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omgeving



# Spatial Policy Plan Flanders

Summary preliminary draft

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## WHY A SPATIAL POLICY PLAN FLANDERS?

Flanders is a densely populated and dynamic region in which towns, villages, economic activities, agriculture and the natural environment are highly interdependent. This proximity and interdependence are key qualities: they make amenities accessible, support entrepreneurship, promote a sustainable energy supply and give Flanders a distinctive spatial character, in which the built environment alternates with high-quality open landscapes.

At the same time, those qualities are under pressure. In a region where every square metre counts, careful and efficient use of space is essential. After all, space is not just the place where we live and work, but also a catalyst for quality of life, food production, climate resilience, energy security, social cohesion and social justice. The choices we make today will determine how liveable, prosperous and resilient Flanders will be tomorrow.

Society, too, is changing at a rapid pace. Climate change, demographic shifts, digitalisation, geopolitical developments and the energy transition call for a living environment that is better prepared for the challenges of tomorrow. These challenges are not confined to Flanders. Europe is placing an ever-greater emphasis on future-proof regions and is calling for attention to be paid to competitiveness, housing, energy security, biodiversity, water resources management and strategic autonomy.

Flanders occupies a special position in this regard. It is one of the most urbanised and intensively used regions in Europe. Spatial decisions make a significant difference to its quality of life, prosperity, the protection and enhancement of natural capital, and future-proofing. After all, societal objectives are increasingly converging in the same space and call for well-considered and coherent decisions.

The Spatial Policy Plan Flanders (Beleidsplan Ruimte Vlaanderen or BRV in Dutch) provides a solution to these spatial issues and thus contributes to the achievement of societal objectives. The BRV is a story of opportunities, not a catalogue of problems.

The BRV consists of a strategic vision and policy frameworks. The strategic vision sets out the long-term direction for spatial development in Flanders. The policy frameworks translate this vision into specific choices, objectives and actions for the short and medium term. Through instruments, investments, partnerships and monitoring, these ambitions are gradually being translated into results on the ground. Following final approval, the BRV may be supplemented with additional policy frameworks in the coming years, or the policy frameworks may be updated over time. In this way, the BRV combines a stable, long-term strategy with the flexibility to respond to new societal challenges and insights. Today, the Government of Flanders is adopting a strategic vision alongside six policy frameworks covering housing, the economy, water, the energy and climate transition, biodiversity, and agriculture and horticulture.

# A COHERENT FRAMEWORK FOR SPATIAL PLANNING DECISIONS

In order to realise the aforementioned ambition, the strategic vision is based on a coherent framework for spatial decisions. This framework consists of three complementary elements: the spatial transformation tasks, the spatial compass and the 'Flanders in 2050' development outlook.

## Three spatial transformation tasks

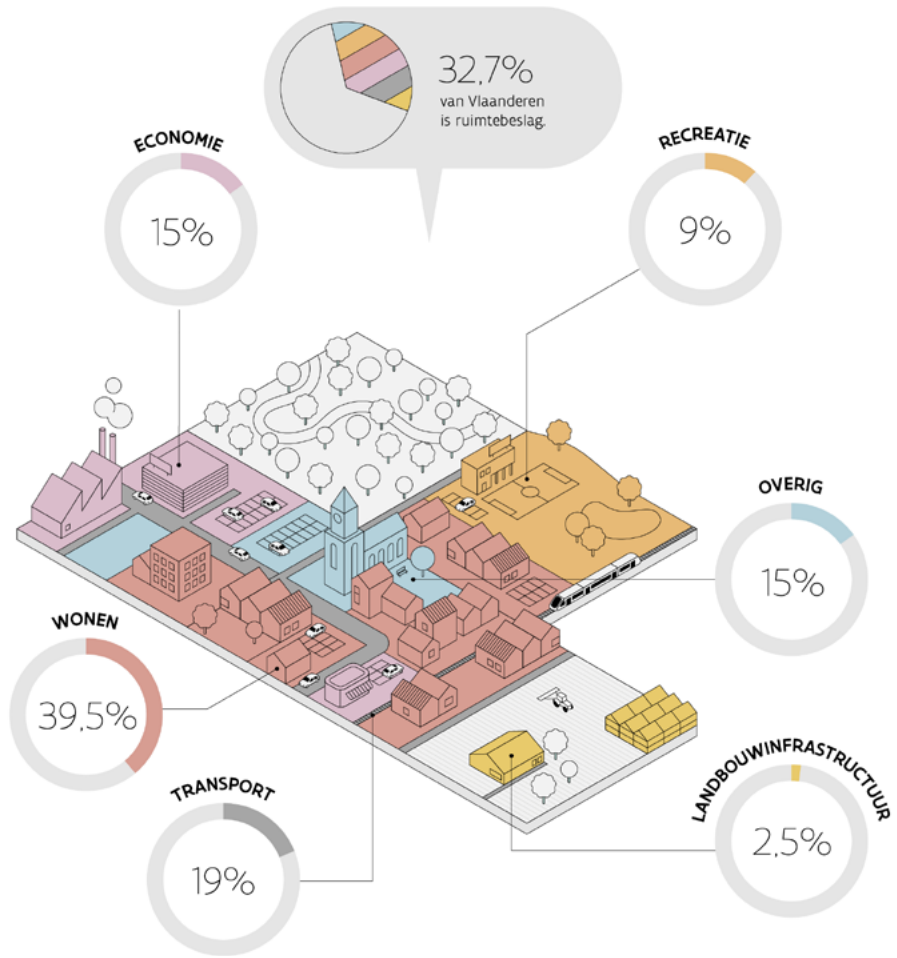
In order for spatial policy to contribute to addressing societal objectives, a well-considered approach to the use of space is required. In this regard, the BRV takes the 'Building Shift' as its starting point: new needs are accommodated as far as possible within the existing land take, while open space is protected and enhanced. That is why we are opting for a spatial shift in which the focus moves from expansion to transformation, from fragmentation to cohesion, and from taking up additional space to improving the quality and efficiency of the space. This shift is taking shape through three interlinked spatial transformation tasks.

### TRANSFORMATION TASK 1 TRANSFORMATION OF THE EXISTING LAND TAKE

The existing land take presents enormous opportunities, but also challenges. By putting vacant and underutilised sites to use, better integrating different functions, ensuring buildings are used flexibly and for multiple purposes, and using available space more efficiently, new needs for housing, working, business, amenities, logistics, leisure, etc. can be met without constantly having to claim new land. This transformation combines greater spatial efficiency with a higher quality living environment.

Depending on the context and local characteristics, town and village centres are strengthened by bringing housing, amenities, transport and economic activities closer together. The use of existing business parks and other economic sites will also be optimised, maximising the possibility of space already in use accommodating entrepreneurship and economic development.

