

AGENDA

CABINET

WEDNESDAY, 18 SEPTEMBER 2019

2.00 PM

**COUNCIL CHAMBER, FENLAND HALL,
COUNTY ROAD, MARCH**

Committee Officer: Linda Albon
Tel: 01354 622229
e-mail: memberservices@fenland.gov.uk

- 1 To receive apologies for absence
- 2 Previous Minutes (Pages 3 - 6)

To confirm and sign the minutes of 18 July 2019.
- 3 To receive members' declaration of any interests under the Local Code of Conduct or any interest under the Code of Conduct on Planning Matters in respect of any item to be discussed at the meeting
- 4 To report additional items for consideration which the Chairman deems urgent by virtue of the special circumstances to be now specified
- 5 Commercial & Investment Strategy. (Pages 7 - 30)

To provide Cabinet with an update on the progress of the Commercial & Investment Strategy and to agree next steps in formulating a plan for implementation to include; governance, funding, investment criteria and prospective projects.

6 Council Tax Support - 2020/21 Scheme. (Pages 31 - 44)

Each year the Council is required to review its Council Tax Support (CTS) Scheme. This report is to receive the recommendations of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel's consideration of the progress of the 2019 annual review and the resultant proposals for consultation for changes to the CTS scheme to take effect from April 2020.

7 Fenland Local Plan Issues and Options. (Pages 45 - 96)

For Cabinet to approve the Issues and Options version of the Local Plan for public consultation in October/November 2019.

8 Open Spaces - Play Areas. (Pages 97 - 104)

Further to a recent motion at Council on 23 May 2019, and a subsequent Cabinet discussion regarding the Council's approach to play areas within our open spaces, this paper sets out the further information requested by Cabinet.

9 Coates Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan. (Pages 105 - 144)

To seek approval from Members to go out to public consultation on the Coates Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan.

10 Draft 6 Month Cabinet Forward Plan (Pages 145 - 146)

For information purposes.

11 Items which the Chairman has under item 3 deemed urgent

Wednesday, 11 September 2019

Members: Councillor C Boden (Chairman), Councillor Mrs J French (Vice-Chairman), Councillor I Benney, Councillor S Clark, Councillor Miss S Hoy, Councillor Mrs D Laws, Councillor P Murphy, Councillor C Seaton, Councillor S Tierney and Councillor S Wallwork

CABINET



THURSDAY, 18 JULY 2019 - 2.00 PM

PRESENT: Councillor C Boden (Chairman), Councillor Mrs J French (Vice-Chairman), Councillor I Benney, Councillor S Clark, Councillor Miss S Hoy, Councillor Mrs D Laws, Councillor C Seaton, Councillor S Tierney and Councillor S Wallwork

APOLOGIES: Councillor P Murphy

OBSERVING: Councillor M Cornwell, Councillor A Miscandlon, Councillor W Sutton and Councillor M Tanfield

CAB12/19 24 HIGH STREET, WISBECH

Cabinet considered the report on the dilapidated structure at the rear of 24 High Street, Wisbech presented by Councillor Seaton.

Cabinet AGREED to approve the recommendation to demolish the rear building to no 24 and approve the expenditure of the predicted costs contained in the report.

CAB13/19 COUNCIL RESERVES UPDATES

Cabinet considered the Council Reserves update report presented by Councillor Boden. He stated that this was a very useful and interesting report and thanked the officers who worked on it.

Cabinet AGREED to note the analysis of reserves provided as part of the report.

CAB14/19 COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT SCHEME 2020/21

Councillor Boden stated that due to an unfortunate miscommunication, no member of Cabinet was present when the Overview and Scrutiny Panel were called to consider the Council Tax Support Scheme. This report will therefore need to be presented to the next meeting of Overview and Scrutiny in early September.

Councillor Boden asked members if it could be recommended that the Overview and Scrutiny Panel consider these proposals at their meeting on 2 September for consideration of the changes to the Council Tax Support Scheme that takes effect from April 2020, but would also ask that they deliberate whether, in the longer term, further reform of the Council Tax Support Scheme is appropriate to be investigated in line with the scheme which is currently operating in the Peterborough Unitary Authority or elsewhere. He suggested this because whilst we do have a small amendment which is being proposed for this year, there are some more fundamental questions which we may care to consider. However, it is going to be difficult to consider those in isolation within Fenland District Council because of the disproportionate effect that has within other precept authorities, primarily the County Council, and it is only in cooperation with the County Council that some changes may be appropriate.

Cabinet AGREED that the Overview and Scrutiny Panel consider these proposals at their meeting on 2 September 2019 for consultation for the changes to the Council Tax Support Scheme to take effect from April 2020, and for them to consider whether in the longer term

further reform of the Council Tax Support Scheme, in line with that operating in Peterborough Unitary Authority or elsewhere, may be usefully investigated.

CAB15/19 SINGLE USE PLASTICS AUDIT - UPDATE

Members considered the Single Use Plastics Audit update report presented by Councillor Tierney.

Cabinet AGREED to note:

- The content of the audit and work completed to date.
- The assurance from the Council's contractor, Amey LG Ltd that the single use plastics the Council disposes of should not be entering our seas or oceans.
- The delivery of a further update report this calendar year evaluating our success or otherwise in adhering to the 3Rs principles – Reduce, Reuse or Recycle and covering points 3, 4 & 5 of the Council motion.

CAB16/19 WASTE & RECYCLING MOTION - UPDATE

Cabinet considered the Waste & Recycling Motion update report presented by Councillor Tierney. The motion had been brought at Council on 23 May 2019.

Cabinet AGREED the recommendations:

- That within the Council's forthcoming budgetary plans, there should be a staged review of waste collection services for consideration in keeping with the Government's evolving Waste and Resources Strategy objectives and timeline.
- Given the integrated nature of waste collection and the potential impact on partner authorities, that any changes to waste collection services should be made, where practicable, in cooperation with Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Waste Partnership (Recap) partners, including the County Council.
- That Cabinet note the existing commitment within the Council's Business Plan to deliver an updated Waste Strategy for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough through the Recap Partnership.

CAB17/19 PLAY EQUIPMENT - RESPONSE TO MOTION

Members considered the Open Spaces – Play Area Equipment report in response to a motion at Council on 23 May 2019, presented by Councillor Tierney on behalf of Councillor Murphy.

Councillor Boden stated that the report did not quite comply with what the original motion from Council which was to list the areas containing play equipment throughout the district.

Councillor Mrs French proposed an amendment to the motion:

1. To request a complete list to be submitted to the September Cabinet meeting of areas where FDC owns and/or maintains play equipment, to be listed by FDC ward and to include a very brief summary of the equipment at each site and its state of repair/maintenance.
2. Apart from those works referred to in the resolution 3 below, to suspend all capital spend, programmed works and further improvements until the September Cabinet Meeting can consider that list of play equipment to fulfil the requirements of the resolution of Full Council on 23rd May 2019.
3. To proceed, regardless of the aforementioned suspension, with those projects which are in procurement where an order has already been placed, thus contractually obliging us to continue, or where a temporary suspension of any project would

imperial receipt of Section 106 monies.

Councillor Benney seconded the amendment to the original motion.

Councillor Hoy commented that the amendment was useful as she was expecting the report to provide a breakdown of the play areas within the wards and the types of play equipment in those wards. The point of the original motion was that some areas did not have equipment and the report in September will show this.

Councillor Boden said that the exceptions stated by Councillor French were very important so as not to delay those proposals that are currently moving forward.

Councillor asked Councillor Tierney if he accepted the amendments put forward by Councillor French, and he agreed he was happy with these.

Councillor Boden asked for a show of hands to see if Cabinet accepted the amendments and these were agreed unanimously.

