Country Fiche on Terrestrial Spatial Planning

LATVIA

Updated November 2026

1. Current situation and main challenges

The spatial planning system is defined by Spatial Development Planning Law (2011)[1] that defines planning principles, spatial development planning documents, their content and Spatial Development Planning Information System (see Chapter 3). Law also states that spatial development shall be planned through public participation (ensuring openness of information and decision-making and ascertaining the public opinion) and a strategic environmental impact assessment shall be ensured when developing spatial development planning documents.

The main **challenges** influencing spatial planning are depopulation, low population density, peripherialisation, increasing ageing, employment (especially in rural areas), outdated infrastructure, revitalisation of degraded territories and contaminated sites, management of EU protected habitats and specially protected nature areas (including Natura 2000 areas), changing land use and landscapes, adaptation to climate change effects (including with green infrastructure/nature based solutions), climate change mitigation measures, capacity of governance institutions and local governments, cooperation of governance institutions, effective engagement of stakeholders in planning, information exchange, funding for spatial planning solutions etc. All of these factors are site-spacific and influence the content of spatial development planning documents, but an overarching challenge is to improve socio-economic development taking into consideration environmental protection measures.

An important challenge in the field of spatial planning is the modernisation of public administration and its ability to adapt to the rapidly changing needs of spatial development. Amendments to Latvia's Spatial Development Planning Law, effective from 3 October 2026, transferred the authority to suspend municipal spatial plans and local plans from the responsible minister to the Cabinet of Ministers. This will ensure that sectoral authorities participate in preparing planning documents at an early stage and assess issues within their respective areas of competence. This helps identify potential non-compliance while the municipality can still consider it during the planning process. In turn, related amendments to the regulations governing spatial planning aim to streamline procedures for amending and finalising municipal spatial plans and local plans, while maintaining transparency and opportunities for public participation. They also seek to ensure timely input from relevant sectoral authorities.

Latvia's Spatial Development Planning Information System (hereinafter - TAPIS) has been operational since 2015. It provides a central digital platform for preparing and publishing spatial development planning documents and serves as the official source of spatial planning information (for further details, see Chapter 4).

All Latvian municipalities are required to prepare and publish their planning documents through TAPIS, including structured geospatial data where mandatory. The system gives institutions, planners and the public online access to planning documents and related spatial data in one place.

Contacts

Responsible authority at national level: The Ministry of Smart Administration and Regional Development

Contact person: Dāvis Bičkovičs, Director of Spatial Planning and Land Management Department, telephone: + 371 66016727, e-mail: davis.bickovics@varam.gov.lv.

[1] https://likumi.lv/ta/en/id/238807-spatial-development-planning-law

2. Spatial planning system

The planning system of Latvia has 3 planning levels – national, regional and local (see Figure 1). However, Latvia has only two governance levels – national and local.

Level	Planning instruments	Main responsible actor
NATIONAL	Sustainable Development Strategy of Latvia (Latvia2030) National Development Plan	Ministry of Smart Administration and Regional Development
REGIONAL	Planning regions` sustainable development strategies Planning regions` development programmes	Planning regions` development councils
LOCAL	Local government sustainable development strategies Local government development programmes Local government spatial plans Local plans Detailed plans Thematic plans Building permits	Municipalities

Figure 1. *Planning instruments and the main actors responsible for planning in Latvia*

Sectoral ministries in co-operation with relevant[2] local governments prepare proposals and advance them for defining objects of national interest (territories and objects necessary to ensure essential public interests, protection and sustainable use of natural resources) and, if necessary, develop thematic plans.

2.1. National level planning documents

Latvija2030 strategy (The Sustainable Development Strategy of Latvia) and the National Development Plan 2021-2027 are hierarchically highest in the state's strategic development planning documents, adopted by the national parliament – accordingly they have the status of legal act. All subordinate spatial planning documents and policy guidelines should be consistent with the policy goals in Latvija2030 strategy.

Spatial development perspective (see Figure 2) of Latvija2030 strategy determines policy directions for sustainable and balanced development of the state territory, attaining full use of the economic potential of regions, improvement of the quality of life of inhabitants, preservation and skillful use of natural and cultural and historical values. On the basis of this position, the spatial development perspective puts emphasis on three main aspects:

a) accessibility and mobility possibilities,

b) settlement as the economic development, human life and work environment; and

[2] local governments with territory affected by the object of national interest

c) spaces of national interest – unique specific territories, which are significant for the development of the whole country.