At the same time, the existing land take is being made more climate-robust and geared towards improving the quality of the living environment. Flanders is improving the quality of public spaces by removing hard surfaces, introducing greenery, improving accessibility, and retaining and allowing water to infiltrate at a local level. Any additional paving is always subject to critical scrutiny, and existing paving that is no longer necessary is systematically removed; the space thus freed up is used for green spaces, trees, open water, rainwater infiltration and other green and blue infrastructure. This creates more space for water infiltration, cooling, biodiversity and water storage, while making towns, villages and business parks more resilient to drought, heat and flooding. Furthermore, the transformation of the existing land take is carried out with a focus on spatial quality and social justice, so that high-quality housing and living environments remain accessible and affordable for everyone.

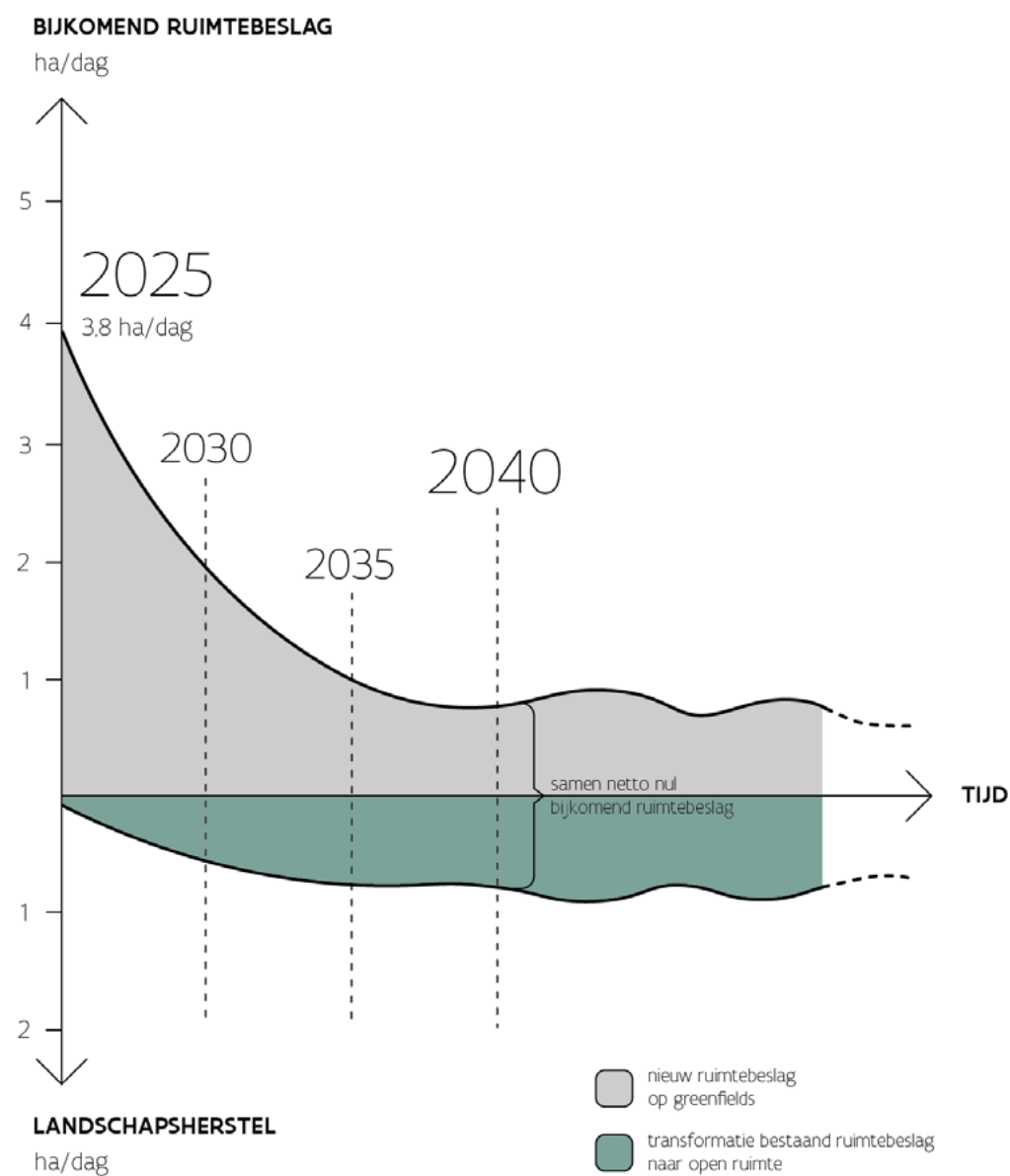


Land use as a proportion of land take (2025)

TRANSFORMATION TASK 2

REDUCE NET ADDITIONAL LAND TAKE TO 0 HA/DAY

Flanders accommodates new societal needs as far as possible within the existing land take framework and takes a critical view of new demands for land. Nevertheless, some developments will continue to require additional land take in the future, such as certain economic activities, infrastructure or facilities for which there is insufficient capacity within the existing land take. That is why Flanders has opted for a targeted and careful approach to additional land take.



Transition towards 0 hectares per day (after Lacoere, 2023)

The decrease to a net total of 0 ha per day is being monitored at the Flemish level. Any new land take requires a demonstrable need, an assessment of alternatives within the existing land take, and an assessment based on the spatial compass (see below). The policy frameworks set out how repurposing, land restoration, instruments and monitoring contribute to this.

For example, new housing developments are preferably situated in well-located town and village centres. New economic developments should be aligned as closely as possible with the main spatial economic structure. Additional land take remains possible where there is a clear social necessity for it and no fully-fledged alternatives are available.

This shift goes hand in hand with repurposing and land restoration. Flanders still has a considerable legal supply of undeveloped land available within zoning areas designated for amongst others housing.. For sites that are currently important for agriculture, nature, forest or water, research is being carried out into how these functions can be protected from development. The physical system – with a focus on water, soil quality, biodiversity and climate resilience – plays a key role in guiding spatial planning.

Land restoration is becoming a fully-fledged spatial task. In poorly situated locations, existing land take or paved surfaces can gradually give way to open-space functions such as agriculture, nature or water storage. In this way, natural processes are restored, while at the same time creating breathing space for societal needs for which additional land take will remain necessary in the future.

By assessing new land take, repurposing and land restoration in relation to each other, Flanders aims to gradually reduce net additional land take to 0 ha per day by 2040.

### TRANSFORMATION TASK 3

#### TRANSFORMATION TOWARDS A ROBUST OPEN SPACE

Today, open space fulfils a variety of functions relating to food production, biodiversity, water storage, recreation and other ecosystem services. However, it is under increasing pressure from climate change, fragmentation and competing land-use demands.

