across a wider area.

**Landowners and land managers (including environmental and heritage groups) Please explain your answer:**

Landowners and land managers generally do apply these sort so principles but an overriding quick return can prevent sensible long-term thinking. resulting development that follow the grants/incentive but don't have a long-term benefit.

**Others (please specify) Please explain your answer:**

Energy and Infrastructure providers including Water Companies. They all need to have a mixed discipline team to do their land use planning so that long term delivery of power/road/rail and water can not only be effective but bring benefits to nature as well. For example, the Water Companies in our area are failing to provide consist water supplies and constantly polluting the rivers and water courses with sewage. There are several ways to prevent this through Nature Based Solutions that would help manage the water and remove pollutants.

**4. What are the policies, incentives and other changes that are needed to support decision makers in the agricultural sector to deliver this scale of land use change, while considering the importance of food production?**

A clear Road Map with a shared vision and financial incentives to deliver, from tax incentives and the appropriate grants to access natural capital where appropriate.

Along with this there is a clear need for free access to initial advice and reasonably priced follow up advice, as has periodically existed in the past e.g. Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group.

**5. How could Government support more land managers to implement multifunctional land uses that deliver a wider range of benefits, such as agroforestry systems with trees within pasture or arable fields?**

Extend farmer advisers across the country by free initial visits and then potentially at a subsidised fee. They should be trained in rural land management and not necessarily experts but able to advise where more help can be found. This would build on the FWAG/ Rural Advisers of the past. Most landowners are open to multifunctional land but like most people they need to understand what is possible and how to achieve it.

**6. What should the Government consider in identifying suitable locations for spatially targeted incentives?**

It is important that land is assessed on what it can provide most sustainably and then what can be combined with that. E.g. if its is good food producing land then that takes precedent, but nature is also important for maintaining the quality of that land and its ability to produce food. Soils being a particular concern.

If there is scope to alleviate an issue such as poor water management that should also be included and note the need to protect spring lines as well as the water catchment. Use local knowledge to determine the best way forward. Better integration of the planning system will also help to identify the best places to achieve multiple benefits.

***7. What approach(es) could most effectively support land managers and the agricultural sector to steer land use changes to where they can deliver greater potential benefits and lower trade-offs?***

A clear plan with a phased change that gives time to get there, e.g. a transition period with advice and financial incentives. The value of free advice. Particularly initially cannot be overstated.

***8. In addition to promoting multifunctional land uses and spatially targeting land use change incentives, what more could be done by Government or others to reduce the risk that we displace more food production and environmental impacts abroad?***

***Monitoring land use change or production on agricultural land. Please explain your answer:***

Food is still a primary need so ensure best land and soil is used for food. Continue to monitor changes to ensure there isn't an acceleration of change away from food production as other land use becomes more profitable leaving us importing far more food/agricultural produce.

***Accounting for displaced food production impacts in project appraisals. Please explain your answer:***

Yes this is essential but it may require an incentive to remain in agriculture where other land uses are more profitable. We will have to pay a realistic amount for our food or subsidise its production.

***Protecting the best agricultural land from permanent land use changes. Please explain your answer:***

Food is still a primary need so ensure best land and soil is used for food. Continue to monitor changes. Having a clear Farming Roadmap that sets out the priorities for production and types of soils /land they would be best produced on. Agree targets for what we can and should produce at home and set import levels. Use tariffs on imported goods we can be self-sufficient in, so costs help to reduce imports and encourage buying British.

***Please explain your answer:***

Nature Restoration Fund-prioritise funds to areas with particular issues flagged in local plans/Local EIPs e.g. water in South East -quantity and quality and the impact on the population. Use natural systems to help regulate the quality of water, storage for dry periods and slowing the flow during heavy rain.

We welcome the call for evidence on potential private investment from economic sectors who impact on or benefit from shared natural capital.

**9. What should Government consider in increasing private investment towards appropriate land use changes?**

**Please explain your answer:**

Looking at those companies who use land for their business or gain by appropriate uses of land and these can vary greatly from those direct uses such as the energy and water companies to all business who employ people.

The wellbeing of the population and of all businesses is underpinned access to nature, food, the availability of freshwater and energy and housing. That overall connection needs to be stressed, particularly with larger businesses.

Co-ordinated planning could provide solutions that could be implemented at a lower cost using nature-based solutions and the power of volunteers. Nature and access to nature is essential for the health and wellbeing of the population, investment from companies into the local greenspace to support the health and wellbeing of their employees, and the support from Government for health interventions that prevent health issues by getting people more active and supporting parks and countryside site, would provide some important support to nature. Improving nature and green spaces in turn supports farming, for example, through increasing pollinators, reducing flooding and storing water for drought periods. water storage.

