Land Use Change Statistics

A response to consultation on proposed changes to the statistics

Contents

Summary of consultation

The Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) consulted users of its Land Use Change Statistics from 31 May to 31 July 2019. This consultation presented a review of the Land Use Change statistics. This National Statistics release reports changes in land use including: the number of addresses changing from and to a residential use and the areas of land that have changed from one use to another. These changes are mapped against local authority, Green Belt boundaries and areas of high flood risk. The land use change data are derived by comparing the land use stock in one year to the land use stock in the previous year.

The consultation outlined the purpose of the Land Use Change statistics, current limitations and future possibilities. Based on previous user engagement work, with external users such as local authorities, academics, campaign groups and other government departments, the department had identified a demand for broader Land Use statistics. These Land Use figures quantified and categorised the developed environment and the split between developed and non-developed uses, not just the in-year changes between these uses.

The consultation included a proposal to publish additional statistics on Land Use annually, in addition to maintaining annual updates on the number of addresses changing from and to a residential use, but decreasing the frequency of publication of hectarage change estimates to three-yearly intervals.

Twenty-two parties responded to the consultation. These included responses on behalf of large user groups and individuals such as academics and members of the public. Respondents told us that they mainly used the statistics for academic research, business evaluation and internal government use.

The consultation was published alongside the latest update of the Land Use Change Statistics for England 2017-18, on May 31st 2019. Users were directed to read through the consultation and its proposals and give feedback via an online questionnaire or directly by email. The consultation document is still available to view and download[1]. The department invited users to attend a user engagement forum. This was held on July 18 2019. As part of the consultation process, the department provided users with an idea of what they might expect an offer of statistics on land use stock data to look like. In addition to the National Statistical release of Land Use Change 2017-18, and Consultation document the department also published an experimental

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[1] https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/land-use-change-statistics-proposed-changes

statistic on [Land Use in England 2017](#), which has been commended by the UK Statistics Authority as a model example of an experimental statistic[2].

MHCLG response

Having considered the responses from user of the statistics, the department has decided to proceed with the changes as proposed in the consultation:

[Publish land use stock data annually](#) on the distribution and proportion of different land uses and the split between developed and non-developed land uses for England and each local authority area within England, following the example of the Land Use in England 2017 experimental statistic. Summary statistics and local authority level maps to be updated annually and compared to contemporaneous updates of Local Authority, Green Belt and High Flood Risk boundaries. Part of each year's statistical publication will look to take a deeper focus on a specific element of land use interest, for example Land Use in National Parks or trends in Vacant Land Use.

[Publish address-use change data annually](#) and the location of these changes, on exactly the same basis as is done currently. Summary statistics would continue to be updated annually and compared to up to date Local Authority, Green Belt and high flood risk boundaries. The department will also expand these comparisons to include other areas of interest where possible including address-based changes within National park and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). The methodology would remain unchanged.

[Publish estimates of hectarage change data](#) at 3-yearly intervals and compare to up to date local authority, Green Belt, and high flood risk boundaries. The department will also expand these comparisons to include other areas of interest where possible, including National Parks and AONBs. The methodology used to calculate the hectarage change will be simplified and based on comparisons of Land Use stock data snapshots. The department will produce guidance giving quantification to the impact this change of methodology will have and will investigate backdating the new methodology as far as possible.

[Broaden the number of land use classifications](#) as part of these changes and as requested by users the department will seek to provide the data split by additional, more detailed land usage categories. This will

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[2] https://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/experimental-statistics-myth-busting/

aim to include and capture data on land use broken down by as many of the additional categories requested by users as outlined in response to question 3 of this consultation.

Better meet user needs, now and in the future by taking on board comments to consider how the land use data may be relevant to United Nations Sustainable Development goals [UNSDG][3], the 25-year environmental plan[4] and forthcoming environment bill[5]. Officials have met with Defra colleagues to discuss how the land use data can serve 25-year environmental plan targets and measures of natural capital. We have begun work to explore how together, MHCLG, Defra and Ordnance Survey can collaborate to better categorise and identify the natural land classes.