Cabinet AGREED to the amended Motion and to:

- **Note the report recognising that the Council manages many play areas, maintains them safely and is continuing to invest in replacement play areas as and when suitable funding is available.**

CAB18/19 DRAFT 6 MONTH CABINET FORWARD PLAN

Councillor Boden presented the draft Cabinet Forward Plan for information, noting that there will be two additions for the meeting on 18 September 2019, namely:

- Cabinet will need to reconsider the representations made from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee about the Council Tax Support Scheme
- As a result of the resolution just passed in Agenda Item 9 (Play Equipment), there will need to be a further agenda item about play equipment.

CAB19/19 PREVIOUS MINUTES

The public minutes of 27 June 2019 were agreed and signed.

(Members resolved to exclude the public from the meeting for this item of business on the grounds that the minutes contained a confidential item involving the disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act (as amended).

The confidential minutes of 27 June 2019 were agreed and signed.

2.22 pm

Chairman

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Agenda Item No:	5	
Committee:	Cabinet	
Date:	18 September 2019	
Report Title:	Commercial & Investment Strategy	

Cover sheet:

1 Purpose

- To provide Cabinet with an update on the progress of the Commercial & Investment Strategy and to agree next steps in formulating a plan for implementation to include; governance, funding, investment criteria and prospective projects.

2 Key issues

- Level of funding to be determined and agreed;
- Criteria for investment to be agreed;
- Capacity and resources required to deliver to be defined;
- How external opportunities can best be identified and explored;
- Identification and delivery of our own sites that are ripe for development;
- Governance structures and type of delivery vehicle needed to achieve the best outcomes in both financial return and project success;
- Risk appetite – from risk adverse to balanced risk taker.

3 Recommendations

- It is recommended that Cabinet:
 - Discusses and comments upon the draft Commercial & Investment Strategy; and
 - Authorises CMT to take all required actions to formulate proposals for consideration by Cabinet and Council on 4th November which facilitate the financial and governance arrangements necessary to give effect to the Strategy and the establishment of a Local Authority Trading Company.

Wards Affected	All
Portfolio Holder(s)	Cllr Chris Boden, Leader and Portfolio Holder, Finance

Report Originator(s)	Peter Catchpole, Chief Finance Officer and Corporate Director Paul Medd, Chief Executive Officer Carol Pilson, Corporate Director and Monitoring Officer Gary Garford, Corporate Director Amy Brown, Deputy Monitoring Officer
Contact Officer(s)	Peter Catchpole, Chief Finance Officer and Corporate Director Paul Medd, Chief Executive Officer Carol Pilson, Corporate Director and Monitoring Officer Gary Garford, Corporate Director Amy Brown, Deputy Monitoring Officer
Background Paper(s)	Draft Commercial & Investment Strategy – Appendix A Additional Governance Arrangements Review – Appendix B

Report:

4 Why do we need a Commercial and Investment Strategy?

Since 2010, Fenland District Council has undertaken massive organisational change in response to national austerity pressures. Major sources of funding, specifically Government Revenue Support Grant (RSG) and Business Rates (NNDR) have reduced significantly during this period and FDC will have delivered a total of £9.9million in savings in response to these challenges.

We have been nationally recognised as one of the most efficient Councils in the country. This is due to our innovative ways of delivering savings through our previous Modernisation Programme and Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR1). Savings have been delivered whilst continuing to protect frontline services and freezing Council Tax for 5 (out of 9) years.

Whilst we have met the savings challenge to date, our journey isn't over. We believe that at least £1.6million of further savings will need to be delivered by 2023/24 and each year large cost reductions become increasingly harder to identify and deliver. Additionally there are a number of significant risk areas which could potentially increase this savings target even further and these include but are not limited to the Fair Funding Review, the future of New Homes Bonus and the Business rates Retention Scheme.

Some efficiencies can be delivered through 'business as usual' activities. However, we must take further actions to meet current challenges whilst ensuring our organisation is sustainable for the future. This strategy outlines the types of investment opportunities that are available to us and the benefits they could bring; not just to our organisation, but to the wider district and its residents.

5 The Commercial and Investment Strategy

Currently the Commercial and Investment Strategy ("the Strategy") is drafted in three parts; Part One being Commercialisation, Part Two being Commercial Property Investment and Part Three covering Regeneration and Place Shaping Investment.

Part One is designed to outline and confirm our approach to commercialisation, taking a broad view to include all aspects of our services, digitalisation, shared services, new income generating opportunities and the selling of services. Examples of this already include Trade Waste, CCTV, Planning Fees, Building Control and general fees and charges.

Part Two covers the acquisition of land, property or other tangible assets to achieve the following key objectives:-

- Provide long term investment opportunities
- Maximise the return whilst appropriately managing risk
- Prioritise properties that deliver stable revenue income and rental growth
- Build a balanced portfolio in the context of all of the Council's investments
- Protect the capital investment

Whilst the governance arrangements for Part One are already in place it will be necessary to establish a "new" governance framework for Part Two that enables us to move in a timely and decisive manner in line with market opportunities and within agreed parameters.

Part Three covers Regeneration and Place Shaping Investment and key to the successful delivery of this approach will be defining the business case for decisions. Although the governance framework for this part of the Strategy is already in place through Cabinet

and Council (examples already in progress include 24 High Street and 11/12 High Street) it may be appropriate to make use of other governance arrangements that will be developed under Part Two of this strategy.

6 Governance Arrangements

It is recognised that in order for the Council to maximise its ability to operate effectively in responding to opportunities for investment in the short term, delegations need to be put in place which enable decisions to be taken expediently within an increasingly competitive market. It is envisaged that this could be achieved through the creation of an “Investment Board” which, as a minimum, would include the Leader of the Council and Finance Portfolio Holder, the Chief Executive, the Chief Finance Officer and the Director of Growth.

It is also prudent to consider other additional governance arrangements to support the desired objectives of the strategy in the medium to long term. At Appendix B of this Report are some examples of alternative structures which could be utilised and a list of some of the pros and cons for each.

Taking into account the relative advantages and disadvantages of establishing a Local Authority Trading Company, Cabinet are recommended to authorise CMT to include within the reports prepared for Cabinet and Council at their respective November meetings all information necessary to consider both the short term arrangements described above and the establishment of a Local Authority Trading Company together with a governance timetable, start-up funding arrangements and all relevant delegations necessary to bring this into effect if agreed.

7 Investment Appraisal

It is envisaged that for each acquisition, the following reports as a minimum would be presented to the “Investment Board”:

Reports forming part of the Investment Appraisal

Investment Appraisal



Investment Report

A narrative report describing details of the opportunity and key risks. It should also provide information about the tenants and their financial covenant. The report should summarise the expected returns and the scenarios that have been evaluated.



Investment Matrix

A scoring matrix to consistently guide decision making. Characteristics to consider include: location, strategy alignment, building quality, lease type, tenure, management implications, repair obligations and asset management opportunities.



Financial Analysis

A financial analysis showing the long term expected income returns. A number of scenarios should be prudently prepared to show a better and worse case - e.g no rental growth assumed unless the lease provides fixed uplifts / basing increases on RPI or similar indices.

Following approval from the Investment Board, the actual process for acquiring and selling property would be in accordance with Appendix 2 of the Commercial and Investment Strategy.

The scoring matrix and risk assessment would need to be fully defined and agreed by Cabinet and Full Council together with any associated constitutional amendments.

It is recommended that CMT are authorised to prepare reports for consideration by Cabinet and Council at their respective November meetings setting out the detailed requirements necessary to give effect to these arrangements to include details as to the associated investment criteria, funding and delegations/constitutional amendments if agreed.

8 Funding

Councils are in a strong financial position to acquire property due to their ability to access capital coupled with the low cost of borrowing. It is also worth noting that Fenland District Council does have available cash and reserves which is currently producing relatively low returns as previously reported in the Treasury Management updates to both Cabinet and Council. In order therefore to exploit property investment opportunities and improve the social and economic wellbeing of the District it is envisaged that it may be necessary to make in-year changes to the budget in order to facilitate the establishment of a Commercial Property Acquisition Fund to support the Internal Governance Arrangements.

