

<b>Report on</b>	<b>Council's consideration of the launch of the Consultation on 'Future Focused Review of the Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS) on the issue of Climate Change'.</b>
<b>Date of Meeting</b>	<b>5<sup>th</sup> March 2024</b>
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<b>Is this report restricted for confidential business?</b>	Yes	
If 'Yes', confirm below the exempt information category relied upon	No	x

<b>1.0</b>	<b>Purpose of Report</b>
1.1	The purpose of this report is to provide members with information regarding the Department for Infrastructure's consultation regarding 'The Review of the SPPS on the issue of Climate Change' and advise of our response.
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Background</b>
2.1	<p>DFI are looking at how they can help improve how the planning system responds to the challenges of our changing climate now and into the future. They want to gain different views on the policy areas of the SPPS that they think are the most relevant in relation to Climate Change.</p> <p>The information gathered will help any future Infrastructure Minister decide on whether or not to review the SPPS and if so, where the focus should be.</p>
2.2	<p>DFI have focused on six main areas which they feel are most impacted by Climate Change;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The Purpose of Planning</li> <li>- Furthering Sustainable Development</li> <li>- The Core Planning Principles of the planning system</li> <li>- Flood Risk</li> <li>- Transportation</li> <li>- Development in the countryside.</li> </ul> <p>They have asked for views on the above six areas and how they might need to be updated because of Climate Change.</p> <p>The details of the consultation can be found on the DFI website.</p> <p>The deadline for responses is 28<sup>th</sup> March 2024.</p>

<b>3.0</b>	<b>Main Report</b>
3.1	<p>Climate change is a long-term change in the average weather patterns that have come to define Earth's local, regional and global climates.</p> <p>The key causes of Climate Change include;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Generating electricity and heat by burning fossil fuels,</li> <li>- Manufacturing goods,</li> <li>- Cutting down of trees causes emissions as trees release carbon they have been storing.</li> <li>- During major explosive eruptions huge amounts of volcanic gas, aerosol droplets, and ash are injected into the stratosphere.</li> <li>- Using transportation</li> <li>- Producing food causes emissions of Co2, methane and other greenhouse gases.</li> <li>- Powering buildings. They continue to draw on coal, oil, natural gas for heating and cooling, they emit significant quantities of greenhouse gas emissions.</li> <li>- Consuming too much. The use of power in the home and how you get around, consumption of goods and how much you throw away,</li> <li>- Other natural factors, including changes in the sun and variations in Earth's orbit and levels of carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>).</li> </ul>
3.2	<p>Northern Ireland accounted for 4.3% of total UK greenhouse gas emissions in 2018 and produced the equivalent of 10.3 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> per person compared with a UK figure of 6.8 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> per person.</p> <p>The UK makes up approximately 1% of global emissions. Based on estimates- NI's share of global emissions is around 0.04%</p> <p>The Questions posed within the consultation are as follows:</p>
3.3	<p><b><i>Question 1: Can you provide any evidence on how and why the Department should update, revise, and improve 'The Purpose of Planning' as contained within the SPPS so that it is fit for purpose and suitably future proofed to appropriately support the Climate Change agenda going forward? Please detail.</i></b></p> <p>'The Purpose of Planning' is currently silent specifically on climate change; however it is not a question if we can prevent it occurring, the key thing is to protect people from its adverse impact and this needs to be reflected in its purpose.</p> <p><b><i>Question 2: Can you provide any evidence on how and why the Department should update, revise, and improve 'Furthering Sustainable Development' (including Mitigating and Adapting to Climate Change and The Importance of Ecosystem Services) in order to better support the Climate Change agenda? Please detail</i></b></p>

Council fully support 'Furthering Sustainable Development' (including Mitigating and Adapting to Climate Change and The Importance of Ecosystem Services) as is broadly set out in the SPPS.

This section of the SPPS forms the basis of our consideration, along with other regional policies, which we use currently use to make our planning decisions relating to sustainable development.

MUDC have approved 43 Renewable applications between 2018-2023 and through our Enforcement section, MUDC have protected boglands through taking action on unauthorised extractions at various unauthorised commercial peat extraction sites, throughout Mid Ulster including in Coalisland and along Lough Neagh.

In terms of travel, any revision to the SPPS should encourage Working from Home, to reduce congestion and in addition we further support 'active travel'. This would include a switch from carbon fuel to electric or hydrogen and Planning should be designed to help in providing the infrastructure for doing this, including the promotion of installation of hybrid heating systems and solar panels.

'Furthering Sustainable Development' requires new thinking. The Covid epidemic taught us that new technology has improved communications to the extent that most office-based jobs no longer require employees to be centred in traditional office locations. Therefore, in order to reduce the need to travel, Planning should be facilitating people to work from home where they can achieve better work/life balance in terms of family commitments.

It is recognised in the SPPS with flooding there is resilience, but this needs to be widened, as flooding is not the only risk.

Any review of the SPPS should encourage the building of resilience to ensure power supplies are not over reliant on traditional carbon and build resilience in relation to technology and telecommunications (including fibre optic cables). This is key in moving forward and we should aim for 100% connectivity for mobile coverage and maximum broadband widths. The Planning Process could be greater utilised to ensure all new properties are catered to provide for this.

Planning Service needs to support those Engineering Industries that are setting up to provide the above services and to ensure an entrepreneurial base is distributed. For example, MUDC have been very successful to date in accommodating many engineering and quarry companies working in blockmaking etc. These have not always followed traditional locations and this advantage of localism should spread to other companies involved in this type of operation.

The SPPS should recognise a balance is required and this is best determined at local level, a localised agenda is missing from the document.

**Question 3: Can you provide any evidence on how and why the Department should update, revise, and improve the 'Core Planning Principles' in order to better support the Climate Change agenda? Please detail.**

The Council fully support the core principle 'improving health and well-being'.

The Council fully support the core principle 'Supporting Sustainable Economic Growth'.

The Council fully support the core principle 'Good design and place making' but it needs to be widened. Design should be about reducing risk and factoring mitigation; this includes many areas including flooding but also areas such as telecommunications and broadband.

The Council fully support the core principle 'Preserving and improving the Built and Natural Heritage'.

***Question 4 – Can you provide any evidence on how and why the Department should update, revise, and improve the subject policy 'Flood Risk', as set out in the SPPS, in order to better support the Climate Change agenda? Please detail.***

Council fully support the existing policy and it should be remembered the policy discourages proposals within the flood plain.

We would be concerned about the notion of using predicted climate change figures due to their uncertainty and because of the amount of existing development already within these climate change areas and the potential impact on them. In the Mid Ulster area in particular there are lands for example, at the Lough Shore that are at risk of being prevented from development if we rely on Climate change predictions.

There would need to be flood mitigation provided for large areas, and not just individual pieces of land but areas as a whole. This could prevent the sterilisation of large areas of land which would otherwise not be capable of being developed.

***Question 5: Can you provide any evidence on how and why the Department should update, revise, and improve the subject policy 'Transportation', as set out in the SPPS, in order to better support the Climate Change agenda? Please detail.***

Evidence to date shows a pullback on commitment to providing interconnecting railway network and MUDC are disappointed with this. If these commitments are not met serious questions need to be asked about Central Governments commitments.