Defra's response to the consultation was strongly supportive of the proposal to provide land use stock data, and to continue to provide address-use change data on an annual basis. These would be used to inform a number of Defra policy areas. MHCLG and Defra are coordinating to work with Ordnance Survey to better understand how the current non-developed land use categories relate to Defra habitat classifications. This will facilitate greater consistency across government, for example in reporting of the land area devoted to agriculture.

MHCLG is also aware of the UN Sustainable Development Goals and the indicator requirements for UK-wide statistics and has discussed with the Office for National Statistics how land use in England might act as a proxy for UK measures in some instances.
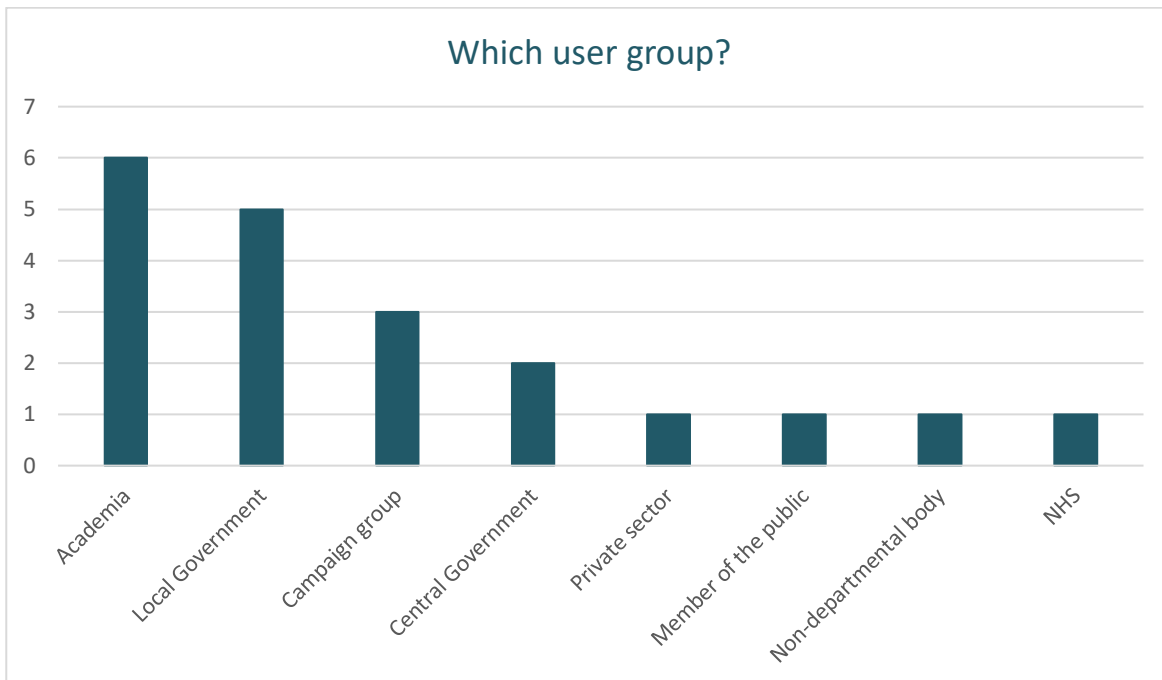
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[3] https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/?menu=1300
[4] https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/25-year-environment-plan
[5] https://services.parliament.uk/bills/2019-20/environment.html ; https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/bills/cbill/2019-2020/0003/20003.pdf

Summary of consultation questions and answers

Six questions were put to users. The department received responses from twenty-two parties. The questions posed are outlined below and summaries of answers are given.

Q1.   Which user group do you fit into?

Which user group?

Q2.   Do the current land use classifications meet your needs?
Yes: 10 respondents
No: 10 respondents