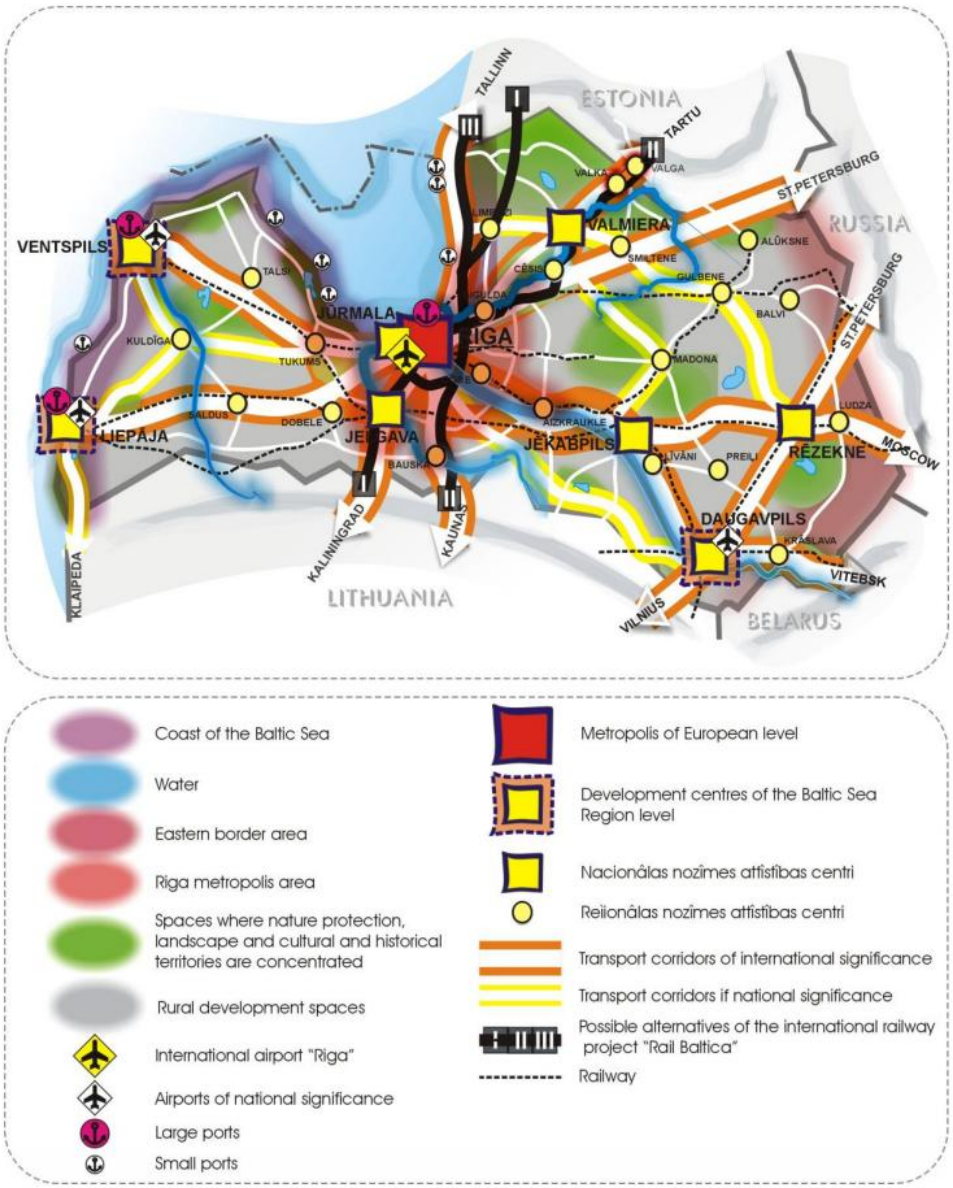

Figure 2. *Future spatial structure of Latvia*[3] *(Source: Latvia2030)*

Latvija2030 strategy foresees development internal and external accessibility and mobility possibilities. The development of the infrastructure of motorways, railways (Trans-European Transport Network or TEN-T), ports and airports of international significance has a substantial role in improvement of external accessibility of Latvia. The quality of regional and local motorways, as well as of public transport should be improved with the aim to reduce the time spent on the way for the improvement of internal accessibility of the state, facilitation of regional development and promotion of mobility of inhabitants from regions.

