Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
Land Use Consultation

By online consultation questionnaire

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Response to Land Use Consultation

Cambridge Past, Present & Future is Cambridge's largest civic society and we are also a land-owning charity, responsible for managing over 550 acres of land in and around Cambridge. We are a charity run by local people who are passionate about where they live. We operate in the greater Cambridge area and working with our members, supporters and volunteers we:

- Own and care for green spaces and historic buildings in and around the city for people and nature, including Wandlebury Country Park, Coton Countryside Reserve, Cambridge Leper Chapel & Barnwell Meadows, Bourn Windmill and Hinxton Watermill.
- Are dedicated to protecting and enhancing the green setting of Cambridge for people and nature.
- Care about Cambridge and are an independent voice for quality of life in the strategic planning of Greater Cambridge.
- Are working to protect, celebrate and improve the important built heritage of the Cambridge area.

The following responses were made to the consultation questionnaire.

Q2: Do you agree or disagree with the land use principles proposed?

Agree: These rules appear adequate to deal with both planning for the future and getting the public involved. How we work with providing sufficient infrastructure such as roads, power lines and water will need to change as the climate, world events, and technology change. We need to think about things like how much electricity AI will use and how we'll get enough water.

Q3: 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)

● Landowners and land managers (including environmental and heritage groups)

● Others (please specify)

Combined and local authorities: the setting up of informal regional groupings of local authorities will ensure consistency over wider than subregional areas.

Landowners and land manager: National and local groups focused on the environment and heritage have a vast amount of knowledge and therefore have an important role in warning the government when new plans could damage nature, heritage or people's well-being.

Q4: 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?

For the majority of landowners their decision will be a financial one based on what is best for their business rather than based on what might be best for the national interest. The consultation indicates that the government is not minded to control landowner choices (such as not permitting energy infrastructure on the best agricultural land) and therefore the only lever the government can use that is likely to make a difference to most landowners is financial incentives – but that requires public funds, which are limited, and therefore we would encourage the government to consider whether some controls on land use are also introduced.

Financial incentives are needed to encourage landowners to deliver these land use changes. We are concerned at the suspension of the Sustainable Farming Initiative and the uncertainty as to if, and how, it will be replaced.

Financial incentives should be aligned with local nature recovery strategies across the country. An example is the Cambridge Nature Network which has set out a spatial plan for nature recovery in and around Cambridge – this identifies the areas where investment in nature will deliver the best results for nature recovery and also to benefit the people of Greater Cambridge.

Q5: 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?

By promoting these options through success stories and by providing financial incentives and access to expertise and support.

There are lots of successful examples across the country, but when you look in detail at these they are often successful for a particular set of circumstances which are not more generally applicable across the wider countryside. It is important to promote/incentivise changes which have wide applicability.

Some changes require new machinery, which may not be financially viable, especially if it is only a small part of the farming/land enterprise. If landowners are able to share such machinery it can start to make options more viable. At the moment sharing machinery is problematic because of issues such as insurance, storage, maintenance, etc. Farm Clusters or co-operatives can be a good way in which this challenge can be overcome and therefore support for Farm Clusters/co-operatives is something that the government could prioritise.

Q6: What should the Government consider in identifying suitable locations for spatially targeted incentives?

The government should consider local as well as strategic concerns. As an example, much of Cambridgeshire is high grade agricultural land – does that mean that the communities of the county should not be able to benefit from incentives for new woodlands, meadows or wetland? Looking at this issue another way, Cambridgeshire is one of the most nature-depleted counties in England and therefore might be a priority for nature recovery? Cambridgeshire is important for agriculture and that should remain the case but it should also have nature, climate mitigation and public access benefits. We would argue that incentives should be available across the country but that they should be informed by local knowledge so that they are targeted locally – for example into areas identified in nature recovery strategies.

Local rural communities are often frustrated that they cannot implement community benefits because they are not the owners of the land, and unless they have a good and amicable relationship with the landowners this shuts off opportunities. Communities (eg parish councils) can be best placed to identify how any incentives can benefit their community.

Q7: 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?