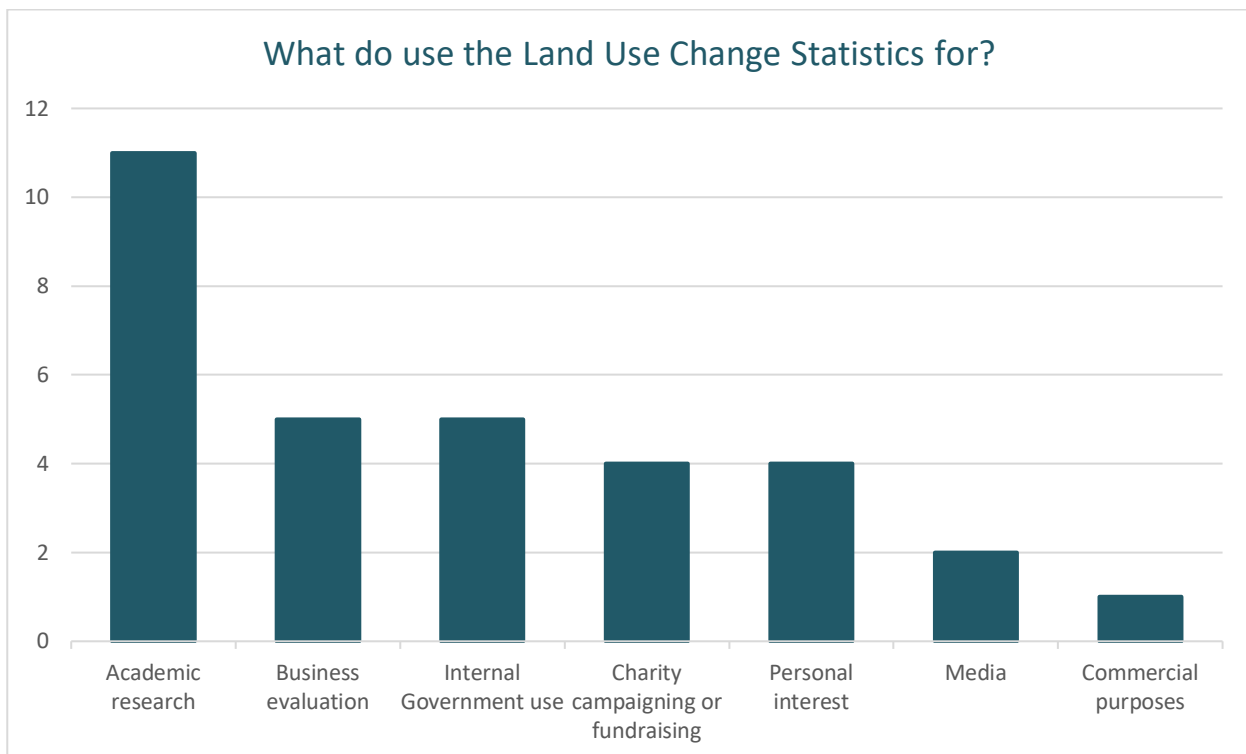Of those who use Land Use Change statistics:
Yes: 8 respondents
No: 10 respondents

Q3.   What land use would you like to see included that is not currently represented?