That is why Flanders is committed to creating a robust and coherent open space in which agriculture, nature and water systems reinforce one another. Flanders ensures that there is sufficient, well-located agricultural land that remains available for current and future generations of professional farmers and horticulturalists. Nature and forest land areas will be further enhanced and better connected to one another. Watercourses, small landscape elements and green/blue networks combine to create a cohesive, high-quality landscape interwoven with green and blue elements, featuring more resilient ecosystems.

To make the open space more resilient to the effects of climate change, Flanders is focusing on 'sponge landscapes', wetlands, space for water, and carbon storage in soil and vegetation. This creates climate-resilient open space that contributes not only to future-proof food production, biodiversity and nature restoration, but also to the quality of life and climate resilience of the land take.

## STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

### Transformation task 1

#### TRANSFORMATION OF THE EXISTING LAND TAKE

- By 2050, the proportion of residents of Flanders living in town and village centres will increase compared to the proportion living outside town and village centres.
- By 2050, there will always be a sufficient supply of space available for non-integrated activities, in accordance with current needs. To this end, the initial focus will be on measures relating to integration, improving spatial efficiency, activation of existing sites, tackling unoccupancy, transforming outdated economic sites, and addressing bottlenecks that hinder the development of a designated business park. In addition, efforts will be made to repurpose economic areas that are no longer earmarked for development and to rezone new business parks in well-situated locations.
- The total area designated for economic use should remain at the 2024 level.
- By 2050 at the latest, the paved area of land take will once again not exceed 200,000 ha (= the 2015 degree of soil sealing projected onto expected land take in 2040).
- By 2040, compared to 2025, a net total of 4,000 ha will have been depaved on plots with land use alien to the locality within the agricultural, nature and forest zones (= a 20% reduction in paving on plots with land use alien to the locality in open-space zones).
- By 2050, Flanders will contribute to the objectives of the Nature Restoration Regulation.

### Transformation task 2

#### REDUCE NET ADDITIONAL LAND TAKE TO 0 HA/DAY

- By 2040, the net additional land take will have been systematically reduced to 0 ha/day.

### Transformation task 3

#### TRANSFORMATION TOWARDS A ROBUST OPEN SPACE

- By 2040, the area designated as agricultural land will total 765,000 ha.
- By 2040, the area designated as nature or forest land will total 218,000 ha, of which at least 53,000 ha will be forest land.
- By 2040, 70,000 ha will be designated as agricultural land with an emphasis on integration with nature, and at least 10,000 ha will be designated under other land-use categories with an emphasis on integration with nature (in line with the target of 150,000 ha of the Integrated Ecological Connectivity and Support Network (IVON)).
- By 2040, the area of the Flemish Ecological Network will total 125,000 ha.
- Achievement of planning objectives, of which the following have already been set for 2030:
  - By 2030, we will have achieved a net increase of 10,000 ha of forest land compared to 2019.
  - By 2030, we will have created 20,000 ha of wetland compared to 2021.
  - By 2030, we will have converted 2,000 ha from temporary to permanent pasture compared to 2021.
- The Government of Flanders will review this target in 2030 and determine the way forward, while maintaining the same level of ambition.
- Through AGNAS, at least 1,500 ha of additional land is designated as nature or forest each year, until the land-use targets are met.

# The spatial compass

The transformation tasks set out the spatial shift that is required. The spatial compass provides guidance on the choices needed to bring about that shift in practice.

**1. The physical system plays a role in shaping the space**

Soil, water, topography and ecological carrying capacity form an early and integral part of the site selection and planning process. They help to determine what development is appropriate for a particular location and under what conditions it may take place. The specific assessment is carried out within the local context and taking into account societal, economic and social needs.

**2. Integrate where possible, separate where necessary**

Housing, work, amenities, agriculture, nature and energy will be combined wherever possible. Activities that cause a nuisance or require special conditions will be allocated a suitable, buffered location.

**3. Proximity and accessibility**

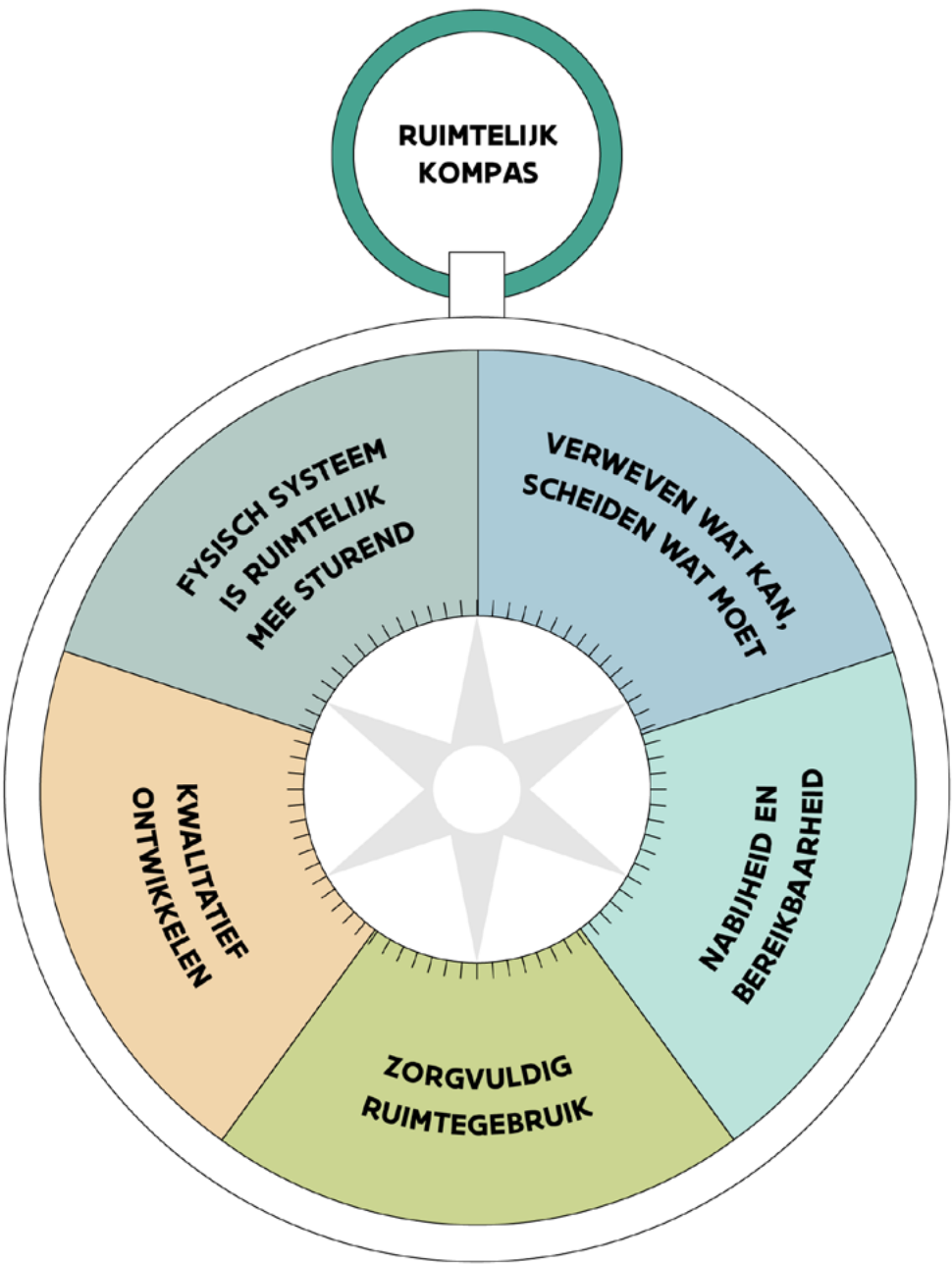
New developments are linked to easily accessible town and village centres, amenities, economically important locations, transport networks and energy networks.