MUDC is utilising its Development Plan to protect old railway lines for transport uses, whether road, rail or active travel. This protection needs to be emphasised and encouraged in the SPPS.

***Question 6: Can you provide any evidence on how and why the Department should update, revise, and improve the subject policy 'Development in the Countryside', as set out in the SPPS, in order to better support the Climate Change agenda? Please detail.***

	<p>From our opening paragraphs you can see MUDC and our settlement patterns will not make any difference to overall climate change. Policy which will further restrict rural development will not assist in any way with climate change.</p> <p>DOE statistics show the number of planning approvals for rural dwellings (new and replacements), throughout all areas of Mid Ulster (Previously Magherafelt, Cookstown and Dungannon Councils), dropped significantly from over 2000 in 2006/07, to 837 in 2010/11 following the introduction of PPS21 in June 2010 and this trend has been continuing consistently since.</p> <p>The paper 'Response to queries raised by the Department for Infrastructure, August 2023', shows the average approval rate for dwellings in the countryside between 2012-2019 was 246 dwellings per annum. This is approvals are well below the previous figures and so there is no need to intervene, to do so would be harmful to the vitality and viability of the countryside.</p> <p>Our experience to date is that policies contained in PPS21 are succeeding in focusing development to clusters and reducing speculative proposals. This said, the SPPS also needs to recognise that within this framework, each local authority may have particular needs and in certain instances there may be a need for adjustments to the policy.</p>
<b>4.0</b>	<b>Other Considerations</b>
<b>4.1</b>	<p><b>Financial, Human Resources &amp; Risk Implications</b></p> <p>Financial: None Identified</p> <p>Human: None Identified</p> <p>Risk Management: None Identified</p>
<b>4.2</b>	<p><b>Screening &amp; Impact Assessments</b></p> <p>Equality &amp; Good Relations Implications: None Identified</p> <p>Rural Needs Implications: None Identified</p>

<b>5.0</b>	<b>Recommendation(s)</b>
5.1	Members are requested to note the contents of this report and agree that the Service Director of Planning can reply as such to DFI.
<b>6.0</b>	<b>Documents Attached &amp; References</b>
	<p><b>Appendix 1</b> - Letter from DFI requesting 'call for evidence'.</p> <p><b>Appendix 2</b> - Future Focused Review of the Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS) on the issue of Climate Change A Call for Evidence</p> <p><b>Appendix 3</b> - Future Focused Review of the Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS) on the issue of Climate Change A Call for Evidence (Easy Read)</p>

**Climate, Planning and Public Transport**



Department for

**Infrastructure**

An Roinn

**Bonneagair**

Department for

**Infrastructure**

[www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk](http://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk)

**To: Council Heads of Planning**

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Your Reference:  
Our Reference:

22<sup>nd</sup> August 2023

Dear Colleague

## **THE STRATEGIC PLANNING POLICY STATEMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE**

You will be aware that the Climate Change Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 came into force in June 2022, setting a net zero target by 2050, with interim targets to be set for 2030 and 2040. The Department for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) is currently consulting on the related Carbon Budgets and the CCC advice report on

“The path to a Net Zero Northern Ireland”:

<https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/consultations/carbonbudget>

The consultation closes on 11 October, and I would encourage you to express your council's views as part of that process.

As you are aware, later this year, DAERA will also consult on the first Climate Action Plan and the current consultation on Carbon Budgets will help to inform that process. The legislation also requires the Department to put in place a transport sectoral plan and an infrastructure sectoral plan for combatting climate change. The infrastructure sectoral plan must include policies and proposals for planning and construction, while the transport sectoral plan must include policies and proposals for public and private transport. Significant cross public sector collaboration will continue to be required over the coming months to put in place the mechanisms which will ensure compliance with

the Act and support the delivery of the related Green Growth, Energy, Clean Air and Nature Recovery Strategies.

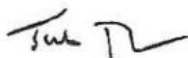
It is widely recognised that the planning system has a key role to play in guiding, encouraging, and promoting a more sustainable and integrated approach to land use and infrastructure development and in looking for innovative and locally agreed solutions to the challenges we will continue to face in terms of climate change. Beyond the ongoing work to finalise the review of regional strategic planning policy on renewable and low carbon energy, it is important that the policy framework provided for by the Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS) is fit for purpose and suitably future proofed to appropriately support the Climate Change agenda going forward.

It is within this context that I am writing to advise you that the Department will soon bring forward a Call for Evidence on a potential focused review of the SPPS on the issue of Climate Change. It is the Department's intention to undertake this stakeholder engagement exercise this autumn. The primary purpose of the Call for Evidence is to engage with key stakeholders on the proposed areas of focus for a review of the SPPS and to invite the submission of evidence on the relevant factors that can assist with determining the best way forward.

The information gathered through the Call for Evidence will be taken into account by the Department and will help inform any decision by a future Infrastructure Minister on a review of the SPPS and the options for it. Should there be an absence of Ministers, a decision on the way forward will be considered in light of the decision-making legislation in place at that time.

Further information will be provided when the Call for Evidence exercise is formally issued but, in the meantime, you may wish to consider how your organisation can provide support and feedback as part of this process.

Yours sincerely



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**JULIE THOMPSON**  
Deputy Secretary





Department for  
**Infrastructure**

An Roinn

**Bonneagair**

Department for

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# **Future Focused Review of the Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS) on the issue of Climate Change**

## **A Call for Evidence**

**Issued: 3 January 2024**

**Respond by: 28 March 2024**

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# 1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Department for Infrastructure (DfI) is responsible for the maintenance, development and planning of critical infrastructure in Northern Ireland. With its focus on water, transport, and planning, the Department seeks to manage and protect over £37bn of public assets that improve people's quality of life, reduce our impact on the planet by living sustainably and decarbonising key services, and build prosperity by driving inclusive productivity. Whilst this Call for Evidence is specifically focused on the Department's regional strategic planning policy (the Strategic Planning Policy Statement, SPPS) it is nonetheless set within this wider Departmental context.

## Water (Flood Risk Management)

- 1.2 DfI is responsible for, inter alia, the management of flood risk which includes the maintenance of our river and sea defences, construction of flood alleviation schemes, informing development decisions and developing flood maps. Approximately 5% of properties here are in areas at risk from flooding, which is set to increase by 33% to 59,800 when 2080 Climate Change projections are taken into consideration. DfI is also the lead government department for the strategic coordination of the emergency response to severe weather events, including flooding, emergency planning and processes, which are developed in conjunction with our multi-agency partners.

## Transport

- 1.3 In addition, the Department is responsible for the oversight and facilitation of surface transport in the region. The main tools for the delivery of the Department's transport vision are the development of transport strategy and policy and related transport plans, the management of the road network asset (including the promotion of road safety) and providing funding and sponsorship of Translink which delivers the public transport network.

