

We are responding as part of the consultation on Proposed reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework and other changes to the planning system.

As the largest professional engineering institution in Europe, the Institution of Engineering and Technology (IET) offers a unique whole systems approach when providing independent, evidence-led guidance to policymakers. We pride ourselves on our ability to convene world-leading experts across a range of subject areas to provide a joined-up, holistic approach to policymaking.

We believe in that any proposed changes to the Planning Policy Framework to achieve sustainable growth should consider how the engineering sectors, and the current skills shortage will impact the UK's growth.

The UK is facing severe and challenging skills shortage in the engineering and technology sectors. The use of digital technologies could help to deliver on the government's goal of achieving growth and decarbonisation. For instance, the use of digital twins could help to support changes to national infrastructure, healthcare, new housing and energy targets.

However, skills in this area are in high demand across the engineering sector. Upskilling is in critical need across the wider supply chain as skills for digital twins would need to include data collection, data analysis, cyber security. UK firms are already the least likely to recognise digital twins as a priority technology for reaching net zero (5%) – in the construction sector, only 3% say digital twins are important. Only 23% of employers think that the UK has the skills in this area.

This is why we believe any changes to the planning reforms need detailed consultation with a variety of stakeholders included in the process. Engineers are critically important to this process and need to have a voice to help shape and inform discussions on this topic. Engineering skills are cross-sectional and the current skills shortage is being picked up by variety of different government departments/ bodies including the announcement of Skills England. There is real need to ensure that the government has a joined-up and long-term strategy to ensure the UK has the right skills to deliver on its commitments and this particularly important in the engineering sector.

I hope this gives you an overview of the important of considering engineers and the skills needed to deliver on the UK's planning and housing commitments. We would be delighted to meet with you to discuss how we can support this consultation and wider priorities for the department at time that is mutually convenient.