**4. Careful use of space**

First, we look at options involving reuse, densification, transformation and mixed-use development. Expansion, whether or not linked to compensation, will only be considered where it is necessary and desirable.

**5. Quality development**

Depending on the project and the context, spatial development contributes to a high-quality environment in terms of e.g. quality of life, health, climate resilience, strengthening local character, accessibility, design quality, and so on.

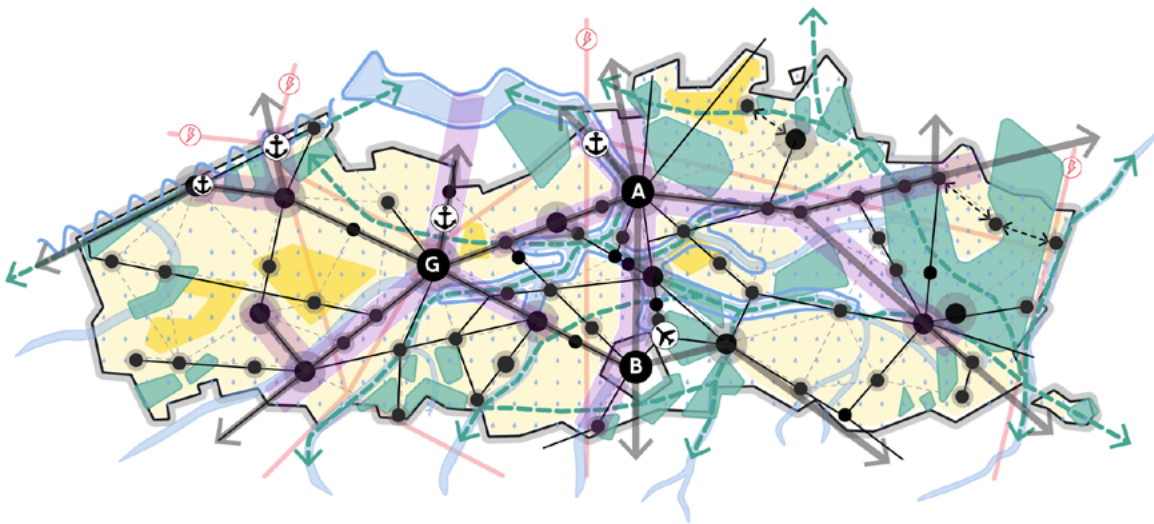


# The 'Flanders in 2050' development outlook.

The 'Flanders in 2050' development outlook gives shape to the transformation tasks and the development principles set out in the spatial compass by showing where different tasks converge. The spatial synthesis image, which is made up of various building blocks, illustrates the interrelationships between the spatial tasks and shows where choices reinforce or conflict with one another.

The integrated tasks are a further refinement of the spatial synthesis image and make the spatial transformation tasks concrete by mapping them out at the level of Flanders using the spatial compass. The representation of the integrated tasks identifies opportunities, tensions and potential directions for development at the level of Flanders, and supports further policy development, investment, spatial development instruments and the assumption of a coordinating role by the Flemish authorities. Several other integrated tasks may also be created in due course, or further refined at a different scale.

The spatial synthesis image illustrates how the strengthening of the network of rivers and valleys, protection against drought and flooding, and the creation of 'sponge' landscapes relate to decisions concerning agriculture, nature, the economy, energy and the strengthening of urban centres. But also how large, contiguous agricultural and nature areas can be strengthened and connected within the context of the further development of the main economic infrastructure and the energy infrastructure, and how the strengthening of urban centres relates to a high-quality public transport and cycling network. The synthesis image thus clearly illustrates how spatial logics either reinforce one another or, conversely, require coordination in order to manage tensions. The diagram allows us to operationalise the building blocks within the thematic policy frameworks from an integrated development perspective.



The spatial synthesis image

# FROM VISION TO IMPLEMENTATION

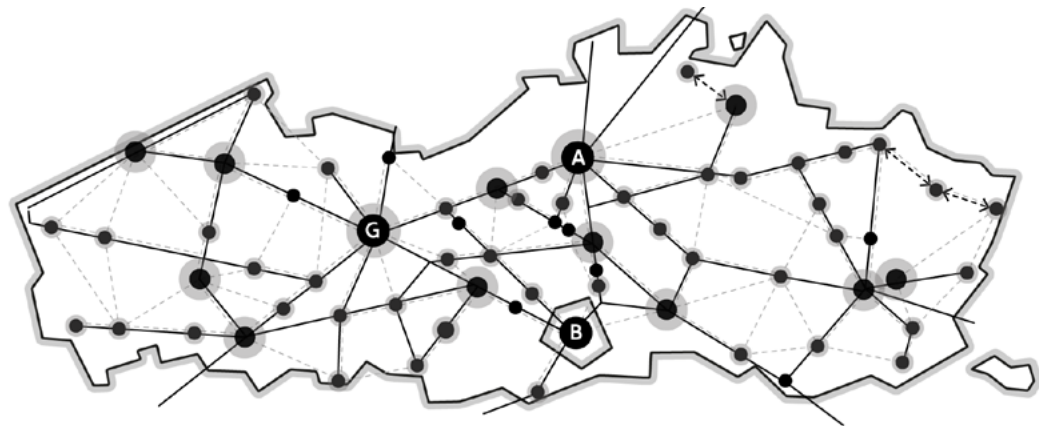
## Living space

### CHALLENGE

By 2050, Flanders needs to build 450,000 additional homes to cater for a changing population – with more singles and elderly – and to accommodate migration flows. At the same time, the implementation of the housing programme must contribute to affordability, climate resilience and an improved quality of life, without further fragmentation of open space. An increase in the population also raises questions regarding space for public green spaces, amenities, infrastructure, integrated commercial activity, etc.