## Planning

- 1.4 The Department is also responsible for the strategic direction and production of regional strategic policy for land use planning, planning legislation, processing a small number of regionally significant planning applications and those applications which may be 'called in'. It has a statutory consultee role for roads and rivers to provide specialist advice in relation to the consideration of planning applications by councils.
- 1.5 DfI also works together with councils in managing the two-tier planning system and has a statutory consultee and an oversight role in the preparation of local development plans (LDPs) which set out councils' long-term visions, objectives, and growth over the plan period. The Department, together with local government

and stakeholders, is also taking forward a Planning Improvement Programme (PIP) with the objective of improving the effectiveness and efficiency of the regional planning system.

- 1.6 There is no doubt that the operating environment, including a constrained resource budget for the delivery of the Department's functions, remains very challenging. By focusing on water, transport and planning the Department is clear on the current state of our infrastructure in these key areas, what we need to do, why we need to do it and how we will prioritise the finite public resources available to address the issues within each delivery area.

## **Climate Change**

- 1.7 In June 2022 the Climate Change Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 (CCA) came into force, setting a target of net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050, with interim targets for 2030 and 2040. These ambitious targets, set out in the CCA represent a decisive change in Northern Ireland's approach to the climate crisis, requiring an immediate step change in all our sectors' activities to achieve this. The Department for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) launched a 16-week public consultation on 21 June 2023 on the related Carbon Budgets and sought views on the Climate Change Committee (CCC) advice report on 'The path to a Net Zero Northern Ireland'. The consultation closed on 11 October 2023. (<https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/consultations/carbonbudget>).
- 1.8 DAERA also intends to consult on the first Climate Action Plan and the recent consultation on Carbon Budgets will help to inform that process. The legislation also requires DfI to put in place a transport sectoral plan and an infrastructure sectoral plan for combatting Climate Change. The infrastructure sectoral plan must include policies and proposals for planning and construction, while the transport sectoral plan must include policies and proposals for public and private transport. Significant cross public sector collaboration will continue to be required over the coming months to put in place the mechanisms which will ensure compliance with the CCA and support the delivery of the related strategies including those on Green Growth, Energy, Clean Air and Nature Recovery Strategies etc.

## **Implications for the SPPS**

- 1.9 It is widely recognised that the planning system has a key role to play in guiding, encouraging, and promoting a more sustainable and integrated approach to land use and infrastructure development and in looking for innovative and locally agreed solutions to the challenges we will continue to face in terms of Climate Change. Beyond the ongoing work to finalise the review of regional strategic planning policy on renewable and low carbon energy, it is important that the policy framework provided for by the Strategic Planning Policy Statement (the SPPS) is fit for purpose and suitably future proofed to appropriately support the Climate

Change agenda and related departmental priorities going forward.

- 1.10 It is within this context that the Department is undertaking a 'Call for Evidence' on a potential focused review of the [Strategic Planning Policy Statement](#) on the issue of Climate Change. The primary purpose of the Call for Evidence is to engage with stakeholders on the proposed areas of focus for a review of the SPPS and to invite the submission of evidence on the relevant factors that can assist with determining the best way forward.
- 1.11 The information gathered through the Call for Evidence will be considered by the Department and will help inform any decision by a future Infrastructure Minister on a review of the SPPS and the options for it. Should there be an absence of ministers, a decision on the way forward will be considered in light of the decision-making legislation in place at that time.

## 2. How to Respond

- 2.1 This Call for Evidence engagement is being facilitated by means of the Citizen Space Hub, which can be accessed via the following weblink:  
[www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/consultations/call-evidence-future-focused-review-SPPS-climate-change](http://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/consultations/call-evidence-future-focused-review-SPPS-climate-change)
- 2.2 This is the primary means of responding to the consultation. However, respondents may also reply by e-mail to: [sppsteam@infrastructure-ni.gov.uk](mailto:sppsteam@infrastructure-ni.gov.uk)
- 2.3 When responding please provide the following information:
- your name,
  - contact details (preferably email),
  - the organisation you represent (if applicable), and
  - your main area of interest (Academic/NGOs; Business and Industry; Community/Resident/Voluntary Organisations; Environmental; Local Government; Professional Bodies; Individuals).
- 2.4 The consultation will run for **from 3 January 2024 to 28 March 2024**.
- 2.5 Responses must be submitted **by 5.00pm Thursday 28 March 2024**. Comments after this deadline will not be accepted.
- 2.6 **All responses to this Call for Evidence should be made electronically.**

### **3. Freedom of Information Act 2000: Confidentiality of Responses**

3.1 The Department for Infrastructure (Dfi) may publish a summary of responses following the closing date for receipt of comments. Your response, and all other responses to this publication, may be disclosed on request and/or made available on the Dfi website (redacted). The Department can only refuse to disclose information in exceptional circumstances. Before you submit your response, please read the paragraphs below on the confidentiality of responses as this will give you guidance on the legal position about any information given by you in response to this publication.

3.2 The Freedom of Information Act 2000 and Environmental Information Regulations 2004 give the public a right of access to any information held by a public authority, namely, the Department in this case. This right of access to information includes information provided in response to a consultation. The Department cannot automatically consider as confidential information supplied to it in response to a consultation. However, it does have the responsibility to decide whether any information provided by you in response to this publication, including information about your identity, should be made public or treated as confidential. The Lord Chancellor's Code of Practice on the Freedom of Information Act provides that:

- the Department should only accept information from third parties in confidence if it is necessary to obtain that information in connection with the exercise of any of the Department's functions and it would not otherwise be provided;
- the Department should not agree to hold information received from third parties 'in confidence' which is not confidential in nature; and
- acceptance by the Department of confidentiality provisions must be for good reasons, capable of being justified to the Information Commissioner.

3.3 The information you provide in your response, excluding personal information, may be published, or disclosed in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA) or the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 (EIR). Any personal information you provide will be handled in accordance with the UK-GDPR and will not be published. If you want the non-personal information that you provide to be treated as confidential, please tell us why, but be aware that, under the FOIA or EIR, we cannot guarantee confidentiality.

For information regarding your personal data, please refer to the Dfi Privacy Notice at [www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/dfi-privacy](http://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/dfi-privacy).

For further details on confidentiality, the FOIA and the EIR please refer to [www.ico.org.uk](http://www.ico.org.uk).

## 4. Background

- 4.1 The Strategic Planning Policy Statement (the SPPS) 'Planning for Sustainable Development' was published in September 2015, following Executive Committee agreement. It has a statutory basis under Part 1 of the Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 and the SPPS is judged to be in general conformity with the Regional Development Strategy 2035 (the RDS).
- 4.2 The provisions of the SPPS apply to whole of Northern Ireland. They must be taken into account in the preparation of LDPs and are material to all decisions on individual planning applications and appeals.
- 4.3 Whilst the SPPS and the planning system has the objective of furthering sustainable development at its heart, there has been much contextual change in the period following its publication, particularly with regards to the wider efforts of government in seeking to address the challenges presented by a changing climate.
- 4.4 Since the SPPS was published in 2015, tackling Climate Change has become a legislative requirement and it is a priority consideration in the context of the work and functions of DfI, other departments and the wider public sector.

