

**WORSHIPFUL COMPANY OF WATER CONSERVATORS
RESPONSE TO DEFRA CONSULTATION ON THE LAND USE FRAMEWORK
MARCH 2025**

<https://consult.defra.gov.uk/land-use-framework/land-use-consultation/consultation/subpage.2025-01-21.3793375962/>

https://consult.defra.gov.uk/land-use-framework/land-use-consultation/supporting_documents/Land%20Use%20Consultation.pdf

https://consult.defra.gov.uk/land-use-framework/land-use-consultation/supporting_documents/LU_analytical%20annex.pdf

PROLOGUE

1 The Worshipful Company of Water Conservators ('WCWC') is a City of London Livery Company focussed on the long-term health of our water resources and the broader environment. Our members include senior professionals from water, environmental and related industries and regulators, along with others who share our concern for water and the environment. Our experience and knowledge ranges from the complexities of environmental sciences, through the application of engineering to deliver the goals identified by those sciences, and the subsequent management of the assets created. The WCWC's purpose is *promoting a diverse and sustainable environment*.

2. As part of that purpose, the WCWC has been responding to relevant consultations particularly on matters relating to water conservation. These are archived on its website.

<https://waterconservators.org/policies-and-practices/>

3 The WCWC is responding to the Consultation on the basis that land and water conservation must come together into the overarching conservation concepts of integrated natural resources management.

SUMMARY

4 The WCWC supports the principles of the need for a sound Land Use Framework but suggests that a lot more work needs investing in these proposals. The consultation does not address the following fundamental failures in the current land market:

- excessive power of supermarkets in the food market that drive down market prices for farmers and low returns from farming which are lower than returns from using land for Solar PV with its Government promotion and subsidies.
- farming land for development having an excessive premium over its value from food production. This is partly due to LPAs' failure to implement CIL to

cover the full costs of infrastructure requirements of developments – including supplying the water and sewage treatment for the additional new houses

Unless these market failures are addressed, Defra will not be able to realise its laudable aims of a sound land use framework that leads the market to deliver long term food security while delivering multiple benefits and supporting economic growth will not be realised

5 There is not enough alignment with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). Nor enough recognition of the need to coordinate better with the high-profile issue of water management.

6 Water is crucial to any exploitation of land. Integration of land use allocation in a framework with other key matters such as climate change and water and in particular water use allocation is essential – as advocated in the Foundation for Water Research (FWR) publication on the future of water resources.

<https://fwr.org/publication/future-of-water-resources/>

There is no reference to the use of Catchment Plans as set out in the 2023 Defra Water Plan or of River Basin Plans. There needs to be a driving concept of Integrated Natural Resources Management bringing land and water together. The use of land for ‘nature- based solutions’ in water management, including that of floods, should be considered as a land use category.

7 The WCWC has been advocating an overarching National Water Strategy for some time and is considering if the example of the concept of Land Use Framework could be complemented by a Water Use Framework into which all the current water initiatives including River Basin Planning could be located .This will be included in the WCWC response to the call for evidence by the Defra Independent Water Commission .

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/independent-water-commission>

8 The WCWC notes that Defra intends organising a series of workshops as part pf the Consultation. It urges the Minister to organise at least one on water specifically, and it stands ready to participate.

WHAT IS THE FRAMEWORK PROPOSING?

9 Three key paragraphs in the Foreword of the Consultation provide an insight into thinking:

By publishing a Land Use Framework, we will go further by creating a toolkit to support decision making and inform discussion on how we can guarantee our long-term food security, how we can support development and how we can achieve our targets on nature and climate that deliver multiple benefits and support economic growth.

This is not going to tell people what to do with their fields or replace the planning system. What the Framework will do is reflect your feedback from this consultation, set out a direction for England's land use and recognise the challenges that land managers will need us to address so that they can deliver our shared vision.

The Land Use Framework will interact with other foundational strategies we are developing in DEFRA; the Environmental Improvement Plan, a 25-year roadmap for farming, and a food strategy. And across government, the Land Use Framework will support sustainable growth, interacting with the Strategic Spatial Energy Plan as we accelerate to clean power by 2030, and driving our ambition to build 1.5 million new homes. This is critical to the delivery of this Government's missions, and the long-term prosperity of our country.