### WHAT CHOICES ARE WE MAKING?

The housing programme and additional integrated amenities will be achieved as far as possible within the existing land take, with priority given to well-located town and village centres. Housing will be linked to the strengthening of urban centres and the development of transport hubs, creating opportunities for synergy with e.g. the energy transition, the shift towards sustainable mobility, climate adaptation, land restoration, circular construction, a higher quality of life, and so on.



Building block: Strengthening urban centres in conjunction with a high-quality public transport and cycling network

### WHAT ARE WE FOCUSING ON?

- ▶ **Transformation, urban densification and the strengthening of urban and village centres as the driving forces of the housing programme.** Flanders is committed to renovation, reuse, targeted densification, mixed-use development, integration, greening, depaving, redevelopment and high-quality living environments.
- ▶ **Housing strategies as a basis for spatial planning decisions.** Regional housing challenges and (supra-) local housing strategies bring together housing needs, development opportunities and spatial quality. They provide the framework for making decisions about where densification, transformation and repurposing are desirable, and how these will be achieved.
- ▶ **A spatially differentiated housing policy.** Housing development is concentrated in well-located and easily accessible centres (both existing and new urban areas and villages). Residential clusters, ribbon developments and scattered buildings have

limited development prospects with a focus on sustainability, climate resilience and the preservation of open space. The spatial compass, which includes the physical system, plays a key role in shaping spatial policy that takes account of spatial differences.

- ▶ **A range of housing options that meets the needs of society.** Flanders is also committed to affordable and social housing, annex housing, innovative forms of housing, smaller and age-proof homes, student accommodation, etc., which respond to demographic changes (in particular shrinking family size and ageing) and housing needs.
- ▶ **Targeted development and repurposing.** Vacant and underutilised sites and buildings are identified and, where they are in good locations, transformed to meet part of the housing demand, while poorly located residential (reserve) areas are protected from further development or converted back into open space through land restoration.

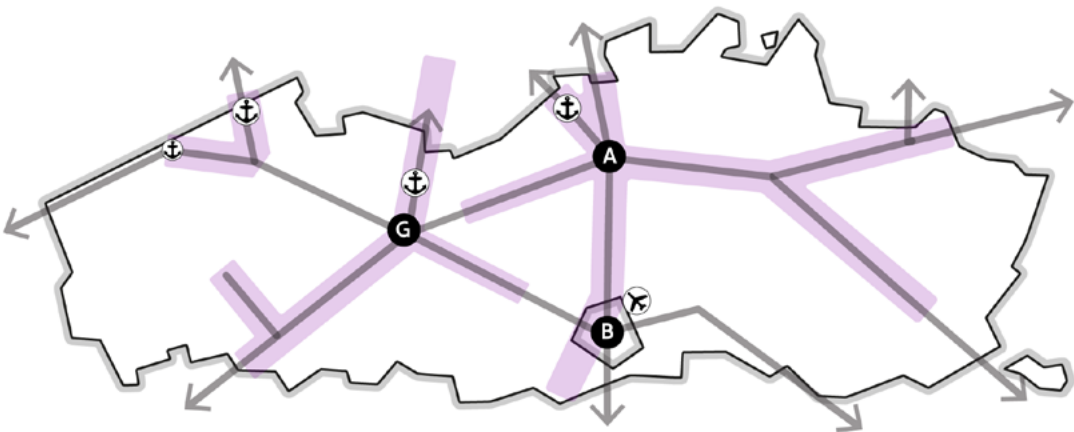
# Space for economic activity

## CHALLENGE

The Flemish economy must continue to provide scope for growth, innovation, strategic industry, logistics and reshoring, while available space is scarce and pressure on business parks is increasing. At the same time, the energy and climate transition, the circular economy and a high-quality living environment call for a more qualitative and careful use of space for economic activities.

## WHAT CHOICES ARE WE MAKING?

Flanders has opted for a spatial and economic policy that reconciles economic development, spatial quality and a careful use of space. Space for economic activity remains essential for prosperity, employment and strategic autonomy, and is concentrated in locations offering the greatest social and economic added value.



Building block: A strong economic system

## WHAT ARE WE FOCUSING ON?

- ▶ **Integration and densification in urban and village centres.** Economic activities are integrated into town and village centres as much as possible. Flanders focuses on strengthening urban centres, the retail shift and better integration of housing, work and amenities.
- ▶ **A spatial approach to the knowledge-based economy.** The knowledge-based economy is one of Flanders' major assets. Not all forms of knowledge-based economy can be integrated. That is why we are committed to an integrated policy and are developing spatial concepts such as innovation districts (within or adjacent to the urban fabric) and science parks (dedicated business parks).
- ▶ **Transformation of existing business parks.** The priority is to revitalise, redevelop and densify existing economic areas through e.g. more intensive use, increased building potential, tackling unoccupancy, shared facilities and green and blue infrastructure.
- ▶ **A spatially differentiated range of business locations.** Flanders is developing a range of business locations tailored to specific activities, such as mixed-use economic zones, business parks for activities that cannot be integrated, logistics hubs, science parks and mining areas.
- ▶ **Strategic clustering of economic activities.** Industry, logistics and other activities that cannot be integrated are concentrated in well-connected locations, with attention to the main spatial economic structure, logistics hubs and strategic clusters. At these sites, additional space is reserved for development for businesses that cannot be integrated into the existing fabric, thus ensuring that there remains a sufficient supply.
- ▶ **An active supply and granting policy.** Flanders brings reserve land and underutilised sites into use and develops new business parks, while better aligning the supply of commercial space with regional economic needs.
- ▶ **Land restoration and repurposing where necessary.** For poorly situated economic sites, an assessment is carried out to determine whether restructuring, phasing out, repurposing or voluntary relocation to more suitable sites is appropriate and feasible.
- ▶ **Additional land-use designation in well-situated locations.** To ensure that the total area designated for commercial use does not decrease compared to 2024, efforts will be made at the Flemish level to designate additional business parks, with a focus on sites suitable for businesses that cannot be integrated into the existing urban fabric, in more suitable locations.

