



Proposed changes to the publication of statistics on
land use change, commercial floorspace and town
centre/retail development

Summary of responses



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Summary

Communities and Local Government (CLG) consulted on proposals to change the frequency of the publication of 'Land Use Change Statistics' (LUCS) and several options to change the coverage and frequency of publication of 'Commercial and Industrial Floorspace' and 'Town Centre/Retail Statistics' from 16 February to 14 April 2010. The consultation was conducted according to the Code of Practice for Official Statistics which requires users to be engaged on changes to statistics.

Analysis of the submissions received from the consultation exercise indicated:

(a) for the Land Use Change Statistics, support for a reduction in frequency of publication from quarterly to annual

(b) for the Commercial and Industrial Floorspace and Town Centre/Retail Statistics, the responses were less clear cut although there was a higher level of support for biennial publication of the Commercial and Industrial Floorspace and annual publication of Town Centre/Retail Statistics than the other options. There were several suggestions on how to improve the statistics and we will consider these and their resource implications and announce our decision in due course.

1. Background

a. Land Use Change Statistics

Users were asked three questions:

1. What impact does the proposal for one annual publication (to replace the current quarterly releases) have on your use of CLG's Land Use Change Statistics?
2. Do you have any suggestions for improving the statistics that would be presented in the annual publication?
3. Do you have any suggestions for additional analyses that might be included in an annual publication?

b. Commercial and Industrial Floorspace and Town Centre/Retail Development Statistics

Users were asked for views on the following options:

- a) Biennial publication of 'Commercial Floorspace' and 'Retail Development Statistics'
- b) Biennial publication of 'Commercial Floorspace' and annual publication of 'Retail Development Statistics'

- c) Biennial publication of 'Commercial Floorspace' and 'Retail Development Statistics' with some enhancement such as finer geographical disaggregation 'sub regionally' and possibly 'sub local authority'.

Consultation questions:

1. Please provide views on what impact each of the proposed options would have on your use of CLG's 'Commercial Floorspace' and 'Retail Development' statistics.
2. Do you have any suggestions on how these statistics might be improved?

2. Outcome of consultation

a. Land Use Change Statistics

Three written responses were received: two from local authorities and one from the Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE). No respondent requested anonymity or confidentiality of response.

The responses can be summarised as follows:

Q1 - Impact of annual publication

One respondent did not answer this question, one respondent accepted our proposal, while one respondent (CPRE) preferred there to be biannual releases because of a concern about loss of detail on trends.

Q2 - Do you have any suggestions for improving the statistics that would be presented in the annual publication?

Q3 - Do you have any suggestions for additional analyses that might be included in an annual publication?

One respondent highlighted possible links between LUCS and other data on the extent of previously-developed land.

CPRE suggested that statistics on the development of Best and Most Versatile Land should be included in the Land Use Change Statistics.

Conclusions

Changing the Land Use Change Statistics publication from quarterly to annually appears to continue to meet user needs. CPRE's comment on trends was noted but on balance it is considered that an annual publication would be sufficient to identify key trends.

b. Commercial and Industrial Floorspace and Town Centre/Retail Development Statistics

Seven written responses were received. Four of these were from local authorities, one from CPRE, one from the Demographic User Group and a joint response from the Association of Convenience Stores (ACS), British Consortium of Shopping Centres (BCSC) and the National Retail Planning Forum (NRPF). No respondent requested anonymity or confidentiality of response.

Q1. Please provide views on what impact each of the proposed options would have on your use of CLG's 'Commercial Floorspace' and 'Retail Development' Statistics.

The most popular options were Option (b) - biennial publication of the Commercial Floorspace Statistics and annual publication of the Town Centre/Retail Development Statistics and Option (c) - biennial publication of the Commercial Floorspace and Town Centre/Retail Development Statistics with some enhancement such as finer geographical disaggregation.

One additional respondent would find Option (c) acceptable if the requirement for reporting these statistics in planning Annual Monitoring Reports were reduced from annual to biennial.

2. Do you have any suggestions on how these statistics might be improved?

There were a wide selection of suggested improvements to the Commercial Floorspace and Town Centre/Retail Development Statistics, although only one topic was mentioned in more than one response. These included:

- finer geographical disaggregation (mentioned in five responses)
- include 'office' development in Town Centre/Retail Development Statistics
- reduce lead time (after the availability of the Valuation Office Agency data) of Town Centre/Retail Development Statistics
- include breakdown by location (such as 'Edge of Town Centre') and size of development for Town Centre/Retail Development Statistics
- monitoring of planning permissions in town centres to provide a leading indicator

Conclusions

Biennial publication of Commercial Floorspace Statistics would be acceptable although more geographic disaggregation would be preferred. The Town Centre/Retail Development Statistics would be most useful if they were annual and disaggregated to at least local authority level.

Next Actions

CLG will change Land Use Change Statistics from the current quarterly publication to annual. Consideration will be given to adding statistics on development on 'Best and Most Versatile Land'.

CLG will take account of the responses on the Commercial Floorspace and Town Centre/Retail Development statistics and continue to work with users on the best way forward.

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