It also states that

The Land Use Framework will interact with other foundational strategies we are developing in DEFRA; the Environmental Improvement Plan, a 25-year roadmap for farming, and a food strategy. And across government, the Land Use Framework will support sustainable growth, interacting with the Strategic Spatial Energy Plan as we accelerate to clean power by 2030, and driving our ambition to build 1.5 million new homes. This is critical to the delivery of this Government's missions, and the long-term prosperity of our country.

And

We want to meet these challenges head on and start a public discussion on how land can deliver our missions for Growth and Clean Energy, boost food security, and meet our statutory climate and nature targets. This Government will be an active partner in the delivery of a fair land use transition which will:

- *Make space for nature recovery, water, and emissions reduction. England's land use will need to change as we move towards 2050 to help deliver our legally binding targets under the Environment Act and Climate Change Act.*
- *Support sustainable and resilient food production. The food system needs to support farmers and landowners to invest in the long-term viability of their businesses, contribute to food security and increase their resilience to climate change.*
- *Deliver new infrastructure and housing. Decision makers at every level need information and tools to deliver sustainable development, including 1.5 million new homes new energy and water infrastructure, and the relatively small area of land use change it requires. We want to use strategic spatial planning to assess gains and losses against national and regional objectives, moving responsibility for managing land use trade-offs away from individual projects.*
- *Fix the foundations for resilient long-term economic growth. Supporting sustainable economic growth over the coming decades will mean investing in its natural capital foundations and long-term climate resilience.*

- *Co-create plans for delivery. Land use change that improves the overall productivity of land alongside wider social and environmental benefits will only happen with the right skills, data, incentives and structures in place. We want to collaborate with land managers, businesses, and communities to define what these are and our plan to deliver them.*

And to find out what this means for the environment, it is necessary to drill down into the Analytical Annex.

Other commitments in the Environmental Improvement Plan (EIP)

The EIP includes environmental commitments which are not statutory but have land use implications, for instance: reducing risks and impacts from floods and droughts; maintaining a sustainable and long-term supply of timber and wood products; every household being within 15 minutes' walk of green / blue space¹⁹. Government has launched a review of the Environmental Improvement Plan (EIP). Following this review, the Government will develop a revised EIP to protect and restore our natural environment at the scale and pace that is needed, drawing on the review's findings and a wide range of stakeholder input.

Environment Targets

To improve environmental outcomes, land-based targets were set in secondary legislation under the Environment Act 2021 (England):

- **Biodiversity:**

Restore or create more than 500,000 hectares of a range of wildlife-rich habitat outside protected sites by 2042.

Halt the decline in species abundance by 2030.

Improve species abundance so that by 2042 it is higher than in 2022 and at least 10% higher than in 2030.

Reduce the risk of species' extinction by 2042, when compared to the risk of species' extinction in 2022.

- **Trees and woodland:**

Increase tree canopy and woodland cover to 16.5% of total land area in England by 2050 (from the 2023 baseline).

- **Water quality:**

Reduce nitrogen, phosphorous and sediment pollution of the water environment from agricultural land by 40% by 2038 (from 2018 baseline)

¹⁰ The WCWC is very much alert to the future of the UK's land bank and the competing demands for its exploitation. Almost every day the news is filled with

items of competition. The Consultation's baseline is the current land use in 2021. But it rightly looks forward to 2035 and 2050. Therefore, it and the Annex should have also set out a suite of future baseline scenarios with impacts of business as usual of current agreed policies and effects of likely future developments in key drivers, which include:

- Climate change
- International trade policies
- International food markets, demand and supplies
- Continuation of current imperfections in land market with continuing low prices and returns for farming with likely exit of farms as major investments would be needed to replace old assets
- Demography, age of farmers and their retirement
- Inheritance tax proposed revisions

THE LAND USE FRAMEWORK AND THE NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK

11 The WCWC welcomes the creation of a Land Use Framework. But it is assessing how this fits in with the revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) published in December 2024.

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/67aafe8f3b41f783cca46251/NPPF_December_2024.pdf

12 The WCWC offers the distinction that the Land Use Framework aims to provide a comprehensive plan for how land should be utilized across a region, considering competing needs like housing, agriculture, nature conservation, and economic development, while the NPPF is a set of government guidelines which dictate how planning decisions should be made in England, with a focus on achieving sustainable development across different land uses; essentially, the Land Use Framework would inform and be considered alongside the NPPF when making land use decisions at a local level.