Latvija2030 strategy stresses the need to provide inhabitants with equal life and work conditions regardless of the place of residence and to strengthen the polycentric settlement structure, therefore the strategy defines the 9 cities or development centres of national importance and 21 of the largest towns that are defined as development centres of regional importance and capital Riga as metropolis of

[3] http://www.pkc.gov.lv/sites/default/files/images-legacy/LV2030/LIAS_2030_en.pdf

European level. The most essential development directions to be implemented are the following: enhancement of the potential and competitiveness of the development centres, mutual co-operation and interaction of cities and rural territories in provision of workplaces and services, establishing of functional networks for development centres, an integrated approach in the planning and implementation of the development of territories and development of creative urban environment, partnership of cities and urban-rural partnership.

The spaces of national interest are: a) *rural development space* – rural territories where natural resources significant for the country's economy are located – agricultural land, forests, water, mineral deposits; b) *coast of the Baltic Sea* – one of the largest values of Latvia where the preservation of nature and cultural heritage should be balanced with promotion of economic development; c) *area of Riga metropolis*, which strengthens the role of Riga as globally-oriented metropolis of the Baltic Sea, thus promoting the development of the whole country; d) *Eastern border*, which is a territory with special status, role and specific problems for the solution of which different approach and special measures are necessary; and e) *outstanding areas of nature, landscapes and cultural history* where its unique values are concentrated and form the identity and international recognisability of Latvia and its different regions.[4]

In order to plan specific development, all sectoral ministries can develop national level thematic plans.

The State Chancellery has initiated the development of the framework for Latvia's Sustainable Development Strategy until 2050.

National long-term thematic plan for development of public infrastructure in the coastal area of the Baltic Sea (hereinafter – **Coastal plan**)[5] is the first national level thematic plan that was adopted by the Government in October 2016. It was elaborated by Ministry of Smart Administration and Regional Development in collaboration with coastal local governments and other stakeholders to foster coastal public infrastructure development and improve coastal governance. The Coastal plan is not binding, but it shall be considered in the elaboration and implementation of planning documents of all levels, as well as in the elaboration process of sectoral policies, including the planning of financial support. It was reviewed in its second interim assessment during 2024 and is set for Cabinet of Ministers approval in 2025.

Based on the proposals from coastal local governments 60 complex development sites were identified in the Coastal Plan, from which 25 sites are recommended to be developed primary. In order to improve the interaction between development sites, as well as to improve the overall coastal access, the plan emphasizes the necessity of the unified infrastructure network, the basic tasks for the coastal development, as well as involvement of responsible institutions in the plan implementation process.

To form a joint tourism offer and multiple services, cooperation shall be improved between nearest local governments, not just between coastal local governments, but also with local governments in inland, using tourism attraction objects for creation of better offer and international recognition. Cooperation territories for common tourism offer (Figure 3) show areas with great potential for development of thematically coherent tourism offers and specific tourism products. In the interim report assessment also need to integrate coastal and maritime spatial planning in future was outlined.

[4] http://www.pkc.gov.lv/sites/default/files/images-legacy/LV2030/LIAS_2030_en.pdf
[5] Coastal plan and information about development of it is available only in Latvian in: http://www.varam.gov.lv/lat/darbibas_veidi/tap/lv/?doc=18794

