Written evidence submitted by Landmark Information Group (PIB144)

Submission to the Planning and Infrastructure Bill Call for Evidence

May 2025

Executive Summary

Landmark Information Group is the biggest source of property and land data in the country, supporting the entire value chain of the property industry. We are on a mission to make the home moving process work better for industry and home-movers alike.

We welcome the ambition of the Planning and Infrastructure Bill to streamline decision-making and unlock housing and infrastructure delivery. However, we urge the Committee to ensure the legislation is futureproofed by integrating the role of geospatial data, pre-development intelligence, digital infrastructure and data-led environmental risk mapping. These elements are fundamental to efficient and effective planning and must be reflected throughout the Bill's implementation.

Key Messages

- Key decisions are made well before a planning application is submitted, yet fragmented systems, outdated datasets, and manual processes often compromise outcomes. High-quality, accessible data is critical to early site assessments, reducing risk, controlling costs, and guiding sound design and planning strategies across both public and private sectors.
- The success of Spatial Development Strategies (SDSs), Environmental Delivery Plans (EDPs), and the implementation of Biodiversity Net Gain all rely on consistent, interoperable datasets. National geospatial data frameworks are essential to support cross-boundary coordination, inform long-term policy, and ensure developments are aligned with environmental and climate goals.
- Smarter decision-making requires modern tools, digital infrastructure, and data-literate planning teams. Local authorities must be equipped with integrated platforms and up-to-date training to improve planning outcomes, reduce delays, and enhance public trust.
- The integration of AI in site selection, environmental modelling, and risk forecasting can improve speed and consistency - but it must be underpinned by robust data infrastructure, transparency safeguards, and strong privacy protections to ensure accountability and maintain public confidence.

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Full Response

Planning reform must start with data

The planning process does not begin with the submission of a formal application. Long before a planning proposal reaches a local authority, a wide range of professionals are already making key decisions. Developers, planners, architects, and land promoters all depend on access to data to evaluate a site's viability, understand environmental, legal, and infrastructure risks and identify possible planning constraints.

These early insights are not just background context. They shape land transactions, inform design strategies, and set the direction for the entire planning journey. Despite this, early-stage decisions are often hindered by poor data practices, including:

- Inconsistent and outdated datasets
- Manual collection methods
- Fragmented sources that don't communicate with one another
- Barriers to access like paywalls and hard-to-use platforms.

Poor data practices can lead to planning decisions being made in an information vacuum or based on unverified assumptions, in turn creating designs that don't meet local needs and drawing out timelines.

Planning decisions can only be as sound as the data that underpins them.

Landmark's suite of data services, including Envirocheck, SiteSolutions, Promap, is embedded across public and private sector workflows. These tools consolidate data on site contamination, flood risk, supporting amenities, planning constraints and environmental sensitivities, empowering planners to make confident, evidence-based decisions. For example, developers such as Taylor Wimpey have utilised Landmark's Envirocheck platform to screen out environmentally unsuitable land at an early stage - saving time, cost, and future risk.

To build more homes, faster, and in the right places, the Government must ensure that robust, interoperable data is embedded into the planning system from the very start. Improving the quality and accessibility of data at the pre-application stage will enable more confident decision-making, reduce unnecessary delays and help deliver better outcomes for developers, communities and local authorities.

Enabling national delivery through shared data standards

Clause 47 introduces a new duty on combined authorities, combined county authorities, upper-tier county councils and unitary authorities to prepare Spatial Development Strategies (SDSs). It also provides for the establishment of Strategic Planning Boards to produce SDSs on behalf of designated groups of authorities.

We welcome the Government's ambition to deliver a nationwide system of strategic planning within this Parliament. SDSs represent a timely and necessary step to address complex spatial challenges such as housing need calculation, and infrastructure and utilities coordination for new towns, at a strategic scale.