It is recommended that Cabinet authorise CMT to review the current budgetary position to identify, as appropriate, all potential funding streams available for the establishment of a Commercial Property Acquisition Fund linking this with the scoring matrix, risk analysis and investment criteria underpinning the internal governance arrangements. This information also to be presented for consideration at the November meetings of Cabinet and Council as appropriate.

9 Part Three Investment Proposals

As identified above, Part Three of the Strategy relates to the development of Council owned land and properties in order to maximise their potential as assets and in terms of their value to the community. CMT have begun to identify potential sites that could be further explored as a potential first wave of developments facilitating the provision of new and high quality housing in the district. All of these sites are owned by the Council, relatively easy to access and service and could be developed relatively quickly. Cabinet are therefore recommended to authorise CMT to draw up a draft Fenland Development Prospectus setting out Part Three investment opportunities supported, as required by a fully costed business and governance case for consideration by Cabinet and Council as appropriate.

10 Timescales

CMT are recommending that Cabinet authorise the production of reports enabling members to give detailed consideration to the establishment of internal and additional governance arrangements together with the associated funding, delegations and constitutional amendments necessary to bring these into effect alongside any fully costed Part Three Proposals for discussion and, as appropriate agreement to future meetings of Cabinet and Council.

Appendix A

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Appendix A

Introduction

Why do we need a Commercial and Investment Strategy?

Since 2010, Fenland District Council has undertaken massive organisational change in response to national austerity pressures. Major sources of funding, specifically Government Revenue Support Grant (RSG) and Business Rates (NNDR) have reduced by 68% (£7.721million). During this time, FDC will have delivered a total of £9.9million in savings.

We have been nationally recognised as one of the most efficient Councils in the country. This is due to our innovative ways of delivering savings through our previous Modernisation Programme and Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR1). Savings have been delivered whilst continuing to protect frontline services and freezing Council Tax for 5 (out of 9) years.

Whilst we have met the savings challenge to date, our journey isn't over. We believe that at least £1.6million of further savings will need to be delivered by 2023/24. A number of significant risk areas¹ could increase this target even further.

Some efficiencies can be delivered through 'business as usual' activities. However, we must take further actions to meet current challenges whilst ensuring our organisation is sustainable for the future. This strategy outlines the types of investment opportunities that are available to us and the benefits they could bring; not just to our organisation, but to the wider district and its residents.

About our strategy

The term 'investment' can have different meanings in different contexts. Our Investment Strategy aims to provide the basis for informed decisions to be made on investing in property assets. It is split into three sections:

- **Part One** discusses and outlines our approach to commercialisation. It takes a broad view to include all aspects of service reviews, transformation, digitalisation, shared services, new income generation opportunities, pricing and the selling of services.
- **Part Two** discusses the purchase of an asset (and its disposal) to secure returns to contribute to the Council's sustainability. It sets out the processes and decisions needed to undertake investment in order to achieve a net income stream over the medium to long term.
- **Part Three** discusses the Council spending its own funds to support its strategic priorities within regeneration and place shaping. This may not deliver a financial return as described in Part Two, but could increase the GVA (Gross Value Added) and potentially deliver a number of indirect benefits through new jobs, inward investment, Business Rates and Council Tax.

Context

Local authorities have always owned property as part of their operational assets, strategic and regeneration projects. During the past decade, government austerity measures have put significant pressure on local government budgets. This, along with increased autonomy, has led an increasing number of authorities to become commercially minded and to

¹ These include, but are not limited to: the Government Spending review, Fair Funding review, 75% Business Rates retention, New Homes Bonus, changes to income (locally and nationally) and capital spending and funding.

Appendix A

subsequently invest into commercial property as a way to improve sustainability, reduce reliance upon central government grants and to protect services within communities. Historically low levels of interest rates from the Public Works Loans Board (PWLB) have also supported development to take place.

All Fenland District Council owned land and property is held as a corporate resource. Our Asset Management Plan outlines our agreed strategy and operation policy for developing, disposing and acquiring land and property. This strategy focuses on the acquisition of property as an investment and sits within the wider Asset Management Plan. All property is (or will be) held for a clearly defined purpose; whether that is to support services, provide revenue or to enhance our strategic role as a place shaper.

Exemptions

This strategy does not cover the Council's management of its cash-flow and surplus funds through short term investments or deposits in approved financial institutions or investment in Property Funds² which would be a policy decision within the Council's approved Treasury Management Strategy or Policy.

² Approved Property Funds are 'pooled funds' that invest in commercial property for rental income and through appreciation in values. They are available to the Council to invest its surplus funds it will not need within the next 5 to 10 years as a minimum. After fees and charges, net proceeds are distributed to investors within the Fund.

Appendix A

1. Part One – Commercialisation

Commercialisation

1.1 'Commercialisation' is an increasingly important concept in local government driven by the need to manage financial challenges. There is no single approach to this, and local factors influence each authority on how best to take the concept forward. These include political buy-in, the financial climate, capacity, risk appetite, opportunities, skills and capability.

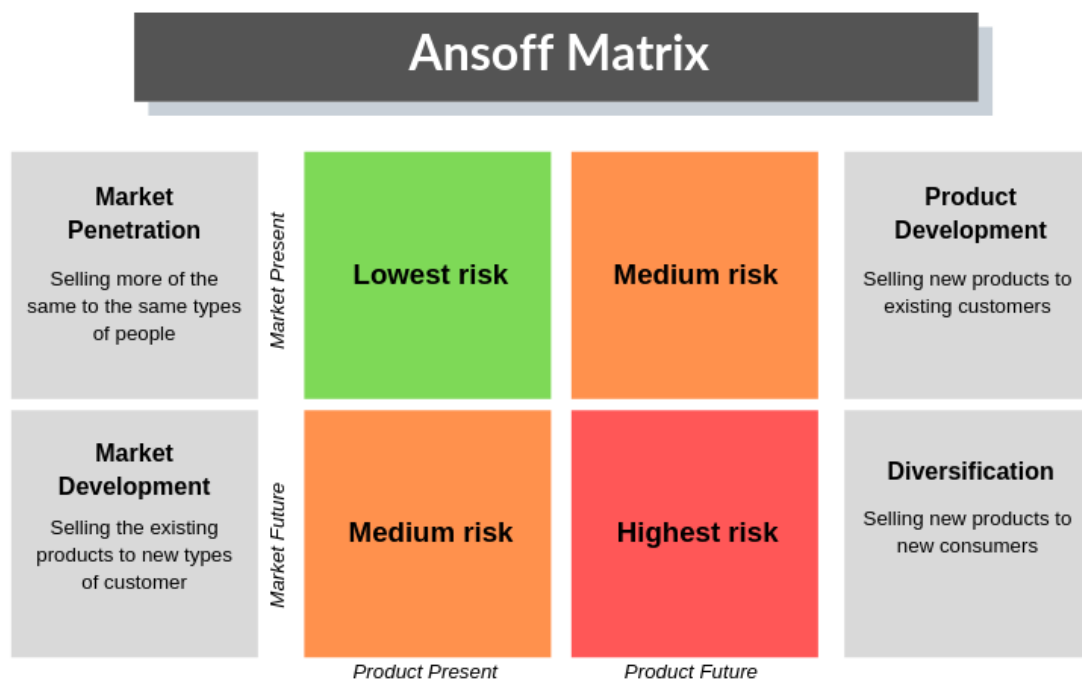
1.1.1 When building our strength as a commercial council, we must question:

- Have all options to maximise use of revenue and assets been explored?
- Do we understand our strengths and weaknesses?
- How do our services compare on net income and cost recovery?
- Have adequate processes been established to identify and select new opportunities?
- Is it clear how generating income will deliver a financial and social return?
- Are we aware of all and emerging financing available to fund proposals?
- Are governance proposals robust enough to scrutinise business cases?
- Do we understand the pros and cons of alternative development models?