## 5. Why undertake a Call for Evidence?

### The Climate Emergency

- 5.1 As noted in the introduction, the Department has a vast and wide-ranging remit in relation to water, transport, and planning. Its responsibilities include:
  - regional strategic planning policy, legislation and promoting good place-making, including acting as the planning authority for regionally significant planning applications and overseeing the effectiveness of the two-tier planning process that came into effect in 2015;
  - policy and legislation for water, reservoirs and sewerage including discharging the Department's responsibilities, including as shareholder, for oversight of NI Water;
  - responsibility for rivers and drainage policy and legislation and for supporting the work of the Drainage Council;
  - the assessment and management of flood risk and lead department responsibilities for the emergency response to flooding and other severe weather incidents;

- almost all aspects of surface transport policy including public transport, promotion of active and sustainable travel, the development and implementation of a transport strategy and the provision, management, and maintenance of all public roads; and
  - being a statutory consultee in the planning process in relation to rivers and roads matters.
- 5.2 Within the context of the climate emergency and the CCA, the Department is looking at how its policies can contribute to emission reduction in our carbon budgets as we chart the path to net zero by 2050. The following departmental work streams are of particular relevance in the context of Climate Change.

### **Water (Flood Risk Management)**

- 5.3 More frequent and extreme weather events are indicative of our changing climate. Such occurrences demonstrate dramatically just how vulnerable Northern Ireland's built and natural environment is to extremes of climate variables (e.g. temperature/heatwaves; wind/storms; precipitation/floods; and sea levels/surges). These events, particularly flooding events, present increased disruption to and stress on our infrastructure networks and services including drainage, sewerage, digital, energy, road and rail infrastructure, water resources and can impact on the economy, environment, and communities more widely, as evidenced by recent flooding events.
- 5.4 The most effective method of managing flood risk is to mitigate, insofar as possible, the risk occurring in the first place. A key area of the Department's work is to advise council planning authorities in relation to flood risk for proposed new development. This is done through its role as a statutory consultee in the planning process, having regard to the SPPS.

### **Transport**

- 5.5 Transport has been identified as a key sector that will be required to decarbonise by 2050 in order to help manage Climate Change. In response, the Department is developing a new 'Transport Strategy for Northern Ireland' (TSNI) which will set the new approach for the transport system as we embark on a transformative journey to net zero carbon emissions by 2050.
- 5.6 This strategy is being developed around four high level strategic priorities for transport that will shape and influence the planning, design, and operation of the transport network, so that it is resilient and sustainable; supports green growth; is safe and healthy; and supports connected and inclusive communities.
- 5.7 In addition, a suite of transport plans are being developed in an integrated manner with local councils in the development of their LDPs. These transport plans will



set out the framework for transport policy and investment decisions up until 2035. The plans will build on the priorities set out in the TSNI and describe the future development of our road, public transport, and active travel networks.

## Planning

- 5.8 Beyond the ongoing work to finalise the review of regional strategic planning policy for renewable and low carbon energy, it is important to consider the current policy framework provided for by the SPPS in relation to Climate Change and if this remains appropriate. This includes ensuring that the regional strategic planning policy framework keeps pace with changes to the context for, and approach to, the delivery of the Department's wider functions on water (flood risk) and transport.
- 5.9 Where appropriate, regional strategic planning policy can also lend support to the implementation of policy developed by other departments where there is a strong interface with the planning system. However, it would not be appropriate for DfI to assume lead policy development responsibility for matters that are the responsibility of other departments.
- 5.10 In order to deliver for the economy, communities and the environment, the Department is committed to ensuring that the planning system operates in an efficient and effective way and plays its part in assisting the wider efforts of government in addressing Climate Change.

## 6. Purpose and Scope

- 6.1 This Call for Evidence is part of the process of gathering the necessary information to inform a potential focused review of the SPPS in relation to Climate Change and the options and scope for any such review.
- 6.2 Should the outcome of this Call for Evidence lead to a decision to formally review the SPPS, such a focused review could seek to update and bring forward new and revised policy provisions on Climate Change on:
- The Purpose of Planning,
  - Furthering Sustainable Development (including Mitigating and Adapting to Climate Change and The Importance of Ecosystem Services), and
  - The Core Planning Principles of the two-tier planning system.
- 6.3 A focused review could also encompass a fresh look at the appropriateness of extant policy provisions on flood risk, transportation, and development in the countryside, given these are three key policy areas which are impacted by Climate Change (in addition to the review of regional strategic planning policy on

renewable and low carbon energy which is already being progressed).

- 6.4 The Department is particularly keen to hear views and gather evidence in respect of the above-mentioned matters. Nonetheless, there may be evidence in relation to other aspects of the SPPS that you may wish to comment on that might assist the Department with determining the appropriate way forward in addressing Climate Change within the SPPS.
- 6.5 The policy areas outlined in this CfE are considered to reflect how and where the Department can optimise the impact of any focused review of the SPPS in responding to the challenges of a changing climate.

## 7. The Purpose of Planning

- 7.1 The objective of the planning system, consistent with Part 1, Section 1 of the Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011, is to secure the orderly and consistent development of land whilst furthering sustainable development and improving well-being. The SPPS states that this means the planning system should positively and proactively facilitate development that contributes to a more socially, economically, and environmentally sustainable Northern Ireland. Planning authorities<sup>1</sup> should therefore simultaneously pursue social and economic priorities alongside the careful management of our built and natural environments for the overall benefit of our society.
- 7.2 For the existing policy provisions of 'The Purpose of Planning' please see paragraphs 2.1 – 2.4 of the [Strategic Planning Policy Statement](#)

**QUESTION 1: *Can you provide any evidence on how and why the Department should update, revise, and improve 'The Purpose of Planning' as contained within the SPPS so that it is fit for purpose and suitably future proofed to appropriately support the Climate Change agenda going forward? Please detail.***

## 8. Furthering Sustainable Development

- 8.1 The objective of furthering sustainable development lies at the heart of the SPPS and the planning system. The key guiding principles for planning in Northern Ireland are contained within the SPPS. It currently recognises the need to mitigate and adapt to Climate Change and the positive part the planning system plays in

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<sup>1</sup> Planning authorities can encompass district councils (in their role as local planning authorities), the Department for Infrastructure and the Planning Appeals Commission (PAC).

seeking to halt the loss of biodiversity and ecosystem services.

- 8.2 In addition, the SPPS seeks to ensure the planning system contributes to a reduction in energy and water usage and helps to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by continuing to support growth in renewable energy sources, as well as promoting development where it reduces the need for private motorised travel. The promotion of high quality and good design is also emphasised, and in terms of seeking to address the nature crisis, working towards the restoration of and halting the loss of biodiversity is noted, as is the conservation of soil and bog lands. In recognition of the challenges of Climate Change, managing development to safeguard against water pollution, flooding and securing improvements in water quality are also addressed.
- 8.3 Furthering sustainable development also means ensuring the planning system plays its part in supporting the Executive and wider government policy and strategies in efforts to address any existing or potential barriers to sustainable development.
- 8.4 The SPPS outlines that in formulating policies and plans and in determining planning applications, planning authorities should be guided by the precautionary approach that where there are significant risks of damage to the environment, its protection will generally be paramount unless there are imperative reasons of overriding public interest.

### **Mitigating and Adapting to Climate Change**

- 8.5 The SPPS currently recognises that a central challenge in furthering sustainable development is mitigating and adapting to Climate Change. It identifies a number of measures that the planning system can consider in this regard.