13 But there is very little evidence of a 'shaking of hands' between the two. Even the diversity of terminologies does not seem to chime. This Consultation refers to Protected Landscapes and designated sites. The NPPF refers to protected sites. Both are very short of recognition of the role of water management co-existing with land management. The Consultation for the NPPF referred to environmental designation for which the WCWC offered extensive commentary. This Consultation makes no reference to Green Belts featured in the NPPF:

[The Protected Landscapes duty - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/the-protected-landscapes-duty)

<https://www.planningaid.co.uk/hc/en-us/articles/203220061-What-are-the-types-of-nature-conservation-designations>

[Protected areas of the United Kingdom - Wikipedia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Protected_areas_of_the_United_Kingdom)

14 The commitment to water conservation is not articulated strongly enough and that was also the case in the NPPF, which has still not been addressed.

LAND USE FRAMEWORK AND WATER MANAGEMENT

15 As set out above, the Analytical Annex states only that the water related target is

Reduce nitrogen, phosphorous and sediment pollution of the water environment from agricultural land by 40% by 2038 (from 2018 baseline)

16 The focus of this, and indeed of the Working Paper by Defra on development of and Nature Recovery, is on phosphate and nitrogen and reflects some of the disputes about Nutrient Neutrality and the Farming Rules for Water Regulations 2018

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/planning-reform-working-paper-development-and-nature-recovery>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/applying-the-farming-rules-for-water/applying-the-farming-rules-for-water>

17 The issue of water and landscape is much broader and deeper than this. Just taking simple targets, the demands of water for irrigation, both in terms of quantity and quality (for example irrigation water cannot have excessive chloride), use of agrochemicals such as herbicides and insecticides and the impact of animal waste on the bacterial quality of river water, are also immediate practical issues. See the Code of Good Agricultural Practice.

<https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a7cbb27ed915d6822362336/pb13558-cogap-131223.pdf>

18 The WCWC recognises that the Consultation is about land use, but this cannot be properly addressed without a significant reference to water management .The Consultation is missing the concepts of integrated natural resources management , which is defined as dealing with managing the way in which people and natural landscapes interact. It brings together natural heritage management, land use planning, water management, bio-diversity conservation, and the future sustainability of industries like agriculture, mining, tourism, fisheries and forestry. It recognizes that people and their livelihoods rely on the health and productivity of our landscapes, and their actions as stewards of the land play a critical role in maintaining this health and productivity.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Natural_resource_management#:~:text=Natural%20resource%20management%20deals%20with,%2C%20tourism%2C%20fisheries%20and%20forestry.

A concept already practiced in Wales.

19 To give some idea of how land management affects water quality, the WCWC refers to a blog in 2024 by Helen Wakeham, Director of Water at the Environment Agency (EA) in which she highlighted that the chief causes of Water Framework Directive (WFD) failure were:

Agricultural runoffs (slurry, fertilisers and pesticides)	40%
Sewage treatment plant discharges	29%
Urban sources (road run-off, etc)	18%
Combined sewer overflows	7%
Localised issues (e.g., abandoned mines)	3%

<https://environmentagency.blog.gov.uk/2024/09/22/world-rivers-day-what-are-the-biggest-causes-of-river-pollution-and-whats-being-done-about-them/>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/state-of-the-water-environment-indicator-b3-supporting-evidence/state-of-the-water-environment-indicator-b3-supporting-evidence>

20 It is worth picking out some of the statements in the blog to give an insight into the importance of land use. The blog reports that the EA

- *Regulates the agriculture sector by checking compliance with the Farming Rules for Water.*
- *It works alongside farmers to make sure they take reasonable precautions to minimise the risk of pollution from applications of nutrients to land and livestock management. Since 2021 we've undertaken more than 10,000 farm inspections and issued over 800 warning letters and site warnings, and 17,467 improvement actions to farmers.*

21 There is no mention of the Defra Water Plan of 2023 in this Consultation, which sought to bring land use and water use together, in which it was envisaged that a more formal system of catchment management within River Basins should be introduced and the WCWC has submitted extensively its views, evidence and suggestions to Defra.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/plan-for-water-our-integrated-plan-for-delivering-clean-and-plentiful-water/plan-for-water-our-integrated-plan-for-delivering-clean-and-plentiful-water>