# Space for water

## CHALLENGE

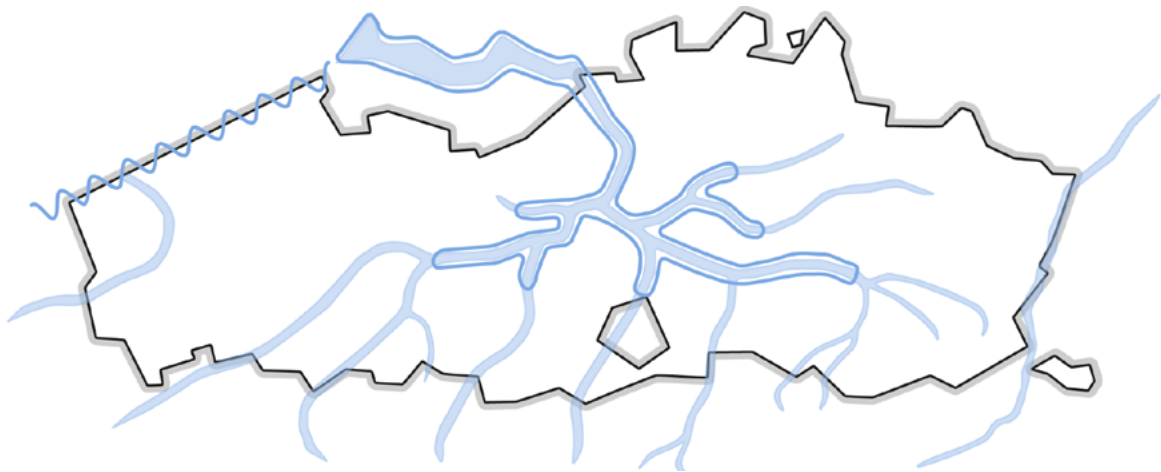
Flanders is increasingly facing flooding, droughts and water shortages. Climate change exacerbates these risks, while paving, building in vulnerable locations and a disrupted water system reduce the resilience of the open space. At the same time, adequate water quality and water availability are essential for housing, agriculture, the economy, biodiversity and recreation.

## WHAT CHOICES ARE WE MAKING?

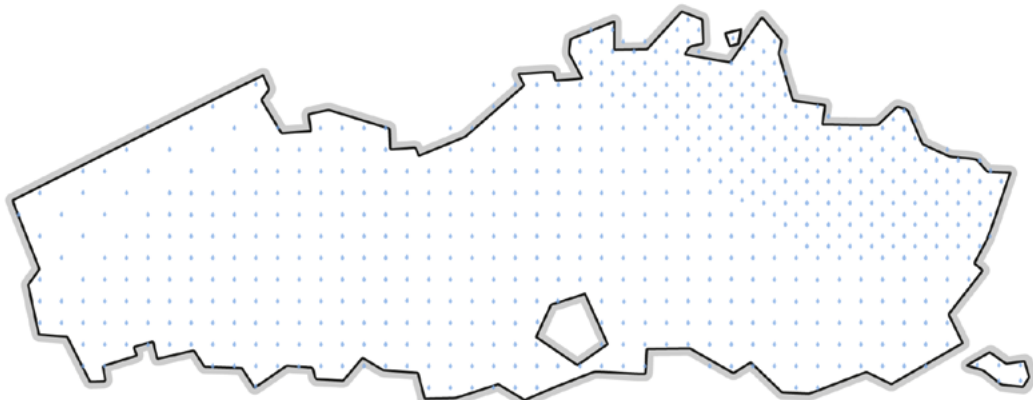
Flanders is making the shift from a 'draining' approach to a 'sponge' approach. By retaining more water, allowing it to infiltrate and providing space for it, we are strengthening our resilience to drought and flooding and building a climate-robust Flanders.

► **Sponge landscapes as a solution to drought and flooding.** Through area-specific projects and water security targets, work is being done to create landscapes that retain water for longer, allow it to infiltrate and ensure it drains away more slowly. This landscape-wide approach, together with the creation of wetlands and wetland restoration, simultaneously enhances water security, soil quality, biodiversity and liveability, while providing agriculture with a forward-looking framework to remain productive and climate-robust.

► **Restoration of water-related natural habitats and green/blue networks.** Flanders is investing in the restoration of wetlands, valleys and watercourses, and in the accelerated development of green and blue infrastructure that contributes to biodiversity, water storage and climate adaptation.



Building block: drought and flooding

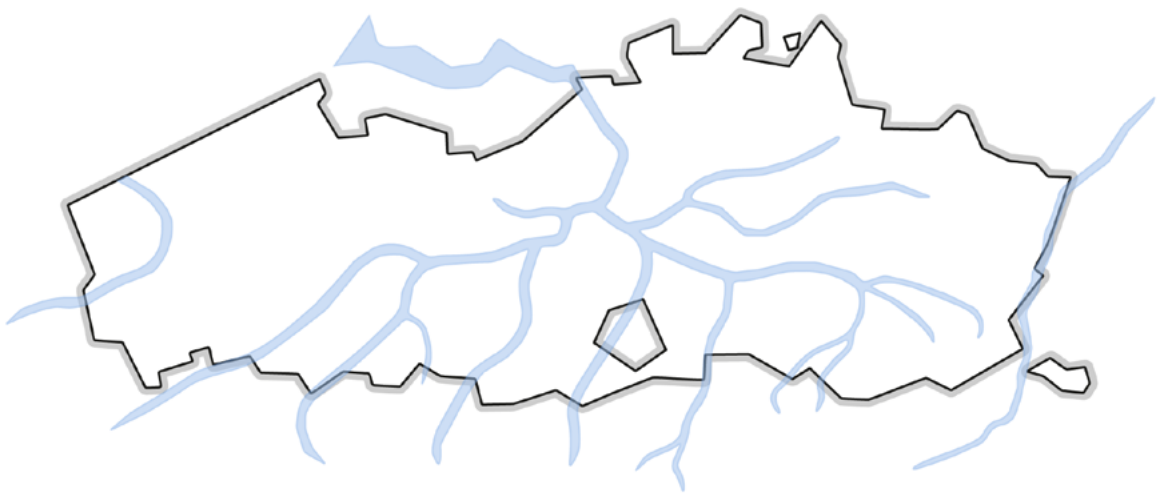


Building block: creating sponge landscapes

## WHAT ARE WE FOCUSING ON?

► **The water system as a guiding factor for spatial planning decisions.** How water moves, and where it infiltrates, is retained or runs off, is essential when making spatial planning decisions. Water and soil play a key role in spatial planning: for example, flood-prone areas are better protected, and water availability becomes an important criterion when selecting sites for economic activities.

► **Systematically reduce the degree of soil sealing and limit further paving.** Flanders is committed to depaving, infiltration and smart rainwater management, so that rainwater is retained locally as much as possible and the pressure on watercourses and public sewer networks is reduced. This also helps to reduce heat stress, promote biodiversity, create a healthier living environment and foster strong social cohesion in neighbourhoods..