### **The Importance of Ecosystem Services**

- 8.6 The SPPS also stresses the importance of ecosystem services. It highlights the benefits that a good quality environment can provide not only in terms of economic performance but also by improving resilience to Climate Change. For example, trees and other green infrastructure provide important ecosystem services that reduce the effects of flooding and the urban heat island, a phenomenon that occurs when urban areas experience higher air temperatures than the surrounding rural area.
- 8.7 For the full 'Furthering Sustainable Development' text please see paragraphs 3.1 – 3.16 of the [Strategic Planning Policy Statement](#)

**QUESTION 2: *Can you provide any evidence on how and why the Department should update, revise, and improve 'Furthering Sustainable Development' (including Mitigating and Adapting to Climate Change and The Importance of Ecosystem Services) in order to better support the***

*Climate Change agenda? Please detail.*

## **9. Core Planning Principles**

- 9.1 The SPPS supports 5 'Core Planning Principles' that are fundamental to the achievement of sustainable development, which are: 'Improving Health and Well-Being'; 'Creating and Enhancing Shared Space'; 'Supporting Sustainable Economic Growth'; 'Supporting Good Design and Positive Place-Making'; and 'Preserving and Improving the Built and Natural Environment'. Four of these are particularly relevant to Climate Change and are summarised below.

### **Improving Health and Well-Being**

- 9.2 The SPPS directs that when plan-making and decision-taking, planning authorities should contribute positively to health and well-being through actions, such as: encouraging and supporting quality, environmentally sustainable design; providing better connected communities with safe pedestrian environments; ensuring better integration between land-use planning and transport; and facilitating the protection and provision of green and blue infrastructure.
- 9.3 In addition, the value of networks of green infrastructure in providing a wide range of environmental benefits including flood water storage, urban cooling, improved air quality and habitats for wildlife are highlighted. It is recognised that green infrastructure should be designed and managed as a multifunctional resource capable of delivering on a wide range of environmental and quality of life benefits for communities. The SPPS also draws attention to the wide range of environment and amenity considerations, including air quality, which should be taken into account by planning authorities when proposing policies or managing development.

### **Supporting Sustainable Economic Growth**

- 9.4 The SPPS supports sustainable economic growth. Our environment is identified as an asset for economic growth in its own right and in line with the Department's vision for a 'sustainable future', the SPPS requires planning authorities to encourage proposals that make an important contribution to sustainable economic growth whilst also carefully balancing the protection and enhancement of the quality of the natural and built environment.

### **Supporting Good Design and Positive Place-Making**

- 9.5 Another core planning principle which encourages the need to mitigate and adapt to Climate Change is that of 'supporting good design and positive place-making'. The SPPS accepts that good design furthers sustainable development and encourages healthier living; promotes accessibility and inclusivity; and contributes to how safe places are and feel.

- 9.6 The SPPS recognises that design is not limited to the appearance of a building or place but that it should encompass how buildings and places function in use over the lifetime of a development. To assist in helping to tackle the impacts of Climate Change, it is stressed that 'design' should consider and address, for example, how a development can minimise energy, water usage and CO2 emissions. Landscape design and planting considerations are also outlined as an integral part of design which can contribute to biodiversity.

### **Preserving and Improving the Built and Natural Environment**

- 9.7 This core planning principle seeks to ensure that the environment is managed in a sustainable manner in order to safeguard our landscape and its heritage assets, preserving and improving the natural and built environment and halting the loss of biodiversity. An integrated approach to the management of the natural and cultural aspects of the landscape is advocated as is the important role of the planning system in conserving, protecting, and enhancing the environment whilst ensuring it remains responsive and adaptive to the everyday needs of society.
- 9.8 The SPPS considers that the importance of the environment, however, goes far beyond the immediate benefits it can provide with it being noted that safeguarding our unique landscape (including heritage assets) and biological diversity will also makes an important contribution to the protection of the wider global ecosystem.
- 9.9 For the full 'Core Planning Principles' text please see paragraphs 4.1 – 4.40 of the [Strategic Planning Policy Statement](#)

**QUESTION 3: *Can you provide any evidence on how and why the Department should update, revise, and improve the 'Core Planning Principles' in order to better support the Climate Change agenda? Please detail.***

## **10. Subject Policies**

- 10.1 The SPPS makes it clear that the objective of furthering sustainable development and the supporting core planning principles that give expression to it should be applied to both plan-making and decision-taking, along with the relevant subject policies. It is clarified that the SPPS should be read and applied as a whole (SPPS para 5.9). As set out at Part 6 above, the Department considers it appropriate to focus on the following three subject policies within the SPPS.

### **Flood Risk**

- 10.2 The Department is the competent authority for The Water Environment (Floods Directive) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2009 and has overall responsibility for

flood risk management in the region (see para. 5.3). Flooding is recognised as one of the primary risks to people, property and the environment arising from a changing climate in Northern Ireland. As mentioned earlier in this document, we have experienced and should expect more frequent and extreme weather events. This is reinforced by the latest evidence by the Climate Change Committee (CCRA3 published 2021).

- 10.3 It is accepted that more needs to be done and in this regard the Department is progressing a number of initiatives. For example, existing 'Technical Flood Risk Guidance in relation to Allowances for Climate Change in Northern Ireland' (published 2019), is currently based on UK Climate Projections (UKCP09) information. This guidance is used for flood risk management and development planning purposes (primarily in respect of allowances for increased sea level rise, river flows and rainfall intensities) and assists DfI in its role as a statutory consultee in the planning system. However, 2018 UK Climate Projections (UKCP18) information is now available, and the Department is currently considering updates to the abovementioned guidance in this regard.
- 10.4 The Department also provides advice to councils on the drainage/flood risk aspects of emerging draft LDP documents. This advice is informed by a suite of flood maps, including Climate Change mapping developed by the Department and produced in accordance with the requirements of The Water Environment (Floods Directive) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2009. These maps have been prepared for areas that have been determined by government to be at significant risk of flooding and were an important step in development of flood risk management plans for these areas. A key aim of the flood maps is to increase awareness among the general public, councils (including planning authorities) and other organisations, of the likelihood of flooding and to recommend that all stakeholders take appropriate action to manage flood risk.
- 10.5 Information relating to flood mapping and Climate Change can be found online at: [Flood Maps NI | Department for Infrastructure \(infrastructure-ni.gov.uk\)](https://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/flood-maps-ni)
- 10.6 As Climate Change predictions indicate there is likely to be an increase in the existing floodplain outlines, developers should be aware of the available Climate Change flood mapping and the expected future changes. The Department's capital flood alleviation schemes are also designed with Climate Change factors taken into consideration.
- 10.7 The Department is also developing preparatory work towards the provision of legislation which will enable it to introduce future arrangements, if funded to do so, to encourage developers to use Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) as the preferred drainage solution in new developments. These arrangements which would require further consultation in due course may propose to detail how SuDS can be approved as part of a potential approval process for developments and requirements for their ongoing long-term maintenance. SuDS can assist in the

management of flood and pollution risks from excess water and can benefit water quality, biodiversity, health, and public amenity.