22 Of course, the use of agricultural land to contain floodwaters is a very important and there is an increasing demand for land to be used for Nature Based Solutions for water management (the Water Special Measures Act 2025 makes this a Statutory Obligation for Water Companies) The government is committed to supporting greater exploration and development of nature-based solutions within the drainage and sewerage network. Nature-based solutions, such as sustainable drainage systems (SuDS), are considered a key mechanism to deliver improvements to drainage and sewerage systems whilst also improving our natural environment, helping decarbonise the economy and restoring ecosystems and biodiversity. So, will this be recognized as a land use category?

23 The WCWC is concerned that there is no overarching strategy pulling all the elements of water conservation together in the United Kingdom and that current

developments in policy and regulation are evolving as a patchwork of silos, often inconsistent, not linking together, or to what is place now. This might be one cause of a lack of coordination with land management. The WCWC will follow the lead of this Consultation and use the expression Water Use Framework. This will then work more easily with the Land Use Framework.

24 The WCWC considers that this could emerge from the current review of River Basin Plans. In November 2024 Defra launched a Consultation process on the review of river basin plans for December 2027 to be concluded by May 2025 and with the progress of time this seems increasingly less likely.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/river-basin-planning-working-together-2024>

25 The WCWC will respond and whilst it does not have the resources to comment on the details of any plans, it does advocate an evolution of a national overarching strategy as set out. This must include land management. The EA has already set out some markers for that process.

<https://engageenvironmentagency.uk.engagementhq.com/river-basin-management-plans>

26 The Government has not yet published the review of the Environment Improvement Plan.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-launches-rapid-review-to-meet-environment-act-targets>

27 As the WCWC and many organisations have advocated, and even the Defra Water Plan anticipated, the practical heart of the way forward is the Catchment Based Approach (CaBA). This will inevitably embrace the use of agricultural land for nature-based solutions to water challenges including flood management and sustainable drainage systems. Appendix 1 includes a synthesis of some of the points made in its thinkpieces and submissions.

RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS

The WCWC answers those questions within the reach of its knowledge and in particular the impact on water conservation. The answers must be interpreted against the background of the more systemic concerns the WWCWC has regarding the relationship of the proposed framework with the broader contexts of Planning and Water Management.

QUESTION 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?

Strongly disagree

Figure 4 is totally the wrong way round. Why is category 1 (land management change) out of scope. It should be the most important and the one in which the greatest change is needed to improve agricultural land quality by improving soils which are the essential basis for sustainable production – through regenerative measures. Similarly, category 2 needs a bigger increase than just 1%. Categories 3.2 and 4 should have the lowest increase.

The WCWC finds it is not clear how “need” has been defined and determined? Nor on what criteria is “need” based?

Are the amounts in Figure 4 the correct “needs”? They look to be just to achieve current designated environmental policies and targets.

QUESTION 2: Do you agree or disagree with the land use principles proposed?

Strongly agree. But the WCWC worries that the Consultation does not apply them well.

Include in Principle 2 on Multifunctional land the new requirement under the Water (Special Measures) Act 2025 for sewerage undertakers to address within their drainage and sewerage management plan (DSMP) the use of nature-based solutions and facilities in their drainage and sewerage network

Add the following principles:

6 Ensure that developments and use changes cover the full costs of the land – including CIL to cover fully infrastructure impacts especially of the additional costs of water supply and sewage generated by the developments.

7 Address failures in the market for land so that an appropriately corrected land market can lead to appropriate land use (see response to Q 4 below).

8 Integration of land use allocation framework with other key matters such as climate change and water and in particular water use allocation – as advocated in the Foundation for Water Research (FWR) his publication on the future of water resources.

<https://fwr.org/publication/future-of-water-resources/>

QUESTION 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)

Yes.

Including in particular need to consider land for Nature Based solutions in their DSMPs (see above). Also need to levy CIL to cover fully infrastructure impacts of proposed developments and land use changes (see above and below).

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

Yes

QUESTION 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 The Consultation correctly highlights that incentives are key to optimising land use which it rightly strives to achieve and identifies the following corrections to market imperfections and externalities that have bedevilled past land uses:

- SFI payments for measures (e.g. field margins, soil surveys) that will yield important public goods including reduced soil erosion, diffuse water pollution and flood risks.
- Policies and mechanisms to enhance carbon sequestration on farms.