Providing financial incentives and access to expertise and support.

Q8: 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? Please give details for your answer.

The Framework should consider the role of good agricultural land for renewable energy such as wind and solar farms. There is concern that good agricultural land is being lost to solar farms. Ideally the incentives for solar energy should be directed to PV panels being located on buildings and already developed land. Where solar farms are being developed on agricultural land, policies need to ensure that the impact can be mitigated by the dual use of the land such as for grazing, appropriate crops or nature rich meadows.

Solar farms currently being developed have a life of 30-40 years. Adequate funding is needed for the decommissioning and returning solar farms to agricultural use.

Although the planning system discourages development on the best agricultural land, in practice this is overcome by demonstrating need and through the same arguments used in this consultation – namely that in the big picture it is only a small amount of land and therefore the impact is small. We believe that the government should look to strengthen the planning system to further discourage energy development on good agricultural land.

Q9 What should Government consider in increasing private investment towards appropriate land use changes?

Most of the private incentives for nature are based on mitigating harm, it is therefore important that the investment is made very close to where the harm occurs otherwise one community benefits and one community loses.

One of the biggest societal and economic benefits is giving the public access to nature-based solutions but there is often no funding available for this aspect of these scheme – including the ongoing costs associated with managing public access. That is the case for BNG for example. This is something that the Government should look at.

Q11: What approaches could cost-effectively support nature and food production in urban landscapes and on land managed for recreation?

The creation and support of local nature recovery networks. An example being the Cambridge Nature Network which aims to create a mosaic of individual nature parks, nature reserves and farm habitats, linked together by wildlife corridors composed of nature-friendly farmland and wildlife-rich towns and villages.

The creation and support of community farms such as through CoFarm Foundation. An example being CoFarm Cambridge which after its fifth growing season has donated over 25 tonnes of premium quality fresh fruit and vegetables worth over £100,000 to 8 community food hubs.

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

By taking account of Nature Recovery Networks, the government can ensure that development and nature recovery are directed to the most appropriate areas.

Q13: How can local authorities and Government better take account of land use opportunities in transport planning?

Transport planning is often carried out in a silo – with engineers focused on the best way to connect A-B and only afterwards considering how the impacts of that can be mitigated. This is driven by the focus on BCR (the

shortest and fastest route usually having the highest economic return). A more holistic approach that recognised the environmental and social BCR would likely lead to better outcomes overall.

Q14: How can Government support closer coordination across plans and strategies for different sectors and outcomes at the local and regional level?

Embed LNRS in other regional and national plans such as Spatial Development Strategies, Strategic Spatial Energy Plan, Industrial Strategies, etc, etc.

Q16: 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. Please select the activities you think should be prioritised and give any reasons for your answer, or specific approaches you would like to see.

● Providing better information on local climate impacts to inform local decision making and strategies (for example, translating UK Climate Projections29 into what these mean in terms of on-the-ground impacts on farming, buildings, communities and nature)

● Providing improved tools and guidance for turning climate information into tangible actions (for example, how to produce an adaptation plan for different sectors)

● Developing and sharing clearer objectives and resilience standards (for example, a clear picture and standards of good practice for each sector under a 2°C climate scenario30)

● Supporting the right actions in the right places in a changing climate (for example, prioritising incentives for sustainable land uses where they will be most resilient to climate change)

● Other (please specify)

We support these suggested activities. When devising the information and tools it needs to be taken into account that they are going to be used by different groups of people from groups with national or regional interests to those with smaller landholdings, from private companies to charities and community groups, who will require different levels of information and have different scales of resources to use toolkits.

Q21: What gaps in land management capacity or skills do you anticipate as part of the land use transition? Please include any suggestions to address these gaps.

● Development and planning

● Farming

● Environment and forestry

● Recreation and access

● Other (please specify)

Charities and community groups who own and manage land for recreation and nature conservation can have limited resources in way of staff, equipment etc.

Q23: Should a Land Use Framework for England be updated periodically, and if so, how frequently should this occur?

Yes, every 10 years

Yours sincerely

Sarah Nicholas

Principal Planning Officer