**10. What changes are needed to accelerate 30by30 delivery, including by enabling Protected Landscapes to contribute more?**

**Strengthened Protected Landscapes legislation (around governance and regulations or duties on key actors) with a greater focus on nature. Please explain your answer:**

Agree, protected landscapes have built up a good communications teams and are able to get important messages to the populations around those landscapes, and visitors to them. This includes the companies in those landscapes. They also have a lot of volunteers. They can all have an important impact on physically getting work done on the ground for nature and promoting visitors and residents to get involved as well.

In addition, with partners, such as the Nature Partnerships and Wildlife Trusts they can extend the scope of their work across a wider area and help to achieve the connectivity of nature and green space that is essential for people and wildlife

In addition they are able to manage small grant schemes to help deliver on the ground (Note to reader: 'deliver on the ground' was not part of the official submission but aids understanding of the point)

**Tools: such as greater alignment of existing Defra schemes with the 30by30 criteria (for 30by30 criteria and next steps see: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/criteria-for-30by30-on-land-in-england/30by30-on-land-in-england-confirmed-criteria-and-next-steps> )**

**Please explain your answer:**

Agree

**Resources: such as funding or guidance for those managing Protected Landscapes for nature Please explain your answer:**

Guidance can be provided by the existing Nature based organisations, e.g. Surrey Nature Partnership and Surrey Wildlife Trust.

Resources would be best directed at project staff and small grants.

***Other (please specify)***

***Please explain your answer:***

Agree emphasis on National Landscapes (NL) makes sense. AONBs in particular do not have sufficient emphasis on quality of the environment. However, they should also take into account the areas outside the NL or this will result in degraded areas outside the NLS, where most people live. In some, cases including Surrey, the NL is not so accessible to people who can't drive and where public transport to rural areas is limited. Connectivity, referred to above is important in achieving a way for nature and people, on foot, horse or bike, to easily get around.

***11. What approaches could cost-effectively support nature and food production in urban landscapes and on land managed for recreation?***

***Please explain your answer:***

All development should include corridors that connect green space for nature and people. This must become compulsory in new development and new development be used to retro fit corridors and links across urban areas. Permeable surfaces, green roofs, nest boxes, swift bricks, etc need to be a part of all developments. The Spatial Development Strategies should be used to develop more joined up plans and allow joined up decisions.

It is more important to create access corridors with green space in places where people, live than necessarily to create new trails outside urban areas. Also try to avoid interfering with private rights such as on rivers, e.g. fishing and boating.

Surrey has created a system of Urban Biodiversity Opportunity Areas (BOA) which highlight the opportunities close to where people live to provide better nature connectivity, extended greenspace can be an additional benefit.

Food growing and community orchards are another way to engage people in their greenspace, provide food and improve wellbeing.

***12. How can Government ensure that development and infrastructure spatial plans take advantage of potential co-benefits and manage trade-offs?***

***Please explain your answer:***

A more joined up way of planning and ensuring that all submitted plans have had all the relevant parties involved from the beginning of an application.

e.g. involve landscape architects, ecologist, land managers as well as builders, developers, infrastructure and drainage experts plus infrastructure experts. Larger developments tend to bring them all together, but Landscape Architects, Ecologists and Land Managers are often not involved until late in the process, when creating the best development possible is difficult and seen to add too much cost.

There is also a need for more coherent cross boundary planning as most factors in planning do not stop at an artificial boundary. If the SDS links across the boundary then all subsequent

planning applications that are adjacent to the local development needs to ensure any cross-boundary issues are considered.

**13. How can local authorities and Government better take account of land use opportunities in transport planning?**

**Please explain your answer:**

Infrastructure/transport planning needs to be national, regional and local, treated like the LNRS and mapped across boundaries to highlight opportunities and challenges. Opportunities need to be used to filter run off, collect plastic/rubber from tyres, reduce sound etc using nature where possible. Any small pieces of land that have been isolated need to be developed as nature havens. Ensure connectivity for nature and green travel/exercise, plan in verges and banks to become nature sites/walking routes.

Ensure the managers of road verges/ green space are better trained to understand mowing constantly does not enhance the space and is not necessary for safety grounds in many cases.

**14. How can Government support closer coordination across plans and strategies for different sectors and outcomes at the local and regional level?**

**Please explain your answer:**

Government should make it compulsory that plans are shared and linked. It will take time to get them all co-ordinated, but it will come and will save time and effort in the future. It will require published plans to be linked across the country on the same IT platform.

**15. Would including additional major landowners and land managers in the Adaptation Reporting Power process (see above) support adaptation knowledge sharing? Please give any reasons or alternative suggestions in the text box below.**

Yes

**Please explain your answer:**

Yes, it would be helpful to include more landowners and managers in this process and then support adaptation and knowledge sharing. This needs to be made simpler and not be too bureaucratic. It would encourage landowners and managers to think through the area and provide greater understanding to government.