However, the success of SDSs will depend on their foundation: a consistent, high-quality, and interoperable data infrastructure. Without shared geospatial data standards, there is a risk of

inconsistent data generation and collection, undermining the credibility of SDSs and the local plans that must conform to them.

Landmark is a leading provider of high-resolution geospatial data through its PointX database - comprising of over 3.5 million accurately mapped amenities such as schools, GP surgeries, transport networks, utilities, heritage assets, and other points of interest. These datasets are already used across central and local government, to inform everything from site acquisition to emergency planning.

We recommend that the Government develop a national geospatial data framework to support SDS preparation. This should apply to both public and private datasets and ensure that information on land ownership, environmental designations, infrastructure networks and planning constraints is consistently available across England.

SDSs also present an opportunity to align evidence bases, streamline local plan timetables, and facilitate resource-sharing between authorities. A federated approach to data infrastructure, rather than a one-size-fits-all approach, could help enable cross-boundary collaboration while preserving local flexibility.

Embedding shared data standards into the strategic planning process will support better decision-making, reduce duplication, and ensure SDSs provide a sound basis for sustainable, coordinated growth across the country.

Geospatial data for investment and net zero goals

Geospatial intelligence is essential to delivering sustainable housing and infrastructure at scale. It enables developers, investors and public authorities to assess development potential, optimise site selection, and understand climate and social risks from the outset. As demands on land intensify, the value of spatial data in supporting smart, evidence-based decisions continues to grow.

Landmark believes the Planning and Infrastructure Bill should explicitly support the integration of Environmental Value Modelling (EVM) into the planning process. EVM, when powered by high-quality geospatial inputs, allows users to assess whole-life carbon impacts, identify retrofit opportunities, and ensure developments deliver net positive environmental outcomes. This capability is critical as the UK accelerates its transition to net zero.

In practice, our geospatial modelling tools are already used to assess the viability of low-carbon technologies such as solar PV, heat pumps and EV infrastructure. For example, Landmark's services can estimate solar yield potential at building or portfolio level - helping determine whether upgrades are technically feasible and aligned with environmental, social and governance (ESG) priorities.

Our PointX dataset supports public sector users including Historic England, identifying at-risk high street properties, as well as the Arts Council England, assessing cultural infrastructure gaps. By embedding this intelligence into early-stage planning, authorities can prioritise reuse, conservation, and place-based investment, rather than defaulting to land release or demolition.

Geospatial modelling can also help determine where social and affordable housing can be delivered most effectively, by factoring in infrastructure capacity, land constraints, and local need. It can quantify not just housing numbers, but broader place value, incorporating access to schools, GP surgeries, employment, and transport, all of which are critical to genuine local growth and housing sustainability.

By formally recognising the role of geospatial intelligence in strategic planning, the Bill can help deliver developments that are not only viable but sustainable, equitable and future-ready.

Environmental Delivery Plans (EDPs) and nature-based planning

Clauses 48 to 60 of the Bill introduce Environmental Delivery Plans (EDPs), a new planning tool to be developed by Natural England. EDPs will outline the conservation measures required to address the environmental impacts of specified development types on protected sites or species. They will also determine the amount of the nature restoration levy payable by developers and clarify which environmental obligations may be discharged or modified through that payment.

We support the strategic intent behind EDPs. By addressing environmental impacts at a system level, these plans offer a structured way to integrate nature recovery into national infrastructure and housing delivery. The need for reliable, spatially coherent environmental planning is growing, particularly as obligations such as Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG), nutrient neutrality, and climate resilience become more embedded in the planning system.

Developing responses at catchment scale makes better use of limited ecological expertise. For example, the Local Government Association has estimated that over 20,000 homes are delayed annually due to nutrient and water neutrality requirements. EDPs, properly resourced, could provide the mechanisms to resolve these barriers more efficiently.

However, delivery will depend on ensuring Natural England is equipped with the necessary funding, capacity, and technical support. It will also require thoughtful alignment of EDP geographies with other spatial strategies - such as Local Nature Recovery Strategies and administrative boundaries - to avoid overlaps or policy gaps.