Pursuing new opportunities

1.2 When considering new opportunities, we must fully understand the type of commercial opportunity. This will determine the level of risk and whether the venture is appropriate for the Council.

1.2.1 The commercially recognised 'Ansoff Matrix' diagram below categorises the best types of opportunities that are open to us in commercial trading in products (or most likely for us, services):



Appendix A

- 1.2.2 Using this type of categorisation will support us to balance the level of reward against potential risk. Examples of current 'products or services' to pilot include CCTV and new housing development.

Alternative service delivery models

- 1.3 There are a number of different delivery models that can be explored within this strategy. These are designed to protect and maximise our potential to undertake commercial ventures. Examples include:

- Company Limited by Shares
- Limited Liability Partnership
- Joint Venture
- Private Company Limited by Guarantee
- Community Interest Company
- Shared Services with Partners (e.g. SLAs)

Each model has specific features and legal connotations which will impact appropriate use. The completion of a business case will support the appropriate and careful consideration of the opportunity.

Governance arrangements

- 1.4 The appropriate arrangements of this activity are already in place. The Council has already engaged in commercial activity. Examples include Trade Waste, CCTV and Building Control.

2. Part Two – Commercial Property Investment

Background

- 2.1 Part two of this strategy aims to provide a viable and sustainable framework for the acquisition of property investments for pure financial benefit. It sets out:
- Our objectives for acquiring property investments
 - Criteria for investment acquisition
 - Risks to the Council
 - The acquisition and disposal process (governance arrangements)
- 2.1.1 The Local Government Act 1972 gives the Council powers to acquire any property or rights which facilitate, or is conducive or incidental to, the discharge of any of its functions.
- 2.1.2 This strategy provides the Council with the framework to exploit commercial property acquisition opportunities. This is with a view to generating long term rental income streams to support the future delivery of Council services. This would be by either by proactively seeking suitable property in the market or being approached by property agents.

Objectives

- 2.2 Our key objectives are to:
- a) Acquire properties that provide long term investment in accordance with our corporate and financial objectives
 - b) Maximise return whilst minimising risk
 - c) Prioritise properties yielding optimal rental growth and stable income
 - d) Protect capital invested in acquired properties
 - e) Operate a governance framework enabling to move in a decisive and timely manner in line with market opportunities
 - f) Build a balanced investment property portfolio

Investment Property Portfolio Structure

- 2.3 An investment property portfolio must be managed separately to the Council's operational buildings. In line with best practice, it must be balanced and diverse to spread the risk. This means acquiring a mix of asset types, locational spread and tenant types whilst meeting assessment criteria.
- 2.3.1 To provide security, the portfolio should include a combination of lease types. This will ensure there is a minimum income to cover the cost of outstanding debt used to acquire the portfolio.
- 2.3.2 A portfolio of property assets will be diversified on individual assets by sector (industrial, offices and retail), location and risk. A direct investment 'Core' and 'Core Plus' approach is advised, as shown in Table 1.

Appendix A

Table 1: A comparison of ‘Core’ and ‘Core Plus’ Properties

	Description	Returns	Rental yield (% financial return on capital investment)
‘Core Property’	The best property for the sector in an ideal location. Offers long term income with high quality tenants.	Yields equal to or slightly above prime for the sector	Lower than the general market. However, capital and rental growth should be steady. Medium term risk of void periods and tenant default reduced.
‘Core Plus Property’	Similar to Core. However, locations are slightly less favourable, perhaps with shorter leases and lesser tenant covenants.	Returns appropriate to the sector and risk	Higher than Core, due to the increase in risk.

2.3.3 Specialist sector investments³ should not form part of the Core and Core Plus criteria approach. They will only be considered by exception, and with robust proposals.

2.3.4 Given their limited correlation to commercial property, residential properties provide a good income diversifier. Despite the need for careful tenant and property management considerations, returns tend to be stable over the long term. This is discussed in greater detail in Part 3 of our strategy.

2.3.5 Value add (vacant or short leases), re-development opportunities or distressed property can reap high capital and yield returns, but are high risk. Due to differing reasons and motive for consideration, these do not form part of our strategy.

Investment Property Portfolio Principles and Decision Making

2.4 Investment in property should account for the ethical aspects or a property's purpose, and existing/future use under our ethical standards.

2.4.1 Although explored in greater detail in Appendix 1, there are many factors to consider when assessing an opportunity for property acquisition. These include:

- Location
- Covenant
- Lot size
- Lease length
- Tenure
- Repair obligations

All investment under this part of the strategy must provide income (yield) at a positive net rate of return. This is determined by the cost of borrowing and the Council's Internal Rate of Return (IRR). A set of agreed criteria would need to be agreed by Cabinet and Full Council and a minimum net yield would be set before further due diligence would be considered.

³ Such as hotels, public houses, student accommodation and health care facilities

Appendix A

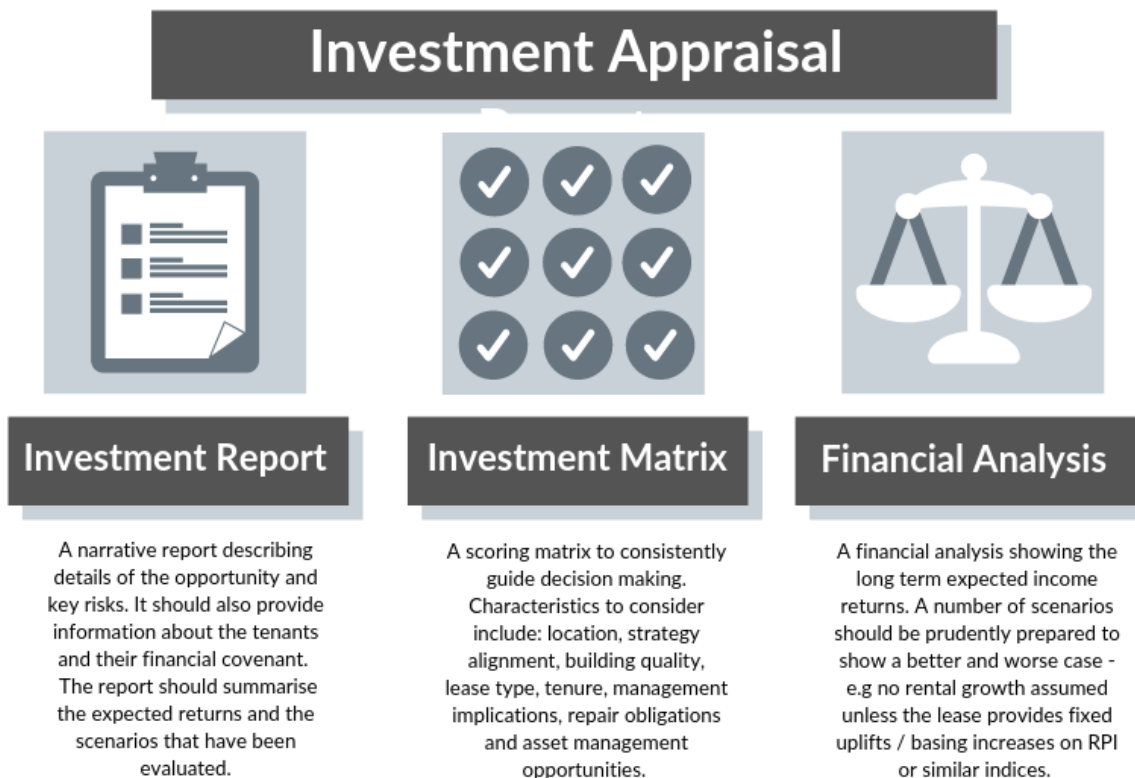
Governance

2.5 It is recognised that in order for the Council to maximise its ability to operate effectively in responding to opportunities for investment in the short term, delegations need to be put in place which enable decisions to be taken expediently within an increasingly competitive market. It is envisaged that this could be achieved through the creation of an “Investment Board” which, as a minimum, would include the Leader of the Council in consultation with the Finance Portfolio Holder, the Chief Executive, the Chief Finance Officer and the Director of Growth.

