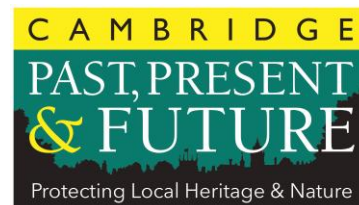


Mayoral Development Management Powers Consultation
Planning Development Management
Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government



By email to:

MayorsPlanningPowersConsultation@communities.gov.uk

Cambridge Past, Present & Future
Wandlebury Country Park
Cambridge CB22 3AE

Phone 01223 - 243830

www.cambridgeppf.org

05/10/2026

Response to MHCLG consultation on Planning powers for mayors in England

Cambridge Past, Present & Future is Cambridge's largest civic society. 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:

- 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.
- 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.

Cambridge Past Present and Future wish to make the following responses to the survey question.

Question 1: Do you agree with the proposed PSI application categories for areas outside of London, as set out in Annex A?

Partially disagree. While strategic thresholds are necessary, the proposal to allow mayoral call-ins for refusals of 50 homes (Category 3J) must be modified. The blanket threshold of 50 homes (Paragraph 40) is far too low for a strategic mayoral call-in and risks encouraging speculative proposals in sensitive areas such as the Green Belt or unallocated rural locations. Mayoral call-in powers for refusals at this scale must strictly be restricted to allocated sites in adopted Local Plans where a Local Planning Authority (LPA) refusal would clearly undermine plan delivery. It must not serve as a route to bypass local plan-led development.

Question 2: Do you propose any other categories of development which should be considered a PSI application, including in London?

No. Not at this stage.

Question 3: Should mayors outside of London be able to call in Category 3J (50 homes or more) applications where local planning authorities are minded to refuse?

No. This intervention should be unnecessary where up-to-date, adopted Local Plans exist.

The blanket threshold of 50 homes (Paragraph 40) is far too low for a strategic mayoral call-in and risks encouraging speculative proposals in sensitive areas such as the Green Belt or unallocated rural locations. Mayoral call-in powers for refusals at this scale must strictly be restricted to allocated sites in adopted Local Plans where a Local Planning Authority (LPA) refusal would clearly undermine plan delivery. It must not serve as a route to bypass local plan-led development.

Question 4: Do you agree that the scope of powers to intervene in relation to PSI applications should expand as a SDS is progressed?

Strongly disagree. Constant expansion or moving thresholds while a Spatial Development Strategy (SDS) is being prepared will create uncertainty, undermine LPAs, and introduce an inefficient, two-tier decision-making regime. Strategic priorities and intervention thresholds must be clearly established from the outset.

Question 5: Do you agree that where a SDS is not yet adopted, a decision by a mayor to either direct refusal or call in a PSI application will need to be justified in respect to growth?

Strongly agree. Ahead of an adopted SDS, mayoral call-in powers must remain extraordinary and strictly aligned with the adopted Local Plan.

We highlight the following critical concerns:

1. **Adherence to Adopted Local Plans:** Decisions must not depart from statutory, adopted Local Plans that have undergone full public consultation and independent examination.
2. **Legal and Professional Rigour:** Where a Mayor directs a refusal, a formal risk assessment must be provided to protect LPAs from appeal costs. Any mayoral intervention should be supported by formal legal counsel from an experienced member of the Planning Bar, alongside advice from chartered town planners (RTPI/RICS).
3. **Applicant-Led Requests (Paragraph 18):** Allowing applicants to request mayoral handling introduces perverse incentives and "game-playing". It removes strategic schemes from democratically accountable local committees, risks decisions being made behind closed doors, and erodes public trust. It also severely impairs LPA resource management and capacity planning.
4. **Public Hearings (Paragraph 21):** Mayoral decisions should strictly take place via open, public hearings to maintain transparency, public trust, and procedural fairness.
5. **Resourcing and Funding (Paragraph 27):** Expecting Mayoral Combined Authorities (MCAs) to absorb these functions without dedicated funding is unrealistic. Mayors must properly resource these operations (e.g., via application fee retention) without placing unfunded burdens on local planning systems.