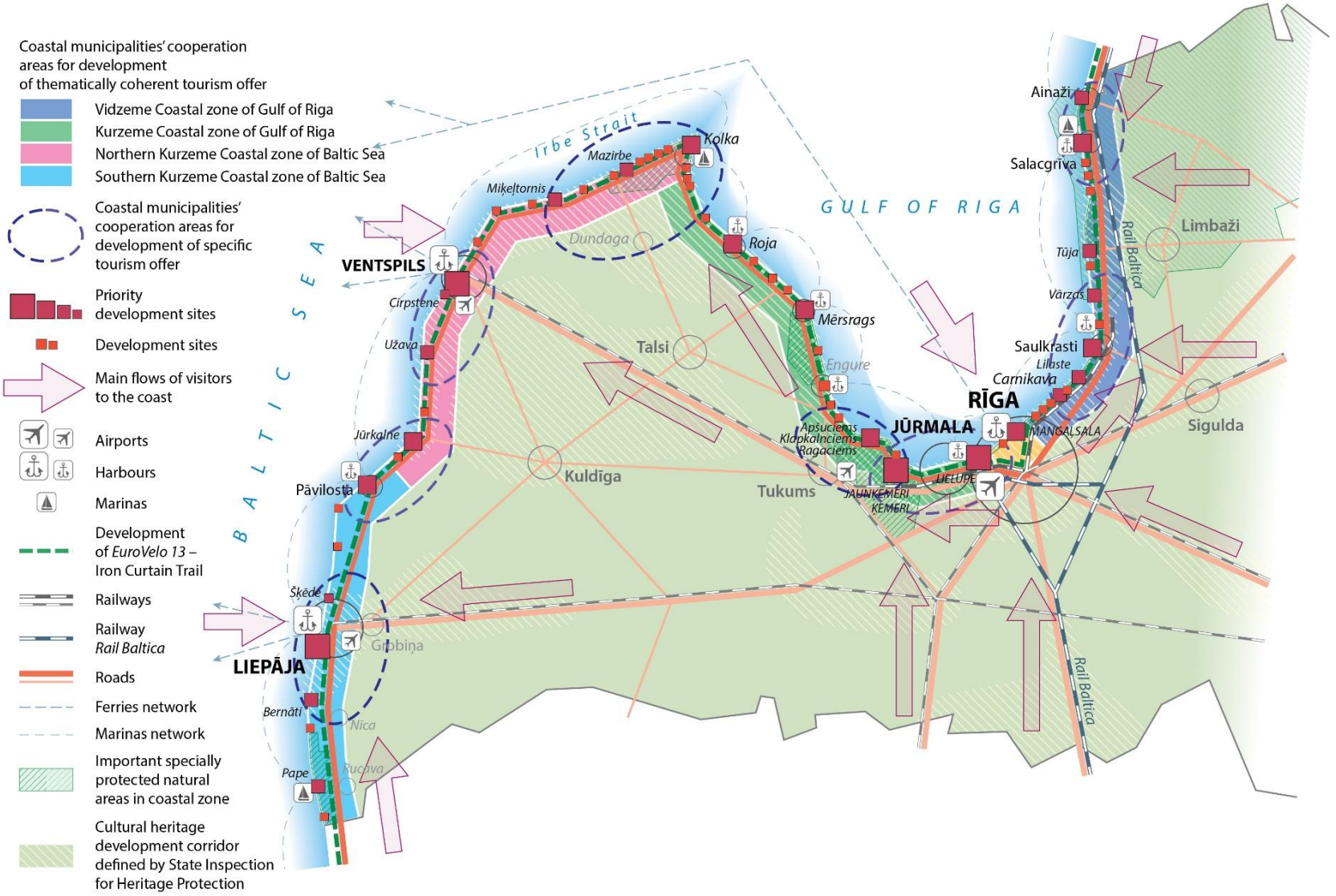

Figure 3. *Cooperation territories for common tourism offer development and coastal public infrastructure development (Source: Coastal Plan, 2016)*

2.2. Regional level planning documents

Planning regions elaborate and approve sustainable development strategies and development programmes for each of planning region to guide spatial development on regional and local level. The decision making body of the planning regions is planning regions' development councils, that consist of representatives of the councils of local governments.

Planning regions co-ordinate implemention of their planning documents and provide opinions on the conformity of the draft local government spatial development planning documents and the requirements of laws and regulations.

During 2024 the first Coastal Thematic Plan for the Kurzeme region was developed and is set for approval in 2025. It tackles the challenges of the region as a whole and identifies numerous interests, sectors, and conflicts included in the regional develoment planning. Effective stakeholder engagement was one of key factors to involve local, regional, and national level institutions and activists, spanning tourism, environmental concerns, cultural heritage, blue economy sectors, housing, and public infrastructure.

2.3.Local level planning documents

Local governments develop and approve the local government development strategy, development programme, spatial plan (also called Territorial plan), local plans, detailed plans and thematic plans (see the Figure 4).



Figure 4. *Spatial planning system on local level in Latvia*

The main rules for developing local level spatial development planning documents (requirements for content and development procedures) are set out in the Cabinet regulation Nr. 628 of 14 October 2014 "Regulations on local government spatial development planning documents"[6].

[6] Available only in Latvian: https://likumi.lv/ta/id/269842-noteikumi-par-pasvaldibu-teritorijas-attistibas-planosanas-dokumentiem

The **sustainable development strategy** of the local government is a planning document for long-term spatial development. It includes a vision, strategic objectives, a spatial development perspective (in written and graphic form) and development priorities for the municipality's long-term development.