2.5.1 The Board would be delegated to make decisions on each potential acquisition up to a monetary limit. This amount would be agreed by Full Council as part of the budget approval process. The Board would have delegation to spend up to this amount following appropriate and agreed due diligence (see Figure 1)

2.5.2 For each acquisition, the following reports would be presented to the Investment Board:

Figure 1: Reports forming part of the Investment Appraisal



2.5.3 Following approval from the Investment Board, the actual process for acquiring and selling property is shown in Appendix 2.

3 Part Three – Regeneration and Place Shaping Investment

Appendix A

Strategy where the Council is considering ‘investment’ for regeneration and place shaping

- 3.1 The Council has specific powers and responsibilities in respect of economic regeneration. As a strategic and planning authority, our remit includes ensuring the supply of housing and employment land through its Local Plan. See Appendix 3 for further detail.

Economic regeneration

- 3.2 Economic regeneration can be defined as “*the broad process of reversing physical, economic and social decline in an area where market forces will not do this without intervention.*”⁴
- 3.2.1 Economic regeneration focuses on business growth and the actions and policies that can be deployed to create growth. The success of economic regeneration can be assessed using measures of income, poverty and employment – both within specific areas and in comparison to other more successful areas.
- 3.2.2 In Cambridgeshire, the remit for economic growth mainly falls within the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority (CPCA); specifically through the CPCA’s Business Board.
- 3.2.3 The CPCA commissioned an independent report title ‘Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Independent Economic Review’⁵ (CPIER Final Report September 2018). It identified there are three distinct economic areas within the CPCA area. These are the greater Cambridge area, the greater Peterborough area and the Fens. Geographically, Fenland District Council predominantly covers the Fens.
- 3.2.4 The CPIER report sets out recommendations and actions for the CPCA to ensure the economic prosperity and wellbeing of its area. Actions are long-term, spanning between 10-25 years, and are aligned to national economic and growth policies.
- 3.2.5 A key recommendation is for the CPCA to develop a Local Industrial Strategy (LIS) to address the strengths and weaknesses of its three economic areas. A LIS is being developed in conjunction with Government and is expected to be adopted by autumn 2019.
- 3.2.6 Our economic regeneration strategy, policies and actions therefore need to be closely aligned to the CPCA strategies. When the Council applies for funding streams, it must have a clear and evidenced view on what will be delivered in line with local strategy and national policy requirements.
- 3.2.7 The economic regeneration discussed so far is normally interventionist in nature by dealing with issues where the market fails to do so. As such, we will engage with a broad range of national and local stakeholders with varying levels of involvement.
- 3.2.8 With this in mind, we recognise that allocating and spending our own funds on economic regeneration is not ‘investment’ in the strictest sense (for example, compared to purchasing a property purely for financial returns).

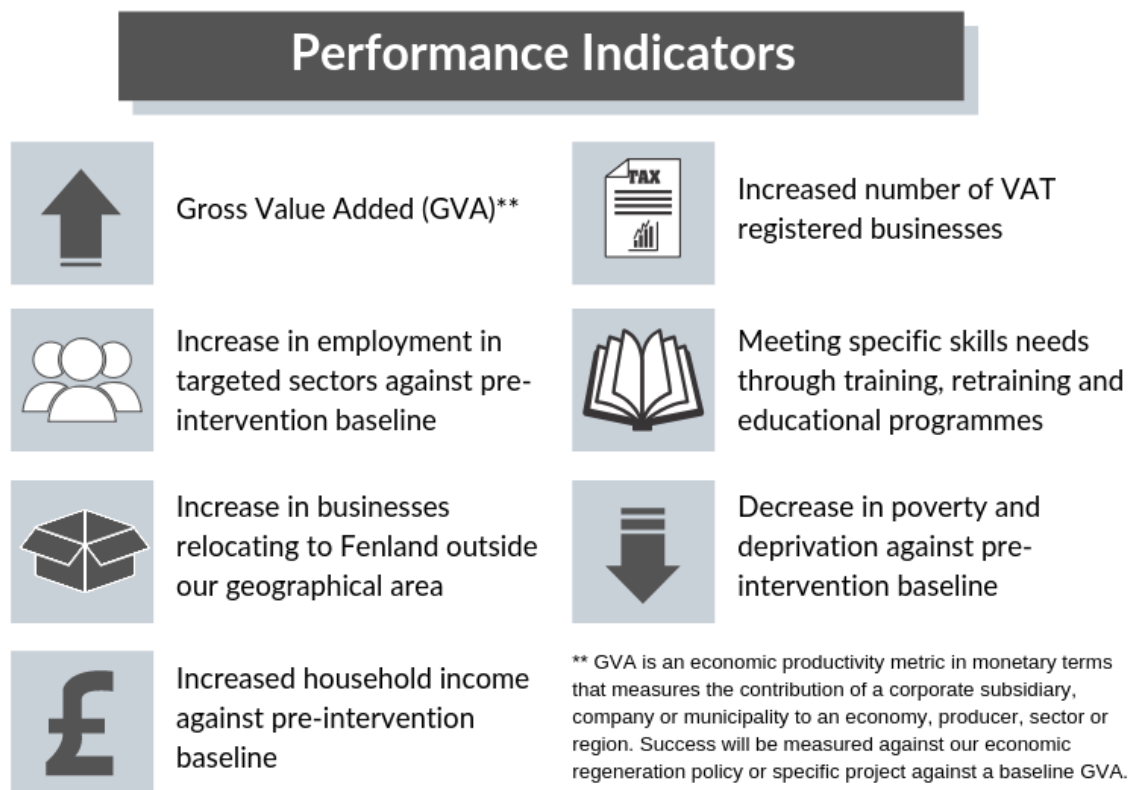
⁴ HM Treasury, Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform and Department for Communities and Local Government, ‘*Review of sub national economic development and regeneration*’, July 2007, para 1.13. The text quoted is from Igloo; Env 213, para 4.1

⁵ The Economic Review is a product of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Independent Economic Commission. It was established by the CPCA in June 2017.

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- 3.2.9 In most cases, spending on economic regeneration will not result in direct income to the Council as it would from an investment property. However, it can deliver indirect income through an increase in business rates and council tax income (where there is new housing) and generally through increased fees and charges from greater use of Council facilities.
- 3.3 The new Business Rates Retention system that is due to be implemented from April 2020 increases the importance of economic growth and inward investment policies to ensure the long term sustainability of the Council.
- 3.3.1 The Council will have a range of measures to identify the success of its economic regeneration policies. These must be meaningful and quantifiable to determine and inform future actions. As a minimum, they will include one or more of the following:

Figure 2 – Indicators to determine extent of economic regeneration success



Housing provision

- 3.4 Fenland District Council does not own its own housing stock but still has responsibilities as a strategic housing authority. In 2017, we transferred our council housing to Roddons (now Clarion). This means there is no council housing any more in Fenland.
- 3.4.1 Local authorities are engaging in the provision of housing through a variety of different means. These include:
- House building through companies
 - Building through the Housing Revenue Account (HRA)
 - Building directly under the general fund