Question 6: Do you agree with the proposed criteria for mayors to use their PSI application powers following adoption of a SDS?

Disagree. The proposed criteria are overly vague.

Terms such as "*otherwise contrary to good strategic planning*" (Paragraph 44) are open to broad, subjective interpretation. Mayoral local growth plans are economic strategy documents, not statutory spatial development plans; only statutory Local Plans and SDSs carry legal weight in planning decisions. Interventions must be explicitly tethered to preventing developments that are demonstrably prejudicial to adopted Local Plans or SDSs.

Furthermore, removing PSI applications from LPA jurisdiction carries severe systemic risks:

- **Loss of Local Knowledge:** Erosion of local expertise and knowledge and contextual understanding essential for complex proposals.
- **Pre-application Disruption:** Degradation of established pre-application processes.
- **Resource and Retention Impacts:** Severe strain on LPA staffing, funding, and professional development.
- **Democratic Deficit:** Loss of local public engagement and community oversight in strategic growth.

Question 7: Do you agree with the proposed approach to written representations for called-in PSI applications?

Strongly disagree. Determining strategic, complex, or controversial applications solely via written representations is undemocratic, opaque, and removes fundamental public speaking rights.

We emphasise:

1. **Public Scrutiny:** Written representations concentrate sole decision-making authority behind closed doors, failing to reflect the scale or public interest of strategic schemes.
2. **Professional Standards and Expertise (Paragraph 25):** The Mayor's lead planning advisor must be a chartered member of a recognised professional body (RTPI or RICS), bound by strict ethical codes of conduct. Complex proposals require multi-disciplinary input (e.g., heritage, ecology, design).
3. **Design Quality & Review Panels:** Independent Design Review Panels must be formally integrated into the mayoral determination process to uphold high design standards and justify refusals of poor-quality schemes.
4. **Appeals and Financial Risk:** The consultation lacks clarity regarding liability for legal challenges, appeals, and cost awards resulting from mayoral decisions.

Question 8: Do you agree to the approach to exclude centrally led UDCs or NTDCs from a mayor's powers to direct refusal and call in PSI applications?

Strongly agree. Dual oversight creates duplication and confusion. This exclusion should explicitly apply where Urban Development Corporations (UDCs) or New Town Development Corporations (NTDCs)—such as the proposed Greater Cambridge Development Corporation—operate.

Question 9: Do you have any suggestions for minor and/or technical changes to the PSI application procedure?

No, provided the explicit exclusion of areas governed by Development Corporations is formally maintained.

Question 10: Do you agree that Mayoral Development Orders cannot be used for Schedule 1 EIA Development?

Agree. Permitted development mechanisms are fundamentally unsuitable for projects requiring formal Environmental Impact Assessment under Schedule 1.

Question 11: Do you agree that Mayoral Development Orders cannot be used for minerals development?

Strongly agree. Minerals planning is highly specialised and inappropriate for streamlined Mayoral Development Orders.

Question 12: Do you agree with the proposed approach to preparing a Mayoral Development Order?

Disagree where a Development Corporation exists. The regulations must explicitly state that Mayoral Development Orders cannot override or duplicate the remit of established Development Corporations.

Question 13: Do you agree with the proposed approach to publicity and consultation of a Mayoral Development Order?

Disagree where a Development Corporation exists. Explicit exclusion must be incorporated into the text.

Question 14: Do you agree with the proposed arrangements for making a Mayoral Development Order?

Disagree where a Development Corporation exists. Explicit exclusion must be incorporated into the text.

Question 15: Do you agree with the proposed approach to approval of conditions following the grant of permission through a Mayoral Development Order?

Agree.

Question 16: Do you agree with the proposed approach to revisions and revocations of a Mayoral Development Order?