The **development programme** is a medium-term development planning document setting out medium-term priorities and the measures used to implement the long-term strategic goals specified in the local government development strategy. It contains the action and investment plan.

The local government **spatial plan** (comprehensive land-use plan) covers the whole territory of the municipality and establishes detailed requirements, sites and objects specified in higher level spatial plans. This planning document defines legally binding requirements for land use and building, including functional zoning, public infrastructure and regulations regarding land use and building, as well as other conditions for land use. This document covers the whole administrative territory of municipality.

The **local plan** is developed by a municipality for a part of its administrative territory (e.g. for a part of a town, village or rural area) in order to accomplish a planning task or to detail or amend a spatial plan, insofar as the local plan is not in contradiction with the sustainable development strategy of the local government.

Cabinet regulation No. 240 of 30 April 2013 "General Regulations for the Planning, Use and Building of the Territory"[7] prescribes the general requirements for spatial development planning, land use and building of the local level as well as the classification of land use types that are complied with when developing the municipal spatial plans or local plans. These regulations No. 240 define common standards for depiction of the Functional Zoning (e.g. Private house building territory - code "DzS", in yellow colour, geospatial code "1010100", polygon fill colour – RGB 255, 245, 145, no contours), depiction of the Territories with Special Provisions, street and road Categories and classification of the types of land use.

A **thematic plan** is a spatial development planning document that focuses on assessing and solving specific issues related to the development of sectors (e.g. transport infrastructure) or specific themes (e.g. valuable landscape areas and high-risk sites). Thematic plans are taken into consideration when developing other spatial development planning documents.

A **detailed plan** is developed in order to specify the requirements for the use of specific land units and building parameters, as well as to adjust the boundaries of land units and restrictions. A detailed plan may be prepared if the local government spatial plan does not cover the spatial utilisation and building conditions of specific land areas, but may not amend the spatial plan or local plan functional zoning.

If an initiator of a local plan or detailed plan is not the relevant local government, the developing and implementation thereof shall be financed by the initiator, concluding a contract regarding it with the local government. In such case the local government may participate in co-financing of the local plan or detailed plan in accordance with the procedures laid down in laws and regulations.

It must be noted that in 2021 in Latvia an administrative territorial reform was implemented, transforming 119 municipalities into 43 larger and stronger municipalities according to Law on Administrative Territories and Populated Areas. In 2025, another merger took place and the total number of municipalities in Latvia is 42. By 31 December 2025, nearly all municipalities had prepared the first drafts of their spatial plans and submitted them for public consultation, as required by Transitional Provision 17 of the Spatial Development Planning Law. By the end of October 2026, the spatial plans of seven newly established municipalities were in force.

[7] http://www.vvc.gov.lv/export/sites/default/docs/LRTA/Citi/Cab._Reg._No._240_-_Planningx_Use_and_Building_of_the_Territory.doc

3. Spatial Development Planning Information System (TAPIS)

Spatial Development Planning Information System (TAPIS) was developed in 2015 and it is a national information system, which consists of the central module (tapis.gov.lv) and the public part of the section "Spatial Development Planning" in State Unified geospatial information portal GeoLatvija.lv (see Figure 5) and e-services from Public Services portal Latvija.lv.

