

# Planning

## OUR ASK



**Make changes to the planning system to ensure permitted development for infrastructure including glasshouses, reservoirs, and slurry stores for the purposes of growing and processing fruit, vegetables, crops and livestock.**

## Why it's needed

Land in England is under pressure from a growing list of demands, especially for new housing and infrastructure. Land will also have a crucial role to play as the UK seeks to meet its net zero targets, through generating renewable energy, as well as for tree planting and other environmental schemes.

At the same time, almost 70% of our land is used to produce food, which is vital for our national food security. The NFU therefore supports a land use and planning framework which enables individual farmers to make the best use of their land, striking a balance between food security, profitability and net zero ambitions.

Too often, the planning system can act to make the rural economy less sustainable – preventing farm modernisation, diversification and house building for farm workers. In some cases, blanket environmental requirements mean that development is refused:

a perverse outcome when development would make a farm business more sustainable, reduce its environmental footprint, create jobs, and promote green growth across the sector – all of which are national priorities.

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) must be strengthened to protect prime agricultural land from non-agricultural development or permanent change of use, emphasising the importance of maintaining valuable agricultural areas to ensure sustainable food production.

The new NPPF must also recognise the infrastructure changes farming businesses need to make to move towards investments in things like new buildings to meet animal welfare requirements, new storage of manure or slurry, or new reservoirs to increase drought resilience.

Relaxation of permitted development rights can help, but a revision of the NPPF is vital to support agricultural businesses so they can make the best use of their existing agricultural buildings and to support the levelling up of economic opportunity across rural areas.

We need a planning system that promotes more economic and social activity. Encouraging people to live and work locally, and building more affordable rural housing, will ensure people can integrate into rural communities, help grow more diverse local economies and boost the local and national economy.



# What it would deliver

The NFU has sought to set the agenda for how agriculture reaches net zero by 2040. But recognition is needed that this will require significant change and investment by the industry, including in new farm buildings and renewable energy generation.

The current planning system acts as a barrier to agriculture's progress to delivering net zero, as planning permissions for new slurry stores, slurry store covers and buildings are being put on hold or stopped, adding cost and significant business uncertainty. If farm businesses

are allowed to develop in this way, it will reduce the impacts of production and help in our collective goal to achieve net zero.

There is also the potential to boost food security and economic growth too. Britain's self-sufficiency in fruit and vegetables currently stands at around 50% for vegetables and 15% for fruit. Newer glasshouses could help us produce more of our own fruit and veg, at a time when the nation's food security and health and wellbeing has never been more important.

Extended permitted development rights for the construction of reservoirs would ensure the agricultural sector has sustainable access to the water it requires for food production. The UK has enough water to produce the food we need, it's just not always in the right place at the right time. As a nation, we must get much better at capturing and storing water, as well as moving it around.

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