B. However, there are currently the following important imperfections in the land market that the consultation fails to address:

- The excess power of supermarkets in the food market that drive down market prices towards the short run marginal costs of production, which leads to low returns from farming and farms exiting the market when big capital items come due for replacement. This presents risks of cuts in production and shortages that the consultation says it aims to avoid.
- The returns from farming, even high quality land, are often below those that could be obtained by converting the land to solar PV, which is driven by Government policies and subsidies.
- Farmland for development having an excessive premium over its value from food production.
- This is partly due to LPAs' failure to implement CIL to cover the full costs of infrastructure requirements of developments – including supplying the water and sewage treatment for the additional new houses
- The significant external costs from soil run off and diffuse water pollution from farmland that the SFI does not fully cover or address
- SFI also does not currently cover payments for the public footpaths on farms, which are an obvious public good.

The Consultation's current failure to tackle these market failures casts serious doubt over Defra Secretary of State's statement that the land use consultation will ensure that high quality land is retained for food production and that secure food production levels can be assured.

C There is a lack of coordination with the efforts made earlier and now need considerable enhancement regarding catchment management. This could be confusing at best and counterproductive at worst. And the following further government actions are needed to ensure that these measures are effectively implemented. From the perspective of water and land use, sort out a Water Use Framework to sit alongside the Land Use Framework and ensure this embraces initiatives , such Water Resource Planning Review, the River Basin Planning Review , with linkages to the development of the Industrial Strategy , application of the consequence of the new National Policy Planning Framework and any further amendments to planning law ... for example .The EA's Flood Risk Management Plans need to have real teeth so that the nature based upstream catchment measures they identify are spelt out and implemented.

Hence, there is a need to enhance the EA's capacity and capability for integrated water and flood risk management at catchment level

QUESTION 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?

- The experience of integration of land management as part of catchment management within the concepts of Integrated Natural Resources Planning, as practiced in Wales, create need for a more dynamic partnership between the Environment Agency, Natural England and Forestry England to contribute to Strategy Development Plans. Consider the role of trees in the Nature Recovery Plans proposed by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government and Defra.
- Ensure that sewerage undertakers implement the new requirement under the Water (Special Measures) Act 2025 for them to address within their drainage and sewerage management plan (DSMP) the use of nature-based solutions and facilities in their drainage and sewerage network.

QUESTION 6: What should the Government consider in identifying suitable locations for spatially targeted incentives?

Agreed:

- Use Land Use plans as provided by Centre for Ecology and Hydrology.

<https://www.ceh.ac.uk/data/ukceh-land-cover-maps>

- From the experience of WCWC members, the system used in Wales was useful in identifying new opportunities for land use. This should become part of the government's economic development strategies with nature and economy working together.

<https://naturalresources.wales/guidance-and-advice/business-sectors/planning-and-development/evidence-to-inform-development-planning/landmap-the-welsh-landscape-baseline/?lang=en>

QUESTION 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?

The WCWC offers no contribution except a plea for clarity!

QUESTION 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? Please give details for your answer.

Accounting for displaced food production impacts in project appraisals:
Agree

- Address market failures of excessive power of the supermarkets in the food market that lead to low prices for UK farmers and inadequate returns for food production in the UK (see responses to Q 4 above).
- Consider that the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) to account for the carbon cost of imported goods covers not only fertilisers (as currently proposed to be introduced in 2027) but also imported food to account for their greenhouse gas emissions.

<https://www.nfuonline.com/updates-and-information/concerns-over-cbam/>

QUESTION 9: What should Government consider in increasing private investment towards appropriate land use changes?

The WCWC gave a positive response to the principle set out in the Defra/MHCLG paper proposing a nature restoration fund with reservations. There could be merit in a nature restoration fund but stressed that key aspects regarding its implementation need to be sorted.

In particular, WCWC and other bodies (e.g. Aldersgate Group) stressed the need to enhance the capacity and capability of the appropriate authority (e.g. Natural England for nature restoration) and that there is no need to create new bodies and mechanisms. The current nutrient neutrality provisions should be converted into developers paying into a fund for nutrient management for which the EA should be the competent authority for managing as part of its integrated catchment management.