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- Building through Joint Ventures with developers
 - Providing land for housing
 - Giving loans to others to build housing or bring it back into use
 - Building for social needs (i.e. extra care housing or homelessness)
- 3.4.2 There is a growing appetite and capacity in local authorities to return to or increase their roles in providing housing as a core function, partly to address local and national housing need. Councils have started to tackle a housing problem, leading to an increase in confidence and capacity to deal with more issues. Some authorities have returned to providing housing, even though they previously transferred their stock.
- 3.4.3 Local authorities have tried to make Government policies work by increasing the number of planning permissions. This has led Councillors to make difficult and sometimes unpopular decisions.
- 3.4.4 Further frustrations can occur when the permitted homes are not built or when renegotiations seek to remove the development contributions, infrastructure or affordable housing initially agreed. The main obligation of developers and land agents are to their shareholders – not to build any housing with planning permission.
- 3.4.5 These frustrations and inactivity have prompted some local authorities to begin building their own homes – often more rapidly than the private sector. Whilst based on a variety of motivations, the most important is to meet local housing needs and to effectively deal with homelessness.
- 3.4.6 Where local authorities are seeking income from housing or property portfolios through their own companies, they are doing so to ensure they have secure and long-term income to deliver their other essential services. This is described as ‘profit for purpose’.
- 3.4.7 It is often assumed that the 5 year land supply in the Local Plan is for private sector development, rather than all types of housing need. There is a disconnect in plans for different market housing needs and alternative tenures. Some authorities are stepping into the breach to provide housing that is not being supplied by the market.
- 3.4.8 Since the mid-1980’s, government policy has mainly focused on housing delivery by the private sector. It has also provided a range of incentives for developers and local authorities to provide new homes, including the New Homes Bonus and Help to Buy. Due to changes in government funding from 2020 (with the removal of the Revenue Support Grant), the New Homes Bonus provides a significant proportion of the Council’s income. However, it could be removed at any time.
- 3.4.9 The Government focus on the private sector has also been represented through Local Plan housing supply approaches. This focuses on the total supply of housing required rather than tenure, need-based locations, or housing related to income. There seems to be an unspoken assumption that land identified for housing is mainly for private house builders. However, private sector developers’ main obligation is to their shareholders, so local authorities cannot rely on them to increase housing supply. They do not have to build any homes at all, despite any planning permissions they hold.
- 3.5 Local authorities are being required to identify more housing land based on potential mortgageability; this not the same for the private sector. Most debate surrounding housing supply has focused on new build dwellings, with developer preference for greenfield sites which usually yield higher profits. However, there are other

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approaches being used by councils. These include selling or developing local authority land in partnership, often through wholly owned housing companies.

3.5.1 There are a number of reasons for local authorities in engaging directly in the provision of housing. These include:

- Meeting local housing requirements
- Estate and place regeneration
- Improving quality of design
- Generating income to replace the Revenue Support Grant (RSG)
- Frustration at unimplemented planning permissions
- Bridging gap that housing associations can't fill
- Tackling homelessness
- Private sector build out rates too slow
- Tackling 'problem' sites

3.5.2 Equally, there are reasons why local authorities may not consider direct housing provision. These include:

- Lack of funding
- Lack of expertise
- Unaware of statutory powers available
- No retained housing stock; believing option to provide housing directly not available
- Lack of market
- Lack of political will

Full business case(s) will need to be undertaken with external expert support to determine this right option for the Council. It is advised that the Council's external auditor should be consulted on early in any progress to understand upfront costs and to mitigate and minimise any issues arising during the annual audit of the accounts.

Conclusion

3.6 Part 3 of our Strategy has discussed how local authorities are using the powers available to them to:

- further their strategic regeneration and place making priorities; and
- directly provide housing of different tenure to meet local requirements and address failure within the housing market

3.6.1 Following expert legal and financial advice, the Council must decide the exact mix of methods, legal powers and funding it uses to achieve these priorities.

Governance

3.7 A governance process is already in place for this investment, with examples being Number 11/12 and 24 High Street in Wisbech and the Nene Waterfront regeneration.

3.7.1 It is expected that committing capital finding will attract other external funding opportunities from bodies such as the HLF, CPCA and Homes England.

3.7.2 It is recommended that a budget amount would be agreed by Full Council as part of the budget approval process. Following this, individual projects would be brought to Cabinet and Council as full business cases following the procedure outlined in this strategy.

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Appendix 1: Assessment Criteria – Commercial Property Investment: Risk and Return Matrix

Criteria	Excellent	Very Good	Good	Acceptable	Marginal	Notes
Location	Major Prime	Macro Prime	Major Secondary	Macro Secondary	Tertiary	Due to potential risk, it is likely locations would be chosen either within or close to Fenland
	Core and Core Plus approach					
Covenant	Single Tenant, Strong Financial Strength and Covenant	Single Tenant, Good Financial Strength and Covenant	Multiple Tenants, Strong Financial Covenant	Multiple Tenants, Good Financial Covenant	Tenant(s), Average Financial Covenant	The covenant of the tenant(s) is considered in terms of (audited) financial strength and risk of failure.
Lot Size	£6m - £12m	£4m - £6m £12m - £18m	£2m - £4m £18m - £20m	£1m - £2m £20m - £25m	<£1m >£25m	A balanced portfolio of investments will include various lot sizes.
Lease Length	>10 years	7 – 10 years	4 – 7 years	2 – 4 years	<2 years	Length of lease will determine the fixed term of guaranteed rental income. In most cases, longer leases are more secure.
Tenure	Freehold	Long Leasehold 125 years minimum	Leasehold >75 years <125 years	Leasehold <75 years	Leasehold <50 years	Freehold possession is best. Liquidity and marketability of properties are key considerations for leasehold.
Repair Obligations	Full Repairing and Insuring (FRI)	Internal Repairing 100% Recoverable	Internal Repairing Partially Recoverable	Internal Repairing Non Recoverable	Landlord Repairs	There are various levels of repair obligations; impacting structural, external and internal repairs to the property
Net Yield	+8%	5% - 8%	3.5% - 5%	2% - 3.5%	<2%	All investment opportunities must initially provide income (yield) at a positive rate of return. Acquisition costs may include Stamp Duty Land Tax, agents' fees, legal fees and conveyancing costs.

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Given the varied sector dynamics, the criteria for each asset will vary. However, the following core principles should apply in each case:

1. All investments considered must initially provide income (yield) equal to or above the Council's rate of return. This is defined by the cost of capital borrowing for purchase.
2. Individual properties and opportunities will be fully financially and physically appraised using industry standard techniques and the risk/return matrix.
3. To minimise management and risk, preference is for single occupancy investments.
4. Location will be dictated by opportunity to acquire investments that meet the strategy. However, location within the Fenland District or its impact on the economy within the Fenland District will be a deciding factor when all other attributes are equal.
5. Only investments with full repairing and insuring (FRI) terms or FRI by service charge will be considered.
6. Whilst determined by market forces, the aim is to maximise lease length.
7. Market rent should be equal to or above passing rent.
8. Preference will be for market sectors and locations with rental growth and good letting prospects
9. Further performance measures, portfolio analysis and valuation will take place as required during the holding period to allow for buy/sell/hold decision making.

2. Holding Period

It is normal to define a 'holding period' before sale at the time of purchase. This is to counter any significant depreciation eroding value or before the need for redevelopment arises. The holding period will be determined for each individual property at the appraisal stage.

3. Value Add

Value add (vacant or short leases), re-development opportunities or distressed property can reap high capital and yield returns. Whilst such properties can be appraised with the above principles and criteria, they will have different and higher levels of risk. The reasons for considering them must be fully evaluated and understood.

4. Issues not to be overlooked: risks and their management

Market Forces

To limit risk the principles, criteria and full due diligence will be undertaken for all transactions. Changes in demand and supply within the market and wider economy may see the value of investment and income rise and fall. The price of property is not the sole factor that should be considered for making a good investment in the long run.

Liquidity

Acquiring and disposing of commercial property can be complex. The process can result in transactional delay and uncertainty which carries risk from market shift, abortive transactional costs and speed of realising a capital receipt.







Active Portfolio Management and Opportunities

Performance of an investment property should be continually monitored as part of an active portfolio management strategy. Qualified in-house or third party auditors should keep up with market trends, manage asset plans, deal with day-to-day issues, examine lease structuring initiatives and protect against loss of income to ensure the investment yield is maximised.

The role of the property professional is to seek out as many opportunities as possible (often in a limited and highly competitive market), build relationships and communicate to the market the Council's requirements and ability to perform.

