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16<sup>th</sup> October 2009

Email response sent to: [foodpolicyunit@defra.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:foodpolicyunit@defra.gsi.gov.uk)

Dear Sir/Madam,

### **RESPONSE TO CONSULTATION PAPER: Development of Indicators for a Sustainable Food System**

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the above consultation. The Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) is a membership organisation representing over 22,000 spatial planners. It exists to advance the science and art of town planning for the benefit of the public.

This response was drafted by the RTPI Development Planning and Rural Planning Networks following an internal consultation. Thanks are due to members of the network. General comments are set out below. The consultation questions are not addressed in this response.

The RTPI welcomes the development of indicators for a sustainable food system.

The role of the planning system is critical in this debate and both the development planning and the development management functions need to be recognised as important tools to help improve UK food security in the longer term – giving consideration to the wider land use and spatial implications.

Planning is able to contribute to the debate by advocating a spatially based approach, integrating the issue of food production with other land use issues, of which some are highlighted below:

- to reduce the loss of agricultural and productive open land in urban areas, rural villages under pressure from urban expansion, agricultural land under pressure from coastal change and flooding (e.g. west Lancashire, parts of East Anglia)
- to ensure previously developed land is most effectively used for future development needs, and ensure non productive hard surfaces are kept to a minimum
- to increase biodiversity across urban and rural networks
- to increase the potential for food production and biodiversity of land not in agricultural use, including in urban areas, through allotment provision and other community growing spaces.
- to ensure the longer term value of food productive and biodiversity land is recognised in evaluation and decision making.
- to ensure that these longer term values include a component representing food security.

The RTPI would support a series of specific and mandatory 'planning indicators' to encourage sustainable food production. These could be integrated within the appropriate policy area of planning and would strongly influence development management decisions.

A healthy environment is the key not only to allowing both land and sea to produce food, but in promoting the development of wider sustainable communities. This is the central theme of planning policy and highlighted in Planning Policy Statements (PPS) such as PPS1. There is a need to re-set our priorities in relation to land and development so that land can be more efficiently used. A different set of priorities, not based solely on short term market conditions, will need to be applied to avoid decisions that could compromise our livelihood. A possible priority list could be:

- food production
- water supply and drainage
- biodiversity
- housing
- other productive uses, e.g. employment
- transport
- leisure activities

The RTPI has recently responded to the Natural England consultation on [Food Security and the Environment](#) and has previously commented on a number of specific consultations on the natural environment/resources covering topics such as soil, landscape, flooding and water management.<sup>1</sup> These responses can be found on the [policy pages](#) of our website. The RTPI Policy Team can be contacted via e-mail at [policy@rtpi.org.uk](mailto:policy@rtpi.org.uk) if you would like to discuss any of the comments raised in these responses.

If you require any further assistance, please contact Rhian Brimble, RTPI Network Manager on 01443 229852 or email [rhian.brimble@rtpi.org.uk](mailto:rhian.brimble@rtpi.org.uk)

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Matt Thomson', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Matt Thomson  
**Head of Policy and Practice**

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<sup>1</sup> [RTPI Response to draft Flood & Water Management Bill.](#)  
[All Landscapes Matter draft Policy Consultation.](#)  
[RTPI response to the Future Landscapes consultation.](#)  
[Draft Soil Strategy for England](#)