Landmark offers a comprehensive suite of environmental data platforms (EDPs) including Envirocheck, SiteSolutions Biodiversity Check, and bespoke BNG Reports. These tools support planners, developers and consultants in identifying ecological constraints, mapping biodiversity units, and designing schemes that align with Natural Capital principles and legal compliance. For example, Landmark worked closely with Natural England to provide early roe deer movement data to the HS2 project, which enabled ecological risk mitigation and informed alternative route design in Buckinghamshire.

Environmental data processes must be embedded into planning workflows and supported by clear national data standards. This includes defining national environmental data standards to support net zero and climate resilience objectives, biodiversity and water management, and enabling geospatial technology adoption at both local and national level.

Reforming Compulsory Purchase Orders (CPOs)

Clause 91 introduces amendments to streamline the compulsory purchase process by enabling acquiring authorities to disregard "hope value" in certain compensation assessments. Specifically, this clause revises the provisions of the Land Compensation Act 1961 to allow public bodies to issue a section 14A direction, permitting the valuation of land to exclude any uplift in value based on the prospect of future planning permission. This change is intended to make regeneration schemes and strategic infrastructure delivery more financially viable.

We welcome this reform. The ability to remove "hope value" in appropriate circumstances is a proportionate and necessary step that will support public sector bodies in delivering critical infrastructure and development more efficiently. However, to be implemented fairly and effectively, this measure must be underpinned by accurate and transparent data.

Landmark's planning and ownership platforms are designed to support acquiring authorities in making more confident and defensible decisions. Our datasets provide detailed insight into land titles, planning histories, environmental risks and legal constraints, in turn helping to identify suitable sites at an early stage and reduce uncertainty throughout the CPO process.

By enabling earlier and more informed assessments, our data tools also reduce the likelihood of legal challenge and support more consistent compensation determinations. Accurate land and risk data ensures that acquisition targets are viable, appropriate and aligned with local development priorities.

Modernising local decision making

Clauses 45 and 46 introduce measures to enhance the consistency and effectiveness of local planning decisions. Clause 45 mandates training for planning committee members and those exercising mayoral planning functions, ensuring a consistent standard of understanding across England. Clause 46 establishes a national scheme of delegation to clarify which planning functions should be decided by officers and which must go to a planning committee, alongside powers to issue statutory guidance and limit committee sizes.

These are important and necessary reforms. However, their impact will be limited unless matched by investment in digital infrastructure, data access, and the skills needed to support contemporary decision-making.

While many councils already deliver some form of training, the content and format vary significantly. A consistent, high-quality training programme is essential to equip committee members with the knowledge to make robust, informed decisions. This training must not be reduced to a tick-box exercise. It should be regularly updated to reflect changes in legislation and planning policy and delivered in formats that support effective engagement - whether through in-person workshops, online learning, or interactive modules - with appropriate methods of assessment and feedback.

The Bill should go further by mandating support for broader digital capacity-building within local planning authorities. This includes investment in data literacy, the adoption of modern digital tools, and governance frameworks that strike a balance between local discretion and national consistency.

Local officers and committees are responsible for decisions that shape communities for generations. Yet many lack access to the integrated data and digital platforms required to manage the complexity of today's planning environment. This contributes to delays, inconsistent decisions, and a lack of public trust.

Landmark has developed geospatial dashboards that bring together a range of datasets, including environmental risk, land use constraints, infrastructure overlays, planning permissions, and ownership records, into a single, easy-to-use interface. These tools enable local authorities to assess applications with full situational context. Our collaboration with HM Land Registry on the national digitalisation programme offers a strong example of how joined-up systems can support consistency, particularly in the context of devolution.