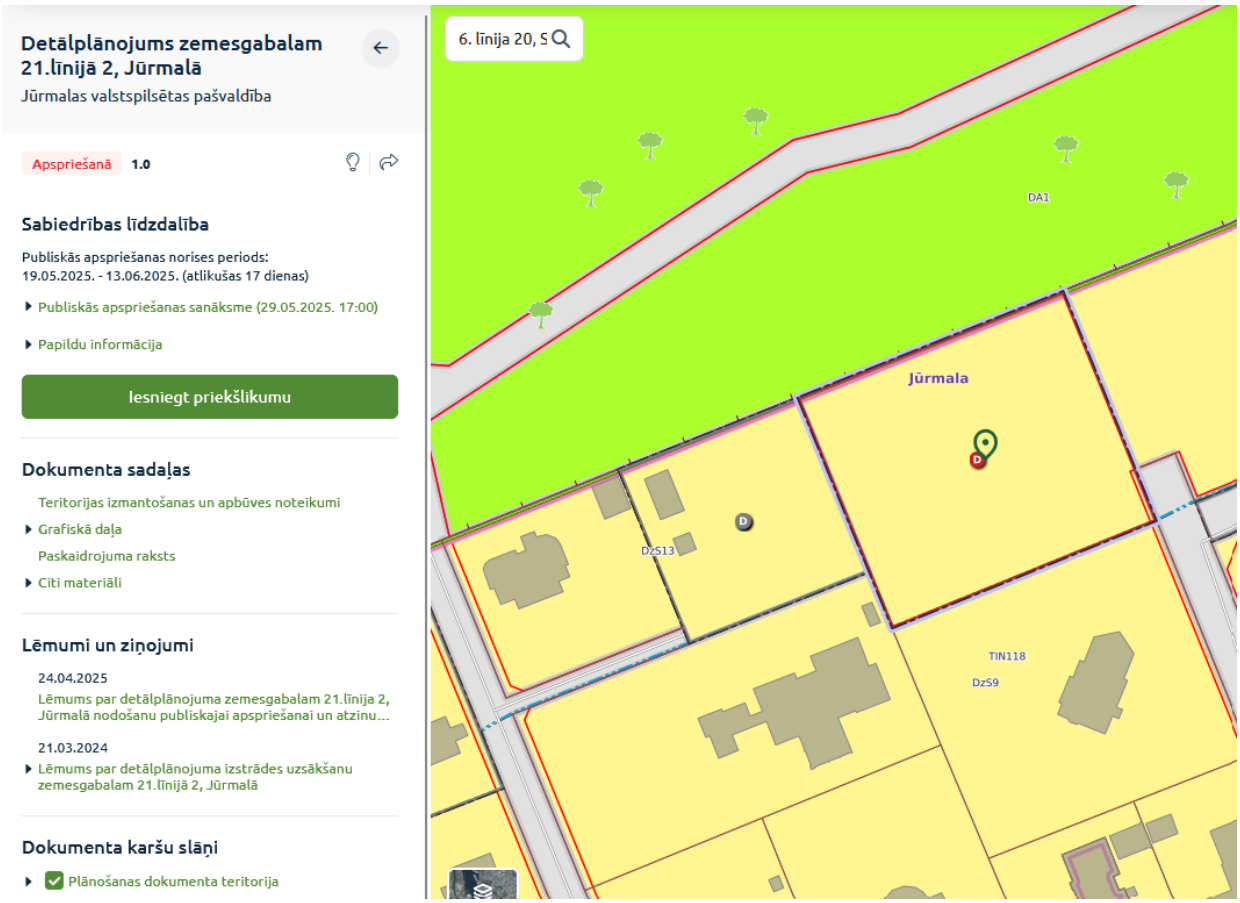

Figure 5. *Screenshot of State Unified geospatial information portal GeoLatvija.lv, section "Spatial Development Planning"*

The central module of TAPIS is envisaged to authorised users of local municipalities, planning regions and state institutions, mainly, to develop national, regional and local spatial development planning documents.

Each process of drafting spatial development planning documents has been defined in accordance with laws and regulations of national level, and is done step by step, adding a decision on the next step in the process, e.g. decisions on the initiation of spatial planning document, process of public consultation, improvements and approval of the document, etc. It facilitates the development of this document, as well as minimizes the possibility of mistakes or omitting of any of the process steps. But above all, it allows the system to send out automatically generated notices about all planning documents to any person who has applied for notifications by e-mail. It is possible to apply for notifications about specific Latvian territory and spatial development planning document types on TAPIS in the central module or the public section, which is one of GeoLatvija.lv e-services for citizens.

In the public part of TAPIS (GeoLatvija.lv), residents are able to submit proposals about specific spatial development planning document easily, when it is the subject of a public consultation. These proposals

are automatically sent to the central module of TAPIS, where the developer of spatial development planning document can process them and provide an answer, which is then sent to the e-mail, indicated by the resident.

All the materials (rules, maps, explanation, etc.) that are added to spatial development planning documents during public consultation and after approval of the document are available for the public (GeoLatvija.lv) in one place for the whole territory of Latvia. Citizens can find them by location or name easily.

The system is constantly being improved by The Ministry of Smart Administration and Regional Development and the popularity of the system is gradually increasing.

TAPIS and it's public part (www.GeoLatvija.lv) has an additional part from 2025 – the Participation Budget – design to provide shared platform for municipalities, where citizens can submit and vote for the activities, they consider important for municipality to implement, for example, infrastructure developments in neighborhoods and so on.