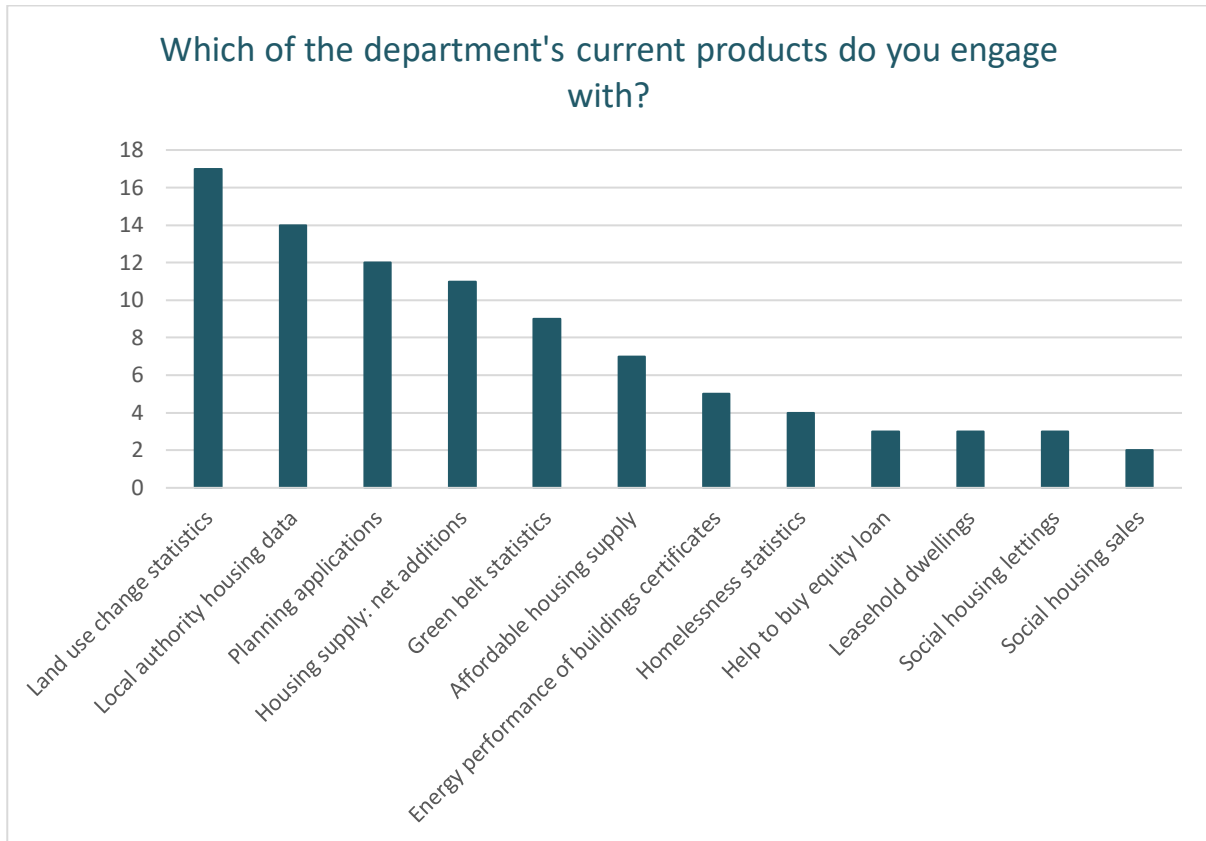| Suggested improvements	Number of respondents that nominated it
Solar energy installations	4
Agricultural land classification	4
Map against national parks, national character areas and Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty	3
Wind energy	3
Mixed use	2
Game bird use	1
Non-developed land within defence	1
Vacant sites with planning application	1
Align to use classes order	1
Educational establishments, including playing fields	1
Accessible non-accessible urban green space	1
Electric car charging points	1
Hospitals and GP surgeries	1
Improve address density measures	1

Q4.   What do you use the Land Use Change Statistics for?

The top three uses of land use change statistics by those respondents that declared they engaged with the statistics were academic research (59%), business evaluation (24%) and internal government use (24%).

What do use the Land Use Change Statistics for?

Q5.   Which of the departments current products do you engage with?

Of the 22 respondents, two did not answer this question. Seventy-four per cent of respondents engaged with Land Use Change Statistics with 61% using Local authority housing data and 52% using Planning Application Statistics. Of those that did typically engage with land use change statistics, 65% used local authority housing data, 59% used Planning application statistics and 47% used Housing supply: net additional dwellings.

Which of the department's current products do you engage with?

Q6.   Do you agree with the proposal to improve the Land Use Change Statistics outlined? Specifically:
a. To publish land use stock data on an annual basis.
b. To continue to publish the address-use change data on the same basis as is done currently.
c. To publish hectarage change data every three years to better match the cycle of changes in underlying sources.

All respondents were in favour of MHCLG's proposal to publish land use stock date on an annual basis. One respondent was only interested in annual land use stock data. Other than this respondent 77% of users were in favour of the overall proposal. Fourteen per cent of respondents were not in favour of the overall proposal as they were against a change in the frequency of hectarage change data publication from annual to 3-yearly.

Useful Information

Topic of the consultation:	The consultation sought views on changes to the Land Use Change Statistic
Scope of this consultation:	We considered how best to meet the needs of users in a cost-effective way, while broadening the usefulness of the Land Use Change statistic.
Geographical scope:	These proposals related to statistics for England only
Those consulted:	Any users of the Land Use Change Statistics or parties interested in Land Use in England namely: Government departments, Local Government, Planners, Developers, Industry, Academics, Media, Campaign groups, Community groups, Consultants and members of the public
Body/bodies responsible for the consultation:	Housing and Planning Analysis Division of the Department of Housing, Communities and Local Government.
Duration:	The consultation ran from 31 May until 31 July 2019.
Enquiries:	For any enquiries about the consultation please contact: Planning.Statistics@communities.gov.uk

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