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Appendix 2: Portfolio Acquisition and Disposal Flow Chart

Acquisition (Buying)	Flow	Disposal (Selling)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appraise property • Offers and counter offers • Agree Heads of Terms • Secure source of funds 	Offer to market – Heads of Terms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instruct advisors; formulate asking terms and marketing strategy • Review property information; anticipate information and devise strategy • Procure energy performance certificate
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instruct legal team • Investigate title • Undertake or commission surveys and reports • Negotiate contract 	Pre-contract 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider carrying out and providing searches • Make available pre-contract legal pack and access to data • Negotiate contract
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pay deposit 	Exchange contract 	
Parties committed to acquisition		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pre completion searches • Finalise mechanics for drawdown/transfer of funds for completion 	Pre-completion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to manage property (in accordance with contract) • Preparation of completion statement • Prepare requisitions on title
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pay completion monies • Assume liability for property 	Completion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discharge borrowing liability
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SDLT/Land Registry tasks to be completed • Collation of property information • Portfolio management 	Post-completion 	

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Appendix 3: Exercise of Council's powers

Part 1 of the Localism Act 2011 applies a general power of competence to local authorities in England. Section 1 (1) of the Act provides that “a local authority has the power to do anything that individuals generally may do.” The power does not permit local authorities to do anything that is prohibited in legislation, raise taxes or alter its political management structure.

Under Section 3, commercial activities may be undertaken (in line with powers under Sections 93 and 95 of the Local Government Act 2003), but only through a company. Authorities can't trade in services that they already have a statutory requirement to provide.

Appendix 4: Local Authority Companies

Under the Local Government Act 2003, s95, local authorities can set up companies to make a profit in any area of their competencies. In the Localism Act 2011, S1-7, powers for local authorities to establish companies were extended into a General Power of Competence. This allows them to do anything that a company or individual may do, unless prohibited.

These powers have prompted many local authorities to establish a range of companies to undertake a range of services, to undertake developments and/or to hold assets. These companies are wholly owned by the local authority and are supported through the General Funds in the local authority.

A report by Mark Baigent (2016)⁶ sets out the variety of approaches that are available to local authorities to operate companies to provide housing.

Local authority housing companies are set up with the local authority owning 100% of the shares. They can receive loans for development from the local authority, including when funding has been obtained from the Public Works Loans Board. The local authority housing company would pay a premium for the use of this funding, thus giving a net benefit to the local authority. Housing companies also have set level agreements with local authority service providers (i.e. in legal, finance and planning) where the company pays for the use of the local authority officers' time.

These companies can be set up as tax efficiently as any private company or housing association. The way any development is funded may depend on the methods that provide the most income, as that is needed the most by local authorities to bridge their funding gap. Possible funding methods include:

- Public Works Loans Board
- Council's own resource: finance
- Converting office buildings to residential
- Bonds
- Hedge fund(s)
- Homes England
- S.106 payments
- Building on Council land
- Council's own resource: buildings or land
- Loans from other local authorities
- Commercial loans
- European Investment Bank
- LEP/Devolution and City Deals
- From Joint Venture partners

The structures and governance of companies, joint ventures and partnership arrangements can be complex. The Council will procure expert legal and financial advice before entering into such arrangements.


⁶ Mark Baigent (2016), How to Set Up A Local Housing Company, Mark Baigent Consulting: <http://bit.ly/mb-setup-hc>

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Delivery vehicle	Advantages	Disadvantages
<p>Local authority trading company (distinct from a Teckal company) Note: there is a requirement to set up a company where a local authority wishes to trade commercially</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • potential for the Council to set up a local authority trading company (LATCO) on its own or with another local authority • can be allowed flexibility in terms of its governance and oversight arrangements in order to provide an ability to respond to opportunities quickly • ability to trade commercially with the wider public and private sector to a greater extent than permitted by the 20% limit applied to Teckal companies • a degree of Council oversight and agreement of the company's activities and its use of public money 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • public procurement regime applies to the LATCO. It cannot take advantage of tax benefits or distort market economy • public law governs public bodies "controlled" or influenced by local authorities therefore it will be subject to eg FOI, EIA • upfront in house and external resources required (operations, finance, legal, HR, communications) • must undertake due diligence re analysis of financial, commercial and tax advantages and disadvantages for long term sustainability, costs of resourcing the company, cost of borrowing if loan extended to the company, costs of transferring staff (with LGPS) if applicable, need to satisfy best value duty, determination of how the company will be resourced - staff, assets, premises etc • potential conflicts of interest in appointment of company directors who will be required to act in the best interests of the company • the company will have separate legal identity and will operate independently of the Council similar to an external provider . The Council should not fetter the board directors' powers and duties
<p>Joint Venture(JV)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • potential for collaborating with different joint partners from the private or public sector • potential to establish a JV entity, or enter into a JV contract arrangement without the need to set up a distinct JV entity • potential to create a JV to fall outside the public procurement regime, provided the JV entity is not classed as a public body governed by public law. This is dependent on the structure and purpose of the JV entity and its 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the Council must undertake a procurement exercise to select a JV partner in a private /public sector venture where private sector will have an influence over the JV entity business • public procurement regime applies to the award of a service or works contract to JV entity • even where public procurement regime does not apply, the Council may still need to undertake some form of

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	<p>arrangements eg the JV structure does not create a works services or supplies contract</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • share risks with JV partner • source investment funding , expertise from private sector • where a company is used as a JV entity, usually the liabilities are limited to the company and not the shareholders • can be more overtly commercial than other vehicles • high degree of commercial and operational flexibility 	<p>competition and advertisement to meet General Treaty Principles</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • lesser degree of control by the Council where: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -the JV entity is not classed as a public body so not governed by public body regulations; -a private sector partner holds larger share ownership; - objective of the JV is to operate independently of the Council • a private sector partner may have different objectives dealing with “deadlock disputes” • upfront substantive and time consuming resources (operations, finance, legal HR, communications) will need to be obtained eg. external specialist legal advice on the requirements to create a JV entity falling outside the public procurement regime • resources required for procurement processes • may be a longer process to set up a JV arrangement where public procurement exercises need to be factored into the timescale • higher risk of conflict of interest where Council officers sit on a JV company board having to balance acting in the best commercial interest of a JV company and the Council’s interests • need to reach agreement with private sector partners about treatment of profit • need to guard against state aid implications • risks of Council’s duties on disclosure and freedom of information may not be aligned with private sector partner’s need for commercial confidentiality • private sector partner may be motivated to “cherry pick” elements of the services or arrangement which suit their profit margins
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Agenda Item No:	6	
Committee:	Cabinet	
Date:	18 September 2019	
Report Title:	Council Tax Support – 2020/21 Scheme	

Cover sheet:

1 Purpose / Summary

Each year the Council is required to review its Council Tax Support (CTS) Scheme. This report is to receive the recommendations of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel's consideration of the progress of the 2019 annual review and the resultant proposals for consultation for changes to the CTS scheme to take effect from April 2020.


2 Key issues

- The Overview and Scrutiny Panel met on 2 September 2019 to consider proposals for consultation for changes to the CTS scheme to take effect from April 2020.
- The report as presented to Overview and Scrutiny Panel on 2 September 2019 is attached.
- The recommendations from the Overview and Scrutiny Panel are as follows:
 - (i) the introduction of a fluctuating earnings rule to the treatment of Universal Credit with a tolerance level of £15 per week, subject to consultation. The £15 per week tolerance level to be reassessed next year to ensure the anticipated administration gains remain relevant depending on the income level;
 - (ii) to continue with the current 14% contribution rate for 2020/21;
 - (iii) to undertake further modelling of the Council Tax Support scheme during 2020 to be considered for implementation in the 2021/22 scheme.

3 Recommendations

- It is recommended that members consider the recommendations from the Overview and Scrutiny Panel as detailed above and determine any changes to the 2020-21 CTS scheme which will require consultation to be undertaken.

