

I am a resident of a rural hamlet, just outside Banbury in North Oxfordshire, along the Northamptonshire border. Due to our proximity to the motorway, we are regularly targeted by developers who do not know the area, the outdated infrastructure or the day-to-day implications of large-scale development in the area.

### *Pressures and challenges*

1. What do you see as the most notable current challenges in relation to land use in England? How might these challenges best be tackled? How do you foresee land use in England changing over the long term? How should competing priorities for land use be managed?

A key challenge is identifying motivations for land use to ensure that wider issues are considered than profitability and money. Planning framework is supposed to be in place to ensure this, however loopholes are constantly exploited. Developers are businesses, by definition it is their priority to make profit from their projects and develop their teams in a way that achieves this, therefore, a well-established and successful developer will have significant cash reserves and experienced teams in place to achieve the maximum profit for the business. Local Authorities on the other hand are notably under resourced and short on funds. It is hard to imagine how symmetry can be achieved to ensure that the planning framework is adhered to, in a way that doesn't allow constant exploitation of loopholes.

In terms of competing priorities, it is important that new priorities for land use are managed by taking into account existing priorities in order to eradicate conflict. For example, current planning framework and policies run counter to the Government's 25-year environmental plan. Nature Recovery Strategies currently being introduced, also seem to conflict with the planning framework. When such contradictions occur, then policies should be reviewed and updated to eradicate such conflicts. It is not acceptable for competing priorities to be managed by conflicting policies

Currently there is little protection offered for open land, in order to preserve the heritage that lies within, thus making heritage preservation difficult to achieve when considering the use of the land.

Another challenge is the current strategy of land holding, either by the land owners hoping to sell for development due to the inflated price they may obtain, or developers holding land in the hope of policy changes in planning. Policies have been brought in to discourage people from leaving properties empty and some similar policies could be considered to discourage land holding for future profit.

2. What are the key drivers of land use change which need to be planned for, and how should they be planned for? What is the role of multifunctional land use strategies in implementing these plans?

It would be hoped that the drivers would be what the population and economy require, however it is clear that money is the key driver as profit businesses such as developers are able to exploit planning loopholes and undermine local authorities with their expensive consulting teams.

An example of this, in our nearest town, there are at least two residential sites that within a decade are seeing substantial issues with the properties built, to the extent that they require extensive works, due to being built on unsuitable land. It would seem clear before building that this would be the case, however the planning system was unable to prevent this occurring.

3. How might we achieve greater and more effective coordination, integration and delivery of land use policy and management at a central, regional, local and landscape level?

A key way to achieve more effective coordination would be to encourage input into these policies from a wider audience. Commonly, policies are burdened without input and this reduces understanding about the policies and what they are seeking to achieve by those charged with enforcing & implanting them. Asking for input at all levels will encourage more efficient management by default.

#### *Farming and land management*

4. What impacts are changes to farming and agricultural practices, including food production, likely to have on land use in England? What is the role of new technology and changing standards of land management?

Farmers need to be able to earn a living from their land, constantly prices being driven down, government subsidies not being honoured makes it very difficult for farmers to achieve this. We are encouraged to buy local food, however there is not the support to help farmers provide this at competitive prices or educate the public on the value of paying more. The cost-of-living crisis will only see this worsen. It is therefore easy to see why farmers are tempted to sell their land for development which often pays a higher price for the land than any other use. This is clear to see therefore how the land use is being driven by money as opposed to consideration as to what the land could best be used for.

5. What impact are the forthcoming environmental land management schemes likely to have on agriculture, biodiversity and wellbeing? What do you see as their merits and disadvantages?

#### *Nature, landscape and biodiversity*

6. What do you see as the key threats to nature and biodiversity in England in the short and longer term, and what role should land use policy have in tackling these?

Profit driven development is a major threat to nature and biodiversity, as developers strive to achieve maximum profit, landowners are tempted by high prices for their land and those who aren't are often bullied into selling it anyhow. Under resourced and underfunded Local Authorities are put under pressure and are not able to effectively enforce policies as they were intended or prevent exploitation of loop holes.

There is agricultural land no longer used as such, that could be used for the benefit of nature and biodiversity, however the rules of use are complex and restrictive and should be reviewed with the objective of encouraging non farmers with nature recovery aims in mind to purchase agricultural land over developers but the complexity as well as not being able to compete in price is restrictive.

There is lots of interchangeable terminology in respect to nature and biodiversity that becomes confusing as to what we should be striving to achieve, simplification would present a clearer message. Confusion can have counter productive effects on what we are striving to achieve, for example, tree planting is encouraged, however more education is needed to ensure that the overall biodiversity is achieved and that native species are used, for example. Grants may encourage people to learn more, if they can receive funding by ensuring the right actions are taken.

There are many people who are interested in supporting nature recovery strategies, however, there isn't affordable land available for either local authorities or individuals as developers pay over the market value to secure the land and naturally the land owner will want to achieve the best price for their land.

7. What are the merits and challenges of emerging policies such as nature-based solutions (including eco-system and carbon markets), local nature recovery strategies and the biodiversity net gain requirement? Are these policies compatible, and how can we ensure they support one another, and that they deliver effective benefits for nature?

*Environment, climate change, energy and infrastructure*

8. How will commitments such as the 25-year environment plan and the net zero target require changes to land use in England, and what other impacts might these changes have?

More land needs to be used to support the 25-year environmental plan and the planning framework must be updated to address the conflicts between the two. Developers are currently able to push through their plans,

exploiting loopholes in policies, exploiting the fact that Local Authorities are both over stretched and fearful of litigation. This means that only land not targeted by developers, is available for furthering the objectives of the 25-year environmental plan

The current Land Use rules, mean that land is often sold in its entirety and is not able to be sold in smaller parcels, allowing this would achieve likely a cost more comparable with what a developer would pay as well as becoming more affordable to a wider range of people.

9. How should land use pressures around energy and infrastructure be managed?

There is not sufficient, credible information for the public on land use for energy production and lots of information, factual or incorrect about hazards of this; by giving honest and credible facts on the pros and cons to the public would be a start to easing some of the pressures on land use for energy production

Infrastructure is an issue when there has historically been a lack of long term consideration into planning. Some hard thought now needs to be given as to how infrastructure can be improved in areas where urban sprawl has seriously reduced the opportunity for infrastructure improvement. For example, where we are, we are close to M40 and Banbury only has one junction to access any Banbury areas, this junction is also the main route from all of Northamptonshire and congestion here has a knock-on effect to surrounding areas and also through the entire town on a regular basis. Over time there has been casual talk of a second junction, or ring road, however as the urban sprawl continues and large industrial warehouses fill every conceivable piece of green on the fringes, there is no space left for infrastructure improvements.

### *Land use planning*

10. What do you see as the advantages and disadvantages of the existing land use planning system and associated frameworks in England? How effectively does the system manage competing demands on land, including the Government's housing and development objectives? What would be the merits of introducing a formal spatial planning framework or frameworks, and how might it be implemented?

11. What lessons may be learned from land use planning frameworks in the devolved nations and abroad, and how might these lessons apply to England?

### *Conclusion*

12. Which organisations would be best placed to plan and decide on the allocation of land for the various competing agendas for land use in England, and how should they set about doing so?

A multi organisational approach would see the best outcome in my opinion as this allows input that covers a variety of factors. The current planning route allows for consultation from other LA departments and wider, however they are simply that, a board consisting of members from these important organisations would ensure a more firmer input