Similarly, developers should pay a charge to enhance the capacity and capability of county council's ecology teams so that they can adequately review developers' proposed BNG assessments.

QUESTION 10: What changes are needed to accelerate 30by30 delivery, including by enabling Protected Landscapes to contribute more? Please provide any specific suggestions.

- Strengthened Protected Landscapes legislation (around governance and regulations or duties on key actors) with a greater focus on nature. This focus is too restricted, and needs extended to all designated areas. Develop a common syntax with planning on protected areas. WCWC support in principle Defra/MHCLG paper proposal of developers paying into a nature restoration fund to yield most efficiently natural habitats improvements instead of stringent application of Habitats Directive provisions that restrict developments. Extend this separately to a fund for nutrient management to address more efficiently nutrient neutrality concerns (see above).

The WCWC has opined that the diversity of designations causes confusion, and this needs review and resolution. And the Protected Areas requirements were a step in the right direction. There are already dangers that the Government's proliferation of many specific silo-based targets will be too costly and have unintended adverse impacts in crowding out or ruling out other more important and efficient environmental improvements (without such targets or protected status). Also, there are dangers of wasted time and effort in legal disputes over failure to meet specific targets. This needs realistically to amend the legislation to treat the targets as aim to achieve targets and focus attention on developing and reporting on measures below to achieve them over more reasonable timescales.

- Tools: such as greater alignment of existing Defra schemes with the 30by30 criteria

Yes. But treat the various targets as "aim to achieve" targets. Focus on attention on these and other schemes to help achieve them.

- Resources: such as funding or guidance for those managing Protected Landscapes for nature.

Yes, more are needed.

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

The WCWC has no comment except to re-iterate what it has said before to Defra that green and blue spaces must be part of the overall framework of planning and catchment management.

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

In its responses to other Consultations, WCWC has consistently stressed the need for the various specific Government initiatives to be properly joined up to realise effective integrated environmental and land management and especially integrated water management, which is WCWC's main area of concern and expertise.

The consultation fails to do this, especially with respect to the key area of land use planning. There is only one reference to the NPPF. In particular there is no reference to para 20 of the NPPF about the need for sufficient provision for:

b) infrastructure for transport, telecommunications, security, waste management, water supply, wastewater, flood risk and coastal change management, and the provision of minerals and energy (including heat)

c) community facilities (such as health, education and cultural infrastructure); and

d) conservation and enhancement of the natural, built and historic environment, including landscapes and green infrastructure, and planning measures to address climate change mitigation and adaptation.

Moreover, there is no reference to para 35 about the need for development contributions for infrastructure (such as that needed for education, health, transport, flood and water management). There is no mention of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) needed to provide full payment for these infrastructure requirements. Fisher (2024)² shows that the current excessive premia for developing agricultural land dwarfs current CIL payments. Therefore, ensuring that LPAs fully require proper CIL would reduce these premia and might not necessarily lead to increased price of affordable homes. The corrected market would then lead to the consultation's correct goal of retaining high quality land for agricultural production and the homes that the consultation seeks being on low quality land.

It is not clear just how the Spatial Development Strategies (SDS) would operate and take account and optimise the various factors (including impacts on water catchments) that the consultation rightly mentions. It seems to depend on the as yet to be seen in recommendations of the Independent Commission on Water, which will not arrive until the summer – after the deadline for responses to the land use Consultation.

The Consultation rightly says up front (p.5) that the Land Use framework... Is not going to tell people what to do with their fields

But in the absence of a clear process and addressing market failures and perverse incentives in the land market, there are dangers that Spatial Development Strategies could turn into such central planning.

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

Ensure that developers pay fully CIL (see above) – including for transport impacts.

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

Ensure that the full impacts of developments on all plans and infrastructure are fully accounted for and with incentives covering their full costs and addressing all imperfections in the land market (see Q 4 above).

QUESTION 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

The WCWC has no comment

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

The WCWC has no comment beyond those set out in relation to water management

QUESTION 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?

The WCWC has no comment beyond noting the successes in Wales

QUESTION 18: What improvements could be made to how spatial data is captured, managed, or used to support land use decisions in the following sectors? Please give any reasons for your answer or specific suggestions.