Rather than imposing a centralised system, government should champion market-led, interoperable solutions that empower local authorities to choose the tools best suited to their needs. Landmark and other sector leaders stand ready to collaborate with government to co-design a national roadmap for digital planning transformation.

Responsible data access and AI in planning

The planning system must keep pace with the UK's wider digital transformation agenda. As initiatives like One Login and the National Data Library evolve, planning data frameworks must prioritise privacy, accountability, and interoperability - particularly as AI and automation become embedded in decision-making.

At the heart of this transition is the need for a secure and scalable data infrastructure. Landmark's LandmarkConnect platform already enables real-time, GDPR-compliant data exchange across the

property and planning ecosystem. Trusted by thousands of users, it demonstrates how market-led, federated infrastructure can deliver both accessibility and data protection without the need for duplicative national platforms.

As AI becomes more embedded in planning workflows, from site suitability analysis to risk forecasting and environmental modelling, a secure and interoperable foundation will be essential. AI offers the potential to significantly improve the speed, consistency, and evidence base of planning decisions. Yet, without proper safeguards, it also raises concerns around transparency and public trust in decision making.

The first step toward responsible AI is ensuring the quality and consistency of planning data. Robust AI models rely on well-structured and traceable data to interpret accurately and make trustworthy recommendations. In this vein, a clear audit trail is essential for both compliance and also for maintaining confidence in how decisions are made.

Conclusion

If the UK is to meet its ambitions for housing delivery, infrastructure investment, and environmental sustainability, planning reform must begin with data. From the earliest stages of site evaluation to the strategic coordination of new towns, timely, accurate and interoperable data is the foundation of a modern planning system.

Today's challenges, from climate adaptation to supporting infrastructure coordination, demand a planning system that is not only faster, but smarter. This requires embedding geospatial intelligence, environmental data, and digital tools directly into decision-making processes. It also calls for a national commitment to shared data standards, enabling consistency across local plans, spatial strategies, and environmental assessments.

The Planning and Infrastructure Bill presents a unique opportunity to future-proof the planning system. By investing in federated, secure and market-led data infrastructure, government can avoid unnecessary duplication while empowering local authorities with the flexibility to choose solutions that work best for their local areas.

Crucially, the growing use of AI and automation in planning makes the need for trusted, auditable and privacy-compliant data even more urgent. Without safeguards, these technologies risk eroding transparency and public confidence. With the right frameworks in place, however, they can drive better, faster, and fairer outcomes.

With the right foundations in data, digital infrastructure and skills, the UK can build a planning system that supports sustainable economic growth, drives inward investment, and delivers real, tangible benefits for communities across the country.

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About Landmark:
As the UK's largest property and land data business, Landmark Information Group supports the entire value chain of the property industry. With unrivalled datasets, a comprehensive team of in-house experts, an extensive partner network, and advanced technology innovations and system capabilities,

our mission is to make every property transaction feel effortless; making it both simpler and faster while reducing risks for all stakeholders.

With more than 25 years' experience, we power confident property and land decisions for architects, surveyors, estate agents, environmental consultants, mortgage lenders, real estate professionals, land developers, property lawyers and search providers across all these markets.

Landmark Information Group recently launched LandmarkConnect – a series of digital hubs for each industry sector to help connect the home moving market, reduce delays and improve efficiency. The series of open, accessible, and standardised hubs from Landmark will allow the currently disconnected parts of the home-moving industry to connect to each other in near-real time.

Landmark Information Group is a UK national business and is a subsidiary of Daily Mail and General Trust plc (DMGT).

Visit http://www.landmark.co.uk/ or follow Landmark on Twitter: https://twitter.com/LandmarkUK

Please view the data and tools mentioned throughout this report via the below links:

- Landmark Biodiversity Check
- Landmark SiteSolutions
- Landmark Promap
- Landmark PointX
- LandmarkConnect
- Envirocheck

Further cross market data is available on Landmark's data-to-go dashboard here: www.landmark.co.uk/news-insights/data-to-go/