- 10.8** It is therefore recognised that the SPPS and the planning system have an important role to play in supporting the wider efforts of government in supporting flood risk management. An established approach has been to prevent inappropriate new development in areas known to be at risk of flooding, or that may increase the flood risk elsewhere. The SPPS, therefore, currently provides that, in all but the most exceptional circumstances, new development is not located within the flood plains of rivers or the sea where it may be at risk or increase the risk of flooding in the locality.
- 10.9** The current definition of a flood plain contained in the SPPS does not include an allowance for Climate Change. Whilst DfI Rivers, in its role as statutory consultee, will continue to provide advice taking into account the latest information on flood risk (including for Climate Change) it is recognised that updating the definition of a flood plain in the SPPS can provide further policy backing to support decision making by planning authorities.
- 10.10** The SPPS also recognises that the planning system should help to mitigate and adapt to Climate Change by working with natural environmental processes, for example through promoting the development of green infrastructure and also the use of SuDS to reduce flood risk and improve water quality.
- 10.11** For the existing policy provisions in relation to 'Flood Risk' please see paragraphs 6.99 – 6.132 of the [Strategic Planning Policy Statement](#)

**QUESTION 4: *Can you provide any evidence on how and why the Department should update, revise, and improve the subject policy 'Flood Risk', as set out in the SPPS, in order to better support the Climate Change agenda? Please detail.***

## **Transportation**

- 10.12** The Department is the roads authority for Northern Ireland with responsibility for almost all aspects of transport policy including public transport, promotion of active and sustainable travel, the development and implementation of a transport strategy, transport plans and the provision, management and maintenance of the road network as well as delivering wider transport projects. In addition, the Department is a statutory consultee in the planning process in relation to roads related matters.
- 10.13** As the second largest contributor to carbon emissions, the transport sector and particularly its surface transport, needs to play a critical role in responding to the climate emergency. The CCA places a clear responsibility on the Department to decarbonise the transportation sector. As previously mentioned, the Department

is currently bringing forward a Transport Strategy (TSNI) that will set out its new approach for the transport system up to 2035. The strategy aims to provide a clear framework for action which will facilitate implementation of a range of decarbonisation initiatives.

- 10.14** The planning system has an important role to play in supporting the priorities set out in the TSNI and the Department will aim to ensure that the regional strategic planning policies within the SPPS, planning guidance in [Living Places](#), and council LDPs continue to help improve connectivity, promote more sustainable transport patterns and support the decarbonisation of the transport sector.
- 10.15** Going forward, the planning system could potentially improve the alignment of transport planning in Northern Ireland with the climate targets outlined in the CCA and help support the 'Hierarchy in Reducing the Carbon Impact of Transport'. This hierarchy is focused on reducing the number and length of trips; increasing a shift of modes from the use of the private car to public transport and active travel; and a switch to more sustainable fuels.
- 10.16** Within this context the Department is focused on encouraging and prioritising low-carbon transport options, such as:
- **Transport Demand Management:** measures that help manage and reduce travel demand, such as flexible working arrangements, tele-commuting, and further promotion of cycling and walking for short-distance trips,
  - **Active Travel Infrastructure:** enhancing the focus on active travel (cycling and walking) by allocating more space for cycle paths, pedestrian zones, and implementing measures to improve safety and accessibility for non-motorised transport modes,
  - **Sustainable Transport Networks:** ensuring that transport planning focuses on developing sustainable transport networks that minimise carbon emissions, such as investing in efficient public transport systems, promoting shared mobility services, and integrating different modes of transport, and
  - **Monitoring and Reporting:** implementing monitoring mechanisms to regularly assess the progress and impact of transport-related Climate Change targets.
- 10.17** The SPPS was introduced in 2015 in the context of the 'Regional Transportation Strategy for Northern Ireland' for the period 2002-2012, and the subsequent document 'Ensuring a Sustainable Transport Future: A New Approach to Regional Transportation', published in March 2012.
- 10.18** In respect of transportation, the SPPS seeks to support a 'modal shift' by promoting sustainable forms of development that reduce the need for motorised transport and encourages opportunities for active travel and travel by public transport in preference to the private car.



- 10.19 It also recognises that the preparation of a LDP provides the opportunity to assess the transport needs, problems and opportunities within the plan area and that appropriate consideration be given to transportation issues in the allocation of land for future development, including appropriate integration between transport modes and land use. Policy specifies that LDPs should identify active travel networks and provide a range of infrastructure improvements to increase use of more sustainable modes.
- 10.20 Any review of the SPPS in relation to Climate Change should take account of the new approach for transport infrastructure planning and delivery of transport infrastructure services across Northern Ireland.
- 10.21 The planning system can play a positive role in supporting the decarbonisation of transportation. It can promote more sustainable transportation for a greener and more resilient future. The review provides the opportunity to ensure that the subject planning policy for transportation remains up to date and fit for purpose for plan-making and decision-taking. For example, it could consider how regional strategic planning policy can best support and integrate active travel infrastructure and use, deliver sustainable patterns of development that reduce the need to travel and encourage travel by greener modes of travel that minimise carbon emissions.
- 10.22 For the existing policy provisions in relation to 'Transportation' please see paragraphs 6.293 – 6.305 of the [Strategic Planning Policy Statement](#)

**QUESTION 5: *Can you provide any evidence on how and why the Department should update, revise, and improve the subject policy 'Transportation', as set out in the SPPS, in order to better support the Climate Change agenda? Please detail.***

### **Development in the Countryside**

- 10.23 It is recognised that there are wide variations across Northern Ireland in terms of the economic, social and environmental characteristics of rural areas and that Northern Ireland is characterised by a distinct dispersed rural settlement pattern.
- 10.24 Given the declaration of a climate emergency and the challenges in delivering on the ambitions of the CCA, the Department is considering whether the current approach to new development in the countryside remains appropriate. The role and function of rural settlements and accessibility to existing services and infrastructure is also important.
- 10.25 The aim of the SPPS in relation to the countryside is to manage development in a manner which strikes a balance between protection of the environment from inappropriate development, while supporting and sustaining rural communities, consistent with the RDS. The policy approach is to cluster, consolidate, and group

new development with existing established buildings, and promote the re-use of previously used buildings.

- 10.26 The current policy provides a wide range of opportunities for development in the countryside including new dwellings in existing clusters; replacement dwellings; dwellings on farms; dwellings for non-agricultural business enterprises; infill development; the conversion and reuse of existing buildings; and a dwelling where there are personal and domestic circumstances. Additional opportunities are provided for a temporary caravan; social and affordable housing development; and non-residential development including farm diversification; agriculture and forestry development; and the conversion and reuse of existing buildings for non-residential use.
- 10.27 For the existing policy provisions in relation to 'Development in the Countryside' please see paragraphs 6.61 – 6.75 of the [Strategic Planning Policy Statement](#)

**QUESTION 6: *Can you provide any evidence on how and why the Department should update, revise, and improve the subject policy 'Development in the Countryside', as set out in the SPPS, in order to better support the Climate Change agenda? Please detail.***

### **Other Matters**

- 10.28 As per paragraphs 6.4 and 6.5 above, the Department is particularly keen to hear views and gather evidence in response to Questions 1-6. However, the Department recognises that there may be comments/evidence in relation to other aspects of the SPPS that you may wish to comment on in relation to Climate Change that might assist the Department with determining the most appropriate way forward.