Building block: a network of rivers and valleys

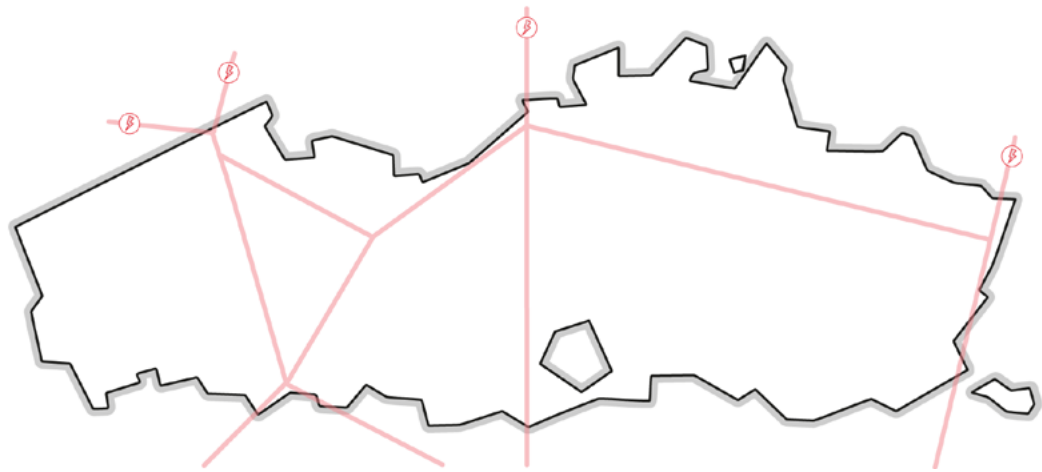
# Space for the energy and climate transition

## CHALLENGE

Flanders must make its energy supply more sustainable, reduce greenhouse gas emissions and, at the same time, guarantee the security of supply and the affordability of energy. This will require substantial investment in a future-proof energy system comprising renewable energy, nuclear energy, district heating networks, electricity infrastructure, energy storage and pipeline infrastructure for hydrogen, CO<sub>2</sub> and other energy carriers. The spatial integration of this infrastructure presents a significant challenge in a region where space is scarce.

## WHAT CHOICES ARE WE MAKING?

The energy and climate transition is also a spatial transition. Energy is becoming a key driving factor in spatial development, with the production, storage, exchange and transport of energy being more closely aligned with the spatial structure, while at the same time helping to shape future spatial decisions.



Building block: Main electricity infrastructure

## WHAT ARE WE FOCUSING ON?

- ▶ **Integrating the energy transition as much as possible within the existing land take.** Priority is given to the integration of new energy projects within urban areas, business parks, port areas and along transport corridors. Multi-purpose spatial use, reuse and transformation are key priorities in this context. For solar panels, the priority is on roofs, façades, infrastructure and space already in use. Ground-mounted installations in the open space will only be considered following a site-specific assessment and provided they are compatible with the functions of the open space and the spatial compass.
- ▶ **An integrated and area-specific approach to the energy transition.** Local and regional energy challenges are linked to spatial development, renovation, mobility, climate adaptation and economic development. Local heating and cooling plans and regional energy strategies are key levers in this regard.
- ▶ **Energy hubs as strategic links in the energy system.** Flanders is developing sites where energy generation, storage, conversion, exchange and consumption come together to better align supply and demand

and reduce grid congestion. International logistics hubs, seaports and large business parks play a key role in this regard.

- ▶ **Guiding the roll-out of renewable energy through spatial planning.** Flanders facilitates the development of wind energy, solar energy and sustainable heating within existing infrastructure or with as little additional land take as possible, while taking into account spatial quality, the landscape and public support.
- ▶ **Developing a forward-looking energy infrastructure.** The expansion of the electricity grid, district heating networks, energy generation, energy storage and pipeline infrastructure are incorporated into spatial planning in order to support the energy transition, security of supply and economic development.

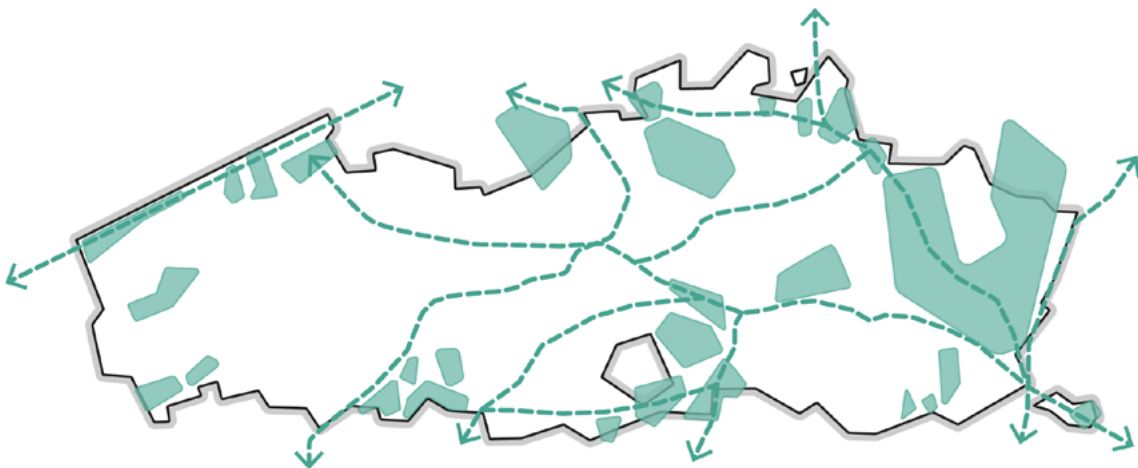
# Space for biodiversity

## CHALLENGE

The status of many habitats and species in Flanders is unfavourable. In addition, the high degree of fragmentation makes nature reserves and ecosystems particularly vulnerable to disruption. Furthermore, a climate-robust and high-quality living environment requires more space for biodiversity and nature-based solutions, both within land take and in open space, in conjunction with soil, water and the landscape.

## WHAT CHOICES ARE WE MAKING?

Flanders regards biodiversity as one of the guiding principles for spatial planning. We are building a robust natural structure characterised by high concentrations of nature and strong connections between natural elements, as well as a fine-grained green/blue network, both in open space and built-up areas.