The WCWC has no comment

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

The WCWC has no comment

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

The WCWC has no comment beyond that submitted earlier

QUESTION 21: 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.

There is a need for greater knowledge and practical expertise on the water management and catchment management issues.

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

The WCWC has no comment

QUESTION 23: Should a Land Use Framework for England be updated

Yes, the WCWC suggests a 25 year Strategic Position Statement with a review every five years somewhat similar to the reviews in the water sector.

QUESTION 24: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposed areas below? Please include comments or suggestions with your answer.

Greater alignment with Water Use.

Comments on the Analytical Annex

S. 4.4 correctly highlights that there are important regional variations in land uses and their drivers. But analysis is limited to scientific analyses of specific environmental policy changes. It fails to analyse variations in land use grades and viability of farm units as well as the premia currently paid for conversion of agricultural land for housing.

The Annex correctly highlights that there are inevitable uncertainties surrounding long run analyses. But fails to present any sensitivity analyses showing clearly the significance of possible changes in key drivers as well as the changes in (behavioural) responses to specific environmental and other policy measures. The WCWC queries the fact that the peat figure does not include key peatlands in, for example, in the Peak District.

APPENDIX1: REPRISE OF CONTRIBUTIONS TO GOVERNMENT ON THE NEED FOR AN OVER-ARCHING WATER STRATEGY

1. An overarching National Water Strategy for England is needed by July 2026. Could this be described as a Water Use Framework?
2. The Strategy should embrace all the main 'planks' of policy and, in particular, a much stronger national leadership on catchment management A diagram of suggestions for future arrangements is given below.
3. In the context of such management the WCWC has advocated a water use and quality objective approach which was used successfully by the National Rivers Authority and, at British instigation and assistance, was enshrined at European level with the Water Framework Directive. This will require national agreement on water use criteria.
4. The Strategy should address the need for integrated monitoring governance and, in particular, improved effluent quality assurance, probably as a matter for immediate tactical response. This is a project in which the WCWC is engaged actively.
5. Consideration must be given to the metrics of measuring and reporting environmental water quality, as indeed the existing Water Plan highlights. It is right that everyone knows what is happening in our rivers, estuaries and coastal waters, but in wise ways, so that investments are made most

effectively and efficiently, and individuals are not held responsible unfairly. The evidence must expose inappropriate practices. Maybe a balanced scorecard approach. One point from this debate is that which has bedevilled quality planning for many a long year; it is absolutely vital that the monitoring programmes and judgment of compliance is exactly the same as those used to set performance standards. Levels of sensitivity must be the same in target setting as performance assessment. And that will be a key issue in moving forward with evolution of new systems for monitoring of sewage discharges, a project in which the WCWC is engaged actively. But the WCWC has warned on the challenges of managing 'Big Data'. There is a challenge in unravelling the greater insights of more extensive monitoring from real changes in status.

6. The WCWC has provided extensive commentary of the impact of varying sewage flows and in particular the operation of combined sewer overflows. The WCWC has consistently supported the introduction of mandatory sustainable drainage systems in England. It is disappointed by the lack of progress.
7. The WCWC highlighted many tactical issues around the delivery of strategies, and in many instances, these involved more than one body, be it government departments or bodies within their spheres of influence, such as local authorities. This would seem to suggest a multi- agency delivery planning task force to iron out issues. And would involve Defra, Ministry of Housing and Communities and Local Government, Department of Business and Trade (DBT), and the Treasury. This has been made more urgent with the expanded commitment to new housing.
8. The Strategy needs to be clear about what government can, itself, provide by leadership in the enabling policy architecture to support delivery and help Citizens play their roles beneficially.
9. The WCWC has identified a number of instances wherein individuals can be part of the delivery teams by adopting behaviours consistent with the National Water Strategy, e.g. Citizen Panels in catchments, what not to flush down toilets and how little water to use. The WCWC has dubbed this as Citizen Partnerships, in this context the WCWC has advocated a greater role in employing the skills of the Behavioural Insights Team.

This could well play an important role in land use management.

<https://www.local.gov.uk/pas/plan-making/neighbourhood-plans/dclg-neighbourhood-planning-case-studies/engaging-local-6>

Local communities are involved already under the NPPF

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/plan-making>

A suggested template is given on the next page

Suggested Template for Catchment Management