**QUESTION 7: *In light of the declared climate emergency and the requirements of The Climate Change Act (Northern Ireland) 2022, can you provide any other evidence on how and why the Department should update, revise, and improve the SPPS to better support the Climate Change agenda? Please detail.***

## 11. Summary of Questions

- 1) *Can you provide any evidence on how and why the Department should update, revise, and improve 'The Purpose of Planning' as contained within the SPPS so that it is fit for purpose and suitably future proofed to appropriately support the Climate Change agenda going forward? Please detail.*
- 2) *Can you provide any evidence on how and why the Department should update, revise, and improve 'Furthering Sustainable Development' (including Mitigating and Adapting to Climate Change and The Importance of Ecosystem Services) in order to better support the Climate Change agenda? Please detail.*
- 3) *Can you provide any evidence on how and why the Department should update, revise, and improve the 'Core Planning Principles' in order to better support the Climate Change agenda? Please detail.*
- 4) *Can you provide any evidence on how and why the Department should update, revise, and improve the subject policy 'Flood Risk', as set out in the SPPS, in order to better support the Climate Change agenda? Please detail.*
- 5) *Can you provide any evidence on how and why the Department should update, revise, and improve the subject policy 'Transportation', as set out in the SPPS, in order to better support the Climate Change agenda? Please detail.*
- 6) *Can you provide any evidence on how and why the Department should update, revise, and improve the subject policy 'Development in the Countryside', as set out in the SPPS, in order to better support the Climate Change agenda? Please detail.*
- 7) *In light of the declared climate emergency and the requirements of The Climate Change Act (Northern Ireland) 2022, can you provide any other evidence on how and why the Department should update, revise, and improve the SPPS to better support the Climate Change agenda? Please detail.*

## 12. Next Steps

- 12.1 Responses to this Call for Evidence should be made to the Department by:  
**5.00pm, Thursday 28 March 2024.**
- 12.2 The information gathered, as a result of this Call for Evidence will be considered by the Department and will help inform any potential focused review of the SPPS in relation to Climate Change.
- 12.3 Depending, in part, upon the evidence received, the consideration and scope of any potential review will be refined to focus on the key issues and/or if further research should be undertaken. Any necessary revisions to regional strategic planning policy will follow the normal policy development process and would involve the preparation of a draft policy proposal which would be subject to full public consultation.

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# **Future Focused Review of the Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS) on the issue of Climate Change**

**A Call for Evidence**

**EASY READ**

**Issued: 3 January 2024**

**Respond by: 28 March 2024**

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You can get a copy of this document in other formats, including:

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**PLEASE NOTE:** This is an 'Easy Read' version of the Call for Evidence. It contains a lot less detail than the full document. If you would like more detail, you may find the full version better suited to your needs. This can be accessed at: [www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/consultations/call-evidence-future-focused-review-SPPS-climate-change](http://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/consultations/call-evidence-future-focused-review-SPPS-climate-change)

To get a copy of this document in another format, or tell us what you think, you can:

- **Telephone: 028 9054 0612** and talk to one of the Regional Planning and Policy team members. If you have a hearing difficulty, you can use the text relay prefix **18001**.
- **Or E-mail: [SPPSteam@infrastructure-ni.gov.uk](mailto:SPPSteam@infrastructure-ni.gov.uk)**

## About us

We are the Department for Infrastructure.

## What do we do?

We have many wide-ranging responsibilities in relation to water, transport, and planning (including the making of regional planning policy).

We look after our water, rivers, roads, and transport infrastructure.

We manage over £37 billion of public assets that improve people's quality of life and help reduce our impact on the planet.

## Here are some of the main things we do.

### Water

- We help to reduce the risk of flooding by looking after our sea and river flood defences and by providing expert advice on flooding matters to decision makers, including planners in councils.
- We lead the emergency response to flooding and other severe weather incidents.
- We develop policy and legislation for water, reservoirs and sewerage and we fund and oversee Northern Ireland Water as a shareholder.
- We also bring forward rivers and drainage policy and legislation.

### Transport

- We are bringing forward a new transport strategy for Northern Ireland.
- We are responsible for the provision, management, and maintenance of all our public roads, and for the promotion of road safety and active and sustainable travel, including walking, wheeling, and cycling.
- We fund Translink which runs the buses and trains on the public transport network.

### Planning

- We make planning policy and planning legislation to guide local development plans and decisions on planning applications.
- We also take decisions on some large planning applications.
- We provide expert advice on roads, rivers, and sewerage issues to our local

councils.

- We are working with others to make the planning system better.

## **This is a Call for Evidence on:**

A potential review of the *Strategic Planning Policy Statement (the SPPS)* on the issue of *Climate Change*

### **What is the SPPS?**

The SPPS is our policy on how we should deal with important planning matters for different land uses and types of development across Northern Ireland.

This policy is used to guide councils in making their local development plans (LDPs) and for those that take decisions on planning applications and planning appeals. A LDP sets out the policies and proposals of councils to be used to decide development proposals for the long-term future development of their areas.

In June 2022 government introduced a new law called the Climate Change Act (Northern Ireland) 2022. This legislation sets an ambitious target of net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050, with interim targets for 2030 and 2040.

This means we need to make a big shift in Northern Ireland's approach to the climate crisis and will require an immediate change in all of our activities.

We are thinking about changing the SPPS in places to give it an improved focus on the issue of Climate Change.

You can look at the current SPPS here: [Strategic Planning Policy Statement](#)

## **Why are we doing a Call for Evidence?**

We are looking at how our policies can help improve how our planning system responds to the challenges of our changing climate now and into the future.

We want to reach out to everyone to get your views on the policy areas of the SPPS we think are most relevant in relation to Climate Change.

We want to gather information through the Call for Evidence consultation to help a future Infrastructure Minister decide on whether or not to review the SPPS and if so, where the focus should be.

If a decision is made in the future to review the SPPS, the information collected from this Call for Evidence will feed into the review and help us decide the best way to do it.



We want any review to take a fresh look at how suitable the policies in the SPPS are, and to update and develop new policies, if needed.

## What does the Call for Evidence cover – what are we asking about?

We want you to focus on the following policies in the SPPS as we think these are the areas which are most impacted by, and are most relevant to, Climate Change:

- The Purpose of Planning,
- Furthering Sustainable Development,
- The Core Planning Principles of the planning system,
- Flood risk,
- Transportation, and
- Development in the countryside.

We want to get your views and gather evidence on the policies mentioned above and how they might need to be updated because of Climate Change.

But we are also interested in any evidence on other policies in the SPPS that you may think are also relevant in terms of Climate Change.

## The Purpose of Planning

We are thinking whether we need to update the purpose of planning and give more focus to climate action so that the planning system can do more to help lessen and manage the impacts of a changing climate.

You can read the existing policy wording on 'The Purpose of Planning' by clicking on the following link and going to paragraphs 2.1 – 2.4.