Disagree where a Development Corporation exists. Explicit exclusion must be incorporated into the text.

Question 17: To what extent, and in what ways, could evidence and analysis used to prepare a Spatial Development Strategy (SDS) inform work to prepare a CIL charging schedule?

This should be determined locally by the relevant Mayoral Combined Authority.

Question 18: Should SDS examination generally take place at the same time as CIL charging schedule examination, and where would greater flexibility be justified?

Yes. Joint examinations ensure structural alignment between spatial growth priorities and infrastructure delivery mechanisms.

Question 19: How might the requirements for updating a MCIL charging schedule best ensure mayors of strategic authorities can keep rates reflective of market conditions?

By instituting robust, continuous market and development delivery monitoring systems.

Question 20: Should the CIL regulations require mayors to take account of local tier authority CIL rates when setting their own rates?

Yes. Aggregated CIL burdens must be carefully calibrated to avoid undermining overall site viability.

Question 21: Are there further conditions or requirements that mayors should need to fulfil before they can charge MCIL?

No comment.

Question 22: Do you agree that MCIL outside of London should be capable of funding a broader range of strategic infrastructure than the current model in London?

Agree. Strategic growth requires holistic infrastructure investment beyond transport alone.

Question 23: What type of strategic infrastructure do you think MCIL should be capable of being used to fund, and how might this affect rate-setting?

MCIL should fund strategic environmental and green infrastructure, including:

- Strategic public open space and country parks.
- Regional nature reserves and landscape-scale ecological restoration.
- Long-term stewardship and management models for strategic public realm and natural assets.

Question 24: Could there be exceptional cases where it would be appropriate for MCIL to fund matters in an area that would usually sit within a single local tier authority's responsibilities?

Yes, but strictly where clear local consensus exists between the Mayoral authority and the affected local tier authority.

Question 25: How can the collection of MCIL work simply and effectively in all circumstances, including when the local tier authority does not charge its own CIL?

Adopt established best practice from existing CIL charging authorities and allow administrative setup and operating costs to be recovered directly from CIL receipts.

Question 26: Do you have any other observations or comments on the expanded MCIL proposals, or anything related to them?

No further comments.

Question 27: Do you agree to removal of the restriction that LDOs cannot be used to grant planning permission for development affecting listed buildings?

Strongly disagree. Mayors and streamlined Development Orders should not extend to Listed Building consents. Heritage assets require specialised architectural and historic environment expertise, detailed case-by-case evaluation, and dedicated statutory protection.

Question 28: Do you agree that Local Development Orders cannot be used for minerals development?

Agree. Minerals planning requires specialised technical assessment and is not suited to LDO mechanisms.

Question 29: Do you have any further minor technical changes to the Local Development Order procedure?

The legislative relationship with Development Corporations must be explicit, ensuring LDO powers cannot be exercised within Development Corporation boundaries.

Question 30: Do you have any views on the implications of the proposals in this consultation for you, or the group or business you represent, and on anyone with a relevant protected characteristic?

Yes. The proposal to process strategic applications via written representations severely disenfranchises community groups, civic amenity societies, and individuals (including those with protected characteristics). Removing public speaking rights, open committee observations, and face-to-face scrutiny undermines transparency, accessibility, and public trust in the planning system.

Question 31: Is there anything that could be done to mitigate any impact identified?

Yes. Remove the proposed written representation process for called-in applications and mandate transparent, open public hearings presided over by qualified planning professionals.

Question 32: Do you have any views on the implications of these proposals for the considerations of the 5 environmental principles identified in the Environment Act 2021?

The five statutory environmental principles cannot be robustly upheld if strategic development proposals are determined behind closed doors via written representations. Open scrutiny, expert ecological consultation, and public involvement are essential to ensuring environmental protection and enhancement are properly weighed.

I trust that you will take our comments into consideration.

Yours sincerely

Sarah Nicholas

Principal Planning Officer