Building block: Large and contiguous areas of nature

## WHAT ARE WE FOCUSING ON?

- ▶ **Robust, high-quality concentrations of nature.** Flanders is strengthening its nature and forest concentrations by, among other things, creating additional areas designated as nature and forest through planning processes for the agricultural and natural structure. In this way, we are also continuing to work on the Flemish Ecological Network and the Integrated Ecological Connectivity and Support Network.
- ▶ **Greater alignment between land-use designation and actual use.** Land-use designation, planning and management will be better coordinated so that nature and forest areas can fulfil their ecological functions more effectively.
- ▶ **Integration with nature and connections with nature.** Efforts are being made to create a coherent nature network through policies designed to encourage the development of additional nature integration areas, the creation of ecological connections and the removal of barriers to connectivity.
- ▶ **A strong green/blue network and basic spatial ecological quality.** In built-up areas, we focus on turning points and the active planning and (re)development of green and blue infrastructure. In open space, we promote green and blue infrastructure through new management plans, nature integration policies, revenue models for ecosystem services, and so on.
- ▶ **Area-based collaboration for biodiversity.** Governments, land managers, farmers, businesses and citizens are involved in the restoration and reinforcement of biodiversity through area-based collaboration.

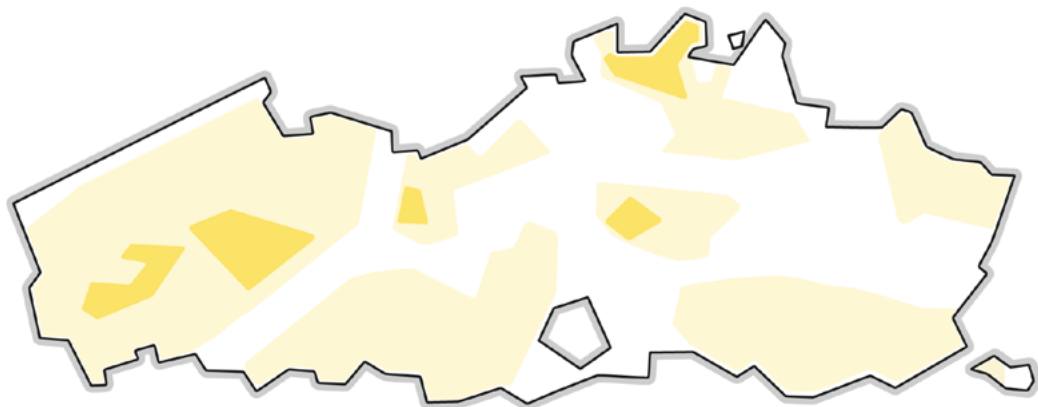
# Space for agriculture and horticulture

## CHALLENGE

Flemish agriculture and horticulture are essential for food production, the agri-food chain, the liveability of the countryside and landscape management. In this context, the sector faces a number of challenges, such as access to and long-term security of land, alien land use in agricultural areas, climate change, and challenges relating to water, carbon storage and nature.

## WHAT CHOICES ARE WE MAKING?

Flanders is opting for a forward-looking approach to agriculture and horticulture, one that provides sufficient space to produce food within large, contiguous agricultural areas that are managed in a climate-robust, high-quality manner



Building block: Large, contiguous agricultural areas

## WHAT ARE WE FOCUSING ON?

- ▶ **A robust and cohesive agricultural structure.** By focusing on achieving a spatial balance between agriculture, nature and water in planning processes, by spatially differentiating agricultural areas, and by better aligning open space objectives, land-use designations and actual use, the foundations are laid for a robust and coherent open space.
- ▶ **Agriculture and horticulture as the main users of agricultural land.** The focus is therefore on the agricultural reuse of sites that become available, a limited scope for development for uses not in keeping with the zoning, and a commitment to land restoration.
- ▶ **Forward-looking planning of the agricultural area.** We do this by drawing on the principles of the spatial compass, including 'the physical system as a guiding principle', and promoting green and blue infrastructure.
- ▶ **Agriculture as a partner in the open space.** Flanders is committed to improving the integration of agriculture, nature, water and the landscape, including through area-based cooperation. Farmers can play a key role in this as land managers in the open space.

# ACHIEVING THINGS TOGETHER

The Spatial Policy Plan Flanders is more than a vision for the future of Flanders. It is an invitation to work together towards a spatial transition that improves our quality of life, strengthens our prosperity, protects our natural capital and prepares Flanders for future challenges. The ambitions of the BRV can only succeed if governments, civil society organisations, knowledge institutions, businesses, citizens and local partners all play their part in shaping that future.

The implementation of the BRV is based on partnership. Flanders, the provinces and the municipalities share responsibility for land use. The principle of subsidiarity applies here: decisions are taken, as far as possible, at the level closest to the reality on the ground and to the public. Flanders is taking on a policy-setting and supportive role, while local governments remain crucial partners in the implementation on the ground.

The BRV calls for a shift from expansion to transformation. That is why we are placing greater emphasis on reusing existing space, capitalising on pivotal moments such as planning permissions, redevelopment projects and investments, pursuing a more proactive land and property policy, and improving spatial management. The spatial transition will not be achieved through a single major project, but through thousands of spatial decisions which, taken together, make a difference.

Collaboration in this regard is becoming increasingly area-specific. After all, many spatial challenges do not stop at municipal boundaries. Through regional Building Shift initiatives, area coalitions and strategic area programmes, Flanders, the provinces, municipalities and partners are working together on integrated solutions relating to housing, the economy, water, nature, agriculture, energy and mobility. In this way, local knowledge and shared Flemish ambitions can reinforce one another.

The spatial synthesis image supports this integrated and area-based policy. The image shows where the various building blocks come together and thus contributes to the spatial representation of the transformation tasks and the spatial compass. It also highlights where further refinement of various building blocks is required, through integrated tasks. The synthesis image is a guiding framework that encourages us to consider spatial challenges in a holistic manner. The synthesis image helps to formulate spatial interventions based on the connections and synergies between tasks, and to deliver area-specific, custom-made solutions where different spatial logics converge.

The BRV ultimately takes concrete form in policy frameworks that are implemented through spatial policy plans, implementation plans, investments, regulations, planning permission and enforcement priorities. In addition, it is translated into area-specific strategies, such as housing strategies, repurposing tasks, economic development plans and landscape projects. By better coordinating spatial planning decisions, a coherent approach is created that provides direction for future developments.

Through monitoring, we track the key indicators, such as land take, paving, land-use designations and the progress of the transformation tasks. This knowledge makes it possible to adjust policy in good time, tackle new challenges and capitalise on opportunities more quickly. In this way, the BRV remains a dynamic guiding framework for spatial development in Flanders.



## COLOPHON

On 11 September 2026, the Flemish Government took note of the preliminary draft of the BRV. This publication provides a summary of that preliminary draft. It forms the basis for targeted consultation and dialogue. This will be followed by provisional adoption: the Flemish Government will then approve a draft BRV. A public consultation will be organised on this draft, during which everyone will have the opportunity to submit comments.

This executive summary sets out the main points of the strategic vision and the relevant policy frameworks of the Spatial Policy Plan Flanders. It has no independent legal or policy status. The strategic vision and the individual policy frameworks determine the precise objectives, policy choices, actions and conditions of application.

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