

GOVERNMENT CONSULTATION HIGHLIGHTS

August 2023

A brief summary of current government consultations of potential interest to RSN members. This is not intended as an exhaustive list of all relevant consultations.

Permitted development rights – Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities

This consultation contains proposed changes to the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015, as amended. It covers the following areas:

- changes to certain permitted development rights that allow for the change of use to dwellinghouses
- changes to certain permitted development rights that allow agricultural diversification and development on agricultural units
- changes to certain permitted development rights that allow for non-domestic extensions and the erection of new industrial and warehouse buildings
- changes to the permitted development right that allows for the temporary use of land to allow markets to operate for more days
- changes to the existing permitted development right that allows for the erection, extension or alteration of schools, colleges, universities, hospitals, and closed prisons to also apply to open prisons
- the application of local design codes to certain permitted development rights

This consultation also contains a call for evidence led by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs seeking views on nature-based solutions, farm efficiency projects and diversification.

This consultation closes on 25 September 2023.

[Permitted development rights - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)

Plan-making reforms: consultation on implementation – Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities

Government state: “Our vision is for local plans (and minerals and waste plans) to be simpler to understand and use, and positively shaped by the views of communities about how their area should evolve.

“We want them to clearly show what is planned in a local area – so that communities and other users of the plan can engage with them more easily, especially while they are being drawn up. We want them to be prepared more quickly and updated more frequently to ensure more authorities have up-to-date plans that reflect local needs. And we want them to make the best use of new digital technology, so that people can get involved without having to go through hundreds of pages of documents at council offices and to drive improved productivity and efficiency in the plan-making process.

“Through this consultation we are asking for your views on our proposals to implement the parts of the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill which relate to plan-making, to make plans simpler, faster to prepare and more accessible.”

This consultation closes on 18 October 2023.

[Plan-making reforms: consultation on implementation - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)

Operational reforms to the Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP) consenting process – Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities

Following the publication of the Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects Action Plan in February 2023, the government has committed to bringing forward reforms to ensure the existing system can support future infrastructure needs by making the Nationally Significant

Infrastructure Projects consenting process better, faster, greener, fairer and more resilient by 2025.

The key operational changes they are consulting on will “make the system work more effectively for applicants, local authorities and communities.” The proposals fall broadly into 3 reform areas:

- Operational reform to support a faster consenting process
- Recognising the role of local communities and strengthening engagement
- System capability - building a more diverse and resilient resourcing model

This consultation closes on 19 September 2023.

[Operational reforms to the Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project \(NSIP\) consenting process - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/operational-reforms-to-the-nationally-significant-infrastructure-project-nsip-consenting-process)

Call for evidence: non-statutory flexible working – Department for Business & Trade

Flexible working is a change to an employee’s working hours, location or pattern. For many people, after pay, access to flexible working is the key thing that they look for from an employer.

Flexible working is a broad term. It can relate to working hours or pattern: part-time, term-time, flexi-time, compressed hours, or adjusting start and finish times. It can also include flexibility over where someone works.

Arrangements for flexible working can be agreed between employers and employees on a contractual or non-contractual basis. Employees may ask for flexible working through the statutory right to request, or an informal non-statutory route – for example a discussion with their manager.

Informal flexible working can benefit individuals and businesses alike. Government wants to explore this further through this call for evidence. They are seeking views from individuals and businesses on their experiences of non-statutory flexible working and how it operates in practice.

This consultation closes on 7 November 2023.

[Call for evidence: non-statutory flexible working - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/call-for-evidence-non-statutory-flexible-working)

Domestic consumers with non-domestic energy supply contracts: call for evidence – Department for Energy Security & Net Zero

This call for evidence aims to increase government understanding of domestic consumers who receive their energy via a non-domestic contract - defined as contracts which are typically used to serve non-residential properties, such as businesses or charities:

- the reasons for those arrangements
- what prices they face

The information provided will help government determine if these consumers need any longer-term protections.

Government welcome responses from a wide range of people who have a non-domestic energy contract including:

- residents in care homes
- tenants on all-inclusive rents (bills included in rent)
- residents in flats or apartments attached to a pub or other business
- residents in caravan parks and park homes
- residents in armed forces residential accommodation

This consultation closes on 18 September 2023.

[Domestic consumers with non-domestic energy supply contracts: call for evidence - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/domestic-consumers-with-non-domestic-energy-supply-contracts-call-for-evidence)

Protecting Hedgerows in England – Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs

Government want to know how they can best protect hedgerows through effective, proportionate regulation as we phase out farm subsidies and cross compliance rules. For the good of the hedgerow and the wildlife it supports, farmers currently must:

- maintain a buffer strip along their hedgerows
- not remove important hedgerows
- not cut or trim hedgerows during bird nesting and rearing season

Government is seeking views on the best way to maintain and improve existing protections, as well as how they enforce them.

This consultation closes on 20 September 2023.

[Protecting hedgerows in England - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/protecting-hedgerows-in-england)

Business Rates Improvement Relief: Draft regulations – Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities

This consultation focuses on draft regulations to implement the government's Business Rates Improvement Relief Scheme.

Government state: "Improvement Relief will support businesses wishing to invest in their property. It will ensure that no ratepayer will face higher business rates bills for 12 months as a result of qualifying improvements to a property they occupy. The Non-Domestic Rating Bill currently before Parliament contains powers to allow for the Improvement Relief Scheme. This consultation seeks views on the draft regulations the government proposes to make under the powers in that Bill."

This consultation closes on 28 August 2023.

[Business Rates Improvement Relief: Draft regulations - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/business-rates-improvement-relief-draft-regulations)