**16. Below is a list of activities the Government could implement to support landowners, land managers, and communities to understand and prepare for the impacts of climate change.**

**Providing better information on local climate impacts to inform local decision making and strategies (for example, translating UK Climate Projections into what these mean in terms of on-the-ground impacts on farming, buildings, communities and nature) (Met Office UK Climate Projections available at**

**<https://www.metoffice.gov.uk/research/approach/collaboration/ukcp>), Providing improved tools and guidance for turning climate information into tangible actions (for example, how to produce an adaptation plan for different sectors), Other (please specify)**

***Please explain your answer:***

The first two are essential and should be prioritised.

Sharing resilience standards could be too generic and would require quite a lot of interpretation to make it generally useful.

Resilience to climate change needs to be a criteria used in deciding how the land is used, however it needs to be clear and accurate.

Other: reinstate the SFI and incentivise appropriate actions.

***17. What changes to how Government's spatial data is presented or shared could increase its value in decision making and make it more accessible?***

***Updating existing Government tools, apps, portals or websites***

***Please explain your answer:***

Not Answered

***Bringing data from different sectors together into common portals or maps***

***Please explain your answer:***

Need to ensure data is comparable and trustworthy. Increasing consistency across spatial and land datasets I feel this way because:

This is essential otherwise the data is meaningless because it can't be relied on.

***More explanation or support for using existing tools, apps or websites***

***Please explain your answer:***

Too many 'toolkits' are produced in expectation that they represent a panacea problem-solver, without sufficient support/back-up for their intended users.

***18. What improvements could be made to how spatial data is captured, managed, or used to support land use decisions in the following sectors?***

***Environment and forestry: such as local and volunteer-collected environmental records***

***Please explain your answer:***

This data is often not held in one place and can be difficult to access except for other members of a group. There needs to be confidence in the holder of the data centrally that they will only release it to legitimate users. The data itself needs to be collected in a similar way to enable a proper history of the records to be relied on.

***Recreation and access: such as accessible land and route data***

***Please explain your answer:***

A lot of data is held locally and centrally but it needs to be better managed and collected in a comparative way so it can be relied on over periods of time. Government-published land and agricultural statistics

***Please explain your answer:***

Key to all data is its compatibility and comparability over time. It needs to be trustworthy and ideally the same data used by everyone.

***19. What improvements are needed to the quality, availability and accessibility of ALC data to support effective land use decisions?***

***Please explain your answer:***

Not answered

***20. Which sources of spatial data should Government consider making free or easier to access, including via open licensing, to increase their potential benefit?***

***Please explain your answer:***

Landownership, not necessarily the private addresses, although these may be obvious from the owner's name, but who owns the land.

***21. What gaps in land management capacity or skills do you anticipate as part of the land use transition?***

***Development and planning***

***Please explain your answer:***

Landscape Architects and in many cases ecologists are not employed by Local Authorities. Surrey for example has one Landscape Architect employed by the County Councils currently and a number of ecologists on short term contracts across the County and Borough and District Councils. Employed using BNG funding and LNRS funding. These roles need to be permanent and employed across the all the Councils.

***Farming***

***Please explain your answer:***

Need for good advisors on issues from farming IT/machinery/nature/available funding, etc These could be provided through a number of existing organisations but would need to be funded.

***Recreation and access***

***Please explain your answer:***

Lack of enough local authority funding to allow for sufficient people to help landowner/managers, increased funding for in house expertise here could help and allow them to be available to advise landowners and managers.

***Other (please specify)***

***Please explain your answer:***

Skills in habitat restoration, land, land management and volunteer co-ordination/leadership

**22. How could the sharing of best practice in innovative land use practices and management be improved?**

***Please explain your answer:***

Webinars, contacts to follow up, on site workshops linked to Colleges and Universities to demonstrate innovation. Sharing lessons such as organisations such as CLA/NFU already do.

**23. Should a Land Use Framework for England be updated periodically, and if so, how frequently should this occur?**

Yes, another frequency or approach.

***Please provide details. Please explain your answer:***

Suggest every 10 years to allow for resources to undertake the update and feedback on implementation.

**24. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposed areas above?**

Strongly agree

***Please explain your answer:***

A cross governmental approach to this work is vital and oversight of the delivery essential to show impact of the Land Use Framework as part of the overall strategic use of land across all aspects.

It would make sense to use the planning Depts in local authorities to pull the spatial information together, at local and strategic levels, which would require additional resources at that level. This could also be added to using Research establishments such as local universities to co-ordinate data and analyse it.