# Call for Evidence: Future Focused Review of the Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS) on the issue of Climate Change

## 26 March 2024


**Summary**

- The logistics sector recognises the need to decarbonise and must be enabled to do so through a more supportive planning environment.
- Fundamental reform of the planning system is required to ensure better efficiency of freight movements and to support this decarbonisation.
- This requires policies that understand the complexities of logistics and the interaction of different policy priorities that affect the sector.


## About Logistics UK

Logistics UK is one of the country's largest business groups, supporting, shaping and standing up for safe and efficient logistics. We are the only organisation representing the entire logistics sector.

We represent a sector delivering an increasingly innovative, productive and sustainable system of essential national infrastructure. This system ensures the availability of the products that households, businesses and public services rely on every day, and is supporting the UK's transformation for the future. Our membership of over 21,000 includes global, national and regional businesses and SMEs spanning the road, rail, sea and air industries as well as the buyers of freight services, such as retailers and manufacturers.

## Response to call for evidence

***Please note that this response refers only to the subject policy on 'Transport' as set out in section 10 of the call for evidence.***

There is a widespread view among the logistics sector that the planning system is not effective at recognising the importance of logistics to local and national supply chains, allocating sites for further development and protecting existing sites and infrastructure.

This lack of effectiveness frequently stems from a poor understanding of the current and future needs of the sector and its role in the economy. There needs to be a far stronger level of engagement between planning authorities and the logistics sector, as well as a thorough review of the data collected and utilised in setting local plans, to ensure they allocate sufficient space for the expansion and future development of logistics sites as well as anticipating economic trends and infrastructure requirements.

In relation to climate change, the logistics industry is embracing the challenge to achieve net zero and has made significant strides in reducing emissions and investing in new technologies. However, decarbonising surface transport and warehousing operations will also be challenging to achieve without a step-change in infrastructure provision and adoption of new fuelling methods. To go further in decarbonising freight movements, the industry needs confidence in both vehicle performance and the infrastructure that will underpin it. As an example, Logistics UK members in Northern Ireland regularly raise concerns about the availability of electric charging points due to significant under provision. The planning system is an important lever in supporting the move towards net zero, both in terms of enabling sustainable logistics developments and ensuring local infrastructure and networks support decarbonisation.

In setting planning policy, there is a need to engage comprehensively with the logistics sector to understand trends in relation to decarbonisation and then identify sites that enable efficient access to markets and local communities, as well as intermodal facilities, rather than seeking to keep them away from urban areas. Planning must then also strive to make these access routes as efficient as possible; reducing congestion and particularly seeking to remove unnecessary single-

passenger journeys, which will both ensure greater efficiency for zero emission vehicles and provide immediate benefits in terms of reduced emissions from existing fleets.

Planning systems should encourage the adoption of transportation modes that are inherently more sustainable. Modal shift promotes a more diversified and resilient transportation network, reducing dependency on a single mode and providing alternative options. As an island, NI's ports play a pivotal role in trade and access to both the GB, EU and international markets. As identified in the All-island Strategic Rail Review, shifting freight to rail can help alleviate road congestion and improve overall transportation efficiency. Planning for green ports involves integrating shore power facilities, allowing ships to connect to the grid while docked, thereby reducing emissions during layovers. In addition, implementing sustainable cargo handling equipment and practices within ports contributes to the overall reduction of emissions associated with maritime trade. Leveraging water and rail transport, where feasible, can significantly cut emissions. However, modal shift is dependent on strategic planning and the prioritisation of investments in port and rail infrastructure to reduce reliance on emissions-intensive road transport.

At an operational level, many businesses have reported difficulties in securing planning permissions for decarbonisation or renewable energy generation at their sites, despite the enormous potential to achieve carbon reductions in this space. In the warehousing sector, for example, there is the opportunity to significantly increase the use of solar power through better use of rooftop panels, yet difficulties in securing grid connections and other permissions, as well as the cost of connection, are holding back progress. Similarly, Logistics UK members have reported long and difficult application processes to acquire land for, and to install electric vehicle charging areas. The planning system has an enormous role to play here. Permitted development rights should be reviewed to ensure that new and existing logistics sites can invest with confidence in renewable energy and carbon reduction schemes, while policy should require network operators to support this investment as much as possible.

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