### [Strategic Planning Policy Statement](#)

Please consider question 1 below and give us your views:

**QUESTION 1:** *Can you provide any evidence on how and why the Department should update, revise, and improve 'The Purpose of Planning' as contained within the SPPS so that it is fit for purpose and suitably future proofed to appropriately support the Climate Change agenda going forward? Please detail.*

## Furthering Sustainable Development

Furthering sustainable development can be described as doing things to help meet our needs now without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs. It is at the heart of the SPPS and the planning system.

The SPPS already gives us examples of how the planning system can play an important part in helping to slow down or address the worst impacts of Climate Change on communities, buildings and on our environment. We are thinking about whether we might need to improve this policy to make it better.

You can read the existing policy wording on 'Furthering Sustainable Development' by clicking on the link below and going to paragraphs 3.1 – 3.16.

### [Strategic Planning Policy Statement](#)

Please consider question 2 below and give us your views.

**QUESTION 2: *Can you provide any evidence on how and why the Department should update, revise, and improve 'Furthering Sustainable Development' (including Mitigating and Adapting to Climate Change and The Importance of Ecosystem Services) in order to better support the Climate Change agenda? Please detail.***

## Core Planning Principles

The SPPS has 5 'Core Planning Principles' that are very important for planning and for achieving sustainable development. Four of these principles are very relevant to Climate Change and you can read a short description of each below.

### Improving Health and Well-Being

The SPPS states that planning should influence health and well-being positively by encouraging better environmentally sustainable design; providing better connected communities with safe pedestrian areas; making sure planning and transport are more linked; and helping to provide and protect green infrastructure (such as parks, green spaces, and street trees) and blue infrastructure (such as ponds, streams, and lakes).

### Supporting Sustainable Economic Growth

The SPPS encourages sustainable economic growth whilst also trying to protect and make the natural and built environment better.

### Supporting Good Design and Positive Place-Making

This core planning principle also encourages the need to react to and reduce the

impacts of Climate Change. The SPPS accepts that good design can further sustainable development; encourage healthier living; promote accessibility and inclusivity; and contribute to how safe places are and feel.

## **Preserving and Improving the Built and Natural Environment**

This core planning principle tries to make sure that the environment is managed in a sustainable way to protect our landscape and its heritage assets; preserving and improving the natural and built environment; and, stopping the loss of biodiversity (that is the variety of plant and animal life in the world).

You can read the existing policy wording on the 'Core Planning Principles' by clicking on the link below and going to paragraphs 4.1 – 4.40.

### [Strategic Planning Policy Statement](#)

Please consider question 3 below and give us your views.

**QUESTION 3: *Can you provide any evidence on how and why the Department should update, revise, and improve the 'Core Planning Principles' in order to better support the Climate Change agenda? Please detail.***

The SPPS includes 18 subject policies on different planning policy topics. We are thinking about whether 3 of these subject policies may need to be reviewed to make them better, given Climate Change. These are the subject policies on Flood Risk, Transportation and Development in the Countryside.

## **Flood Risk**

Flooding is a big risk to people, property, and our environment. Our changing climate is making this an even bigger risk to us all. We have experienced and should expect more frequent and extreme weather conditions and events because of Climate Change.

The SPPS and the planning system have an important role to play in supporting flood risk management. Our current approach is to limit new development from being built in areas that flood or where a development may increase the risk of flooding elsewhere.

The SPPS, therefore, advises that new development should not be located within the flood plains (the area which may flood) of rivers or the sea.

We are thinking about whether we need to improve this subject policy to make it better, given the context of Climate Change.

You can read the existing policy wording on 'Flood Risk' by clicking on the link below and going to paragraphs 6.99 – 6.132.

### [Strategic Planning Policy Statement](#)

Please consider question 4 below and give us your views:

**QUESTION 4:** *Can you provide any evidence on how and why the Department should update, revise, and improve the subject policy 'Flood Risk', as set out in the SPPS, in order to better support the Climate Change agenda? Please detail.*

## Transportation

We are responsible for the network that allows people or goods to move around by road, train, or by ship, and for making transport policy, including planning policy on transport.

As the second largest contributor to carbon emissions, the transport sector and particularly surface transport, needs to play a key role in responding to the climate emergency.

The SPPS seeks to support a 'modal shift' by promoting sustainable forms of development that reduce the need for motorised transport and encourages opportunities for active travel (making journeys in physically active ways like cycling or walking) and travel by public transport in preference to the private car.

We are bringing forward a new Transport Strategy and think we should also consider changing our planning policy to ensure that it can support more walking, wheeling, cycling and use of our buses and trains.

We are thinking about whether we need to improve this subject policy to make it better, given the context of Climate Change.

You can read the existing policy wording on 'Transportation' by clicking on the link below and going to paragraphs 6.293 – 6.305.

### [Strategic Planning Policy Statement](#)

Please consider question 5 below and give us your views:

**QUESTION 5:** *Can you provide any evidence on how and why the Department should update, revise, and improve the subject policy 'Transportation', as set out in the SPPS, in order to better support the Climate Change agenda? Please detail.*

## Development in the Countryside

The aim of the SPPS regarding development in the countryside is to strike a balance between protection of the environment from the wrong type of development, while supporting and sustaining rural communities.

The current policy approach for development in the countryside is to cluster, consolidate, and group new development with existing established buildings, and

promote the re-use of previously used buildings. The SPPS provides a wide range of opportunities for housing, farming, and other types of development in the countryside.

We are thinking about whether we need to improve this subject policy to make it better, given the context of Climate Change.

You can read the existing policy wording on 'Development in the Countryside' by clicking on the link below and going to paragraphs 6.61 – 6.75.

### [Strategic Planning Policy Statement](#)

Please consider question 6 below and give us your views:

**QUESTION 6:** *Can you provide any evidence on how and why the Department should update, revise, and improve the subject policy 'Development in the Countryside', as set out in the SPPS, in order to better support the Climate Change agenda? Please detail.*

## **Other Matters**

We are happy to receive any comments or evidence you may have about other policies in the SPPS that you think are relevant to Climate Change, that might help us in deciding the best way forward or in improving or making new policy.

**QUESTION 7:** *Can you provide any other evidence on how and why the Department should update, revise, and improve the SPPS to better support the Climate Change agenda? Please detail.*

## How to Respond

You can respond to the full consultation survey online through the [Citizen Space hub](#).

Or

Tell us what you think about it by:

- **Telephone: 028 9054 0612** and talk to one of the Regional Planning and Policy team members. If you have a hearing difficulty, you can use the text relay prefix **18001**.
- **Email: [sppsteam@infrastructure-ni.gov.uk](mailto:sppsteam@infrastructure-ni.gov.uk)**

When responding please provide the following information, if possible:

- your name,
- contact details (preferably email),
- the organisation you represent (if applicable), and
- your main area of interest.

The Call for Evidence will run **from Wednesday 3 January 2024 to Thursday 28 March 2024**.

**Please respond through Citizen Space if possible.**

**Please note, you can complete as few or as many questions as you want.**

You can get a copy of the full version of Call for Evidence via the following link: [www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/consultations/call-evidence-future-focused-review-SPPS-climate-change](http://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/consultations/call-evidence-future-focused-review-SPPS-climate-change)

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