Wards Affected	All
Portfolio Holder(s)	Cllr Chris Boden, Leader & Portfolio Holder, Finance Cllr Mrs Jan French, Deputy Leader
Report Originator(s)	Sam Anthony, Head of HR & OD Mark Saunders, Chief Accountant
Contact Officer(s)	Peter Catchpole, Corporate Director and Chief Finance Officer Sam Anthony, Head of HR & OD Mark Saunders, Chief Accountant
Background Paper(s)	None

Agenda Item No:	7	
Committee:	Overview and Scrutiny Panel	
Date:	02 September 2019	
Report Title:	Council Tax Support – 2020/21 scheme	

Cover sheet:

1 Purpose / Summary

Each year the Council is required to review its Council Tax Support (CTS) Scheme. This report advises Overview and Scrutiny of the progress of the 2019 annual review and the resultant proposals for consultation for changes to the CTS scheme to take effect from April 2020.

2 Key issues

- We are now in the seventh year of CTS; a locally set scheme that replaced the nationally set Council Tax Benefits (CTB) scheme from April 2013.
- In 2013-14 we were able to take advantage of a one-off Government grant that compensated in part for the reduction in Government funding that year. This meant that the maximum CTS awarded was the amount calculated, less 8.5% (Pensioners are protected by legislation and receive up to 100% CTS).
- In 2014-15, we initially proposed this reduction be increased to 20%. However a reduction in demand meant that we were able to revise this reduction to 14%.
- For 2015-16 and 2016-17 we kept the same scheme as 2014-15, except that allowances and premiums (the amounts of income from state-administered benefits such as Jobseekers' Allowance) were increased in line with other benefits such as Housing Benefit. This means that customers have a higher income before losing CTS.
- For the 2017-18 scheme, as part of the Council's Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR1), we consulted customers on a proposal to increase the CTS reduction for working age customers from 14% to 20% starting from 1 April 2017. Based upon feedback from customers and the potential impact on collection rates, Overview and Scrutiny members at their meeting on 28 November 2016, recommended to Cabinet and Council that the 14% reduction level be maintained. This recommendation was subsequently approved and the scheme contribution rate remained unchanged.

- For the 2018-19 scheme we consulted on a proposal to harmonise the scheme to DWP welfare reforms introduced for Housing Benefit and CTS for Pensioners, and introducing closer links to Universal Credit data share for claims, thereby removing the stipulation to make a separate claim. This was subsequently approved and introduced.
- For 2019-20 we kept the same scheme as for 2018-19.
- Councils are required to consider whether to review their LCTRS schemes annually. Where it is determined to retain the existing scheme this must be decided by 11 March of the preceding year.
- Where Councils seek to amend their scheme it will be necessary to consult preceptors and stakeholders prior to a wider consultation to inform a final scheme design by 28 February of the preceding year. Therefore work has commenced to allow sufficient time to consult, approve and implement changes prior to 28 February 2020.
- The current Fenland CTS scheme provides a maximum benefit of 86% for working age claimants and our scheme also fully protects War Pensioners. The aim in designing the scheme was to achieve a balance in charging an amount of Council Tax to encourage customers back into work whilst setting the amount charged at an affordable and recoverable level.
- Three options for changes to the current scheme are presented for consideration:
 - (i) to increase the customer contribution rate to 20%;
 - (ii) to reduce the customer contribution rate to 8.5% and
 - (ii) to introduce a fluctuating earnings rule to the treatment of Universal Credit.
- Should Members decide not to recommend changing the customer contribution rate, this will remain at 14% for the 2020/21 scheme.

3 Recommendations

The Panel is requested to:

- Review the CTS scheme for 2020-21 as outlined in this report and recommend to Cabinet any changes to the scheme which will require consultation to be undertaken.

Wards Affected	All
Forward Plan Reference	This item is included in the Forward Plan
Portfolio Holder(s)	Cllr Chris Boden, Leader & Portfolio Holder, Finance Cllr Mrs Jan French, Deputy Leader
Report Originator(s)	Sam Anthony, Head of HR & OD Mark Saunders, Chief Accountant
Contact Officer(s)	Peter Catchpole, Corporate Director and Chief Finance Officer; Sam Anthony, Head of HR & OD Mark Saunders, Chief Accountant
Background Paper(s)	None

Report:

1 Introduction

- 1.1 Before April 2013, Council Tax Benefit (CTB) was a nationally controlled scheme administered by District and Unitary Councils that give reductions from Council Tax to people on low incomes according to set criteria specified by regulations. The maximum reduction was 100% of a person's Council Tax bill.
- 1.2 The costs of CTB were fully reimbursed to the Council by the DWP, so that if demand rose or fell, the Council did not bear the costs of these changes.
- 1.3 CTB was localised and replaced by CTS in April 2013. At the same time, Government funding was reduced and CTS was localised, coming under the control of District and Unitary Councils. Whilst pensioners were protected and regulations specified that they must still receive up to 100% CTS, this protection did not apply to working age people.
- 1.4 Unlike CTB, the costs of CTS are borne by Councils. Funding is given by the Government within the overall finance settlement, but this has reduced significantly over the years so that Councils bear the costs of an increase in demand but gain from reduced demand.
- 1.5 The implementation of CTS left Fenland with a funding gap, that potentially saw working age customers only being entitled to 80% CTS. However, Members considered the options available to help increase CTS and were able to implement a scheme in 2013-14 that saw working age customers be entitled to up to 91.5% of CTS; in two ways.
- 1.6 Members primarily met the funding shortfall by revising Council Tax exemptions on empty properties, permitted by regulations that changed in 2013. This meant that the Council would no longer give a Council Tax reduction for most empty domestic properties.
- 1.7 The funding shortfall was further closed by a one-off transitional Government grant that applied in 2013-14 only.
- 1.8 In 2014-15 this grant was not available. With demand for CTS not growing as much as was predicted for 2013-14, Members were able to revise the CTS scheme to feature a reduction of 14% CTS for working age customers.
- 1.9 Councils are required to review the operation of their CTS schemes annually. They are required to make any revisions no later than 28 February in the financial year preceding that for which the scheme will be revised (i.e. 28 February 2020 for the scheme relating to the 2020-21 financial year).
- 1.10 Further annual reviews determined that the CTS reduction remained at 14% since 2015-16, with further links to Welfare Reform and Universal Credit introduced for 2018-19. That scheme was retained for 2019-20.
- 1.11 We are now reviewing our CTS scheme for the 2020-21 financial year.

2 The 2019 review

- 2.1 Councils are required to review operation of their CTS schemes each year. Where a change is proposed, we are required to undertake customer consultation; the results of which assist in the final decision made by the Council regarding the CTS scheme next year.
- 2.2 Three proposals are presented for members consideration, to increase the contribution rate from 14% to 20%; to reduce the contribution rate from 14% to 8.5% and to introduce a fluctuating earnings rule to the assessment of Universal Credit awards.
- 2.3 Members will be aware that this Council is one of five partners forming the Anglia Revenues Partnership (ARP). The other four Councils are Breckland, East Cambridgeshire, West Suffolk (formerly Forest Heath and St. Edmundsbury) and East Suffolk (formerly Waveney and Suffolk Coastal). These Councils have maintained the contribution rate in their schemes at 8.5% since 2013. They are not proposing any changes to this rate for 2020-21.
- 2.4 The other Councils within ARP will all be considering the change to introduce a fluctuating earnings rule to the assessment of Universal Credit awards as detailed in section 4 of this report.
- 2.5 Currently, apart from a different contribution rate, all other aspects of the CTS scheme are consistent across all of the ARP partners. This aids the efficient administration of the schemes across the partnership. This does not however preclude any of the partners amending their scheme independently of the others.

3 The impact of CTS to date

- 3.1 CTS with its associated gap between Council Tax payable and the maximum help working age people can receive has been in operation now for six full years and we are in the seventh year of operation.
- 3.2 The table below shows how the amount of CTS awarded and numbers of customers claiming it have changed since CTS was introduced in 2013:-

CTS cases and amount awarded			
Date	CTS awarded	Working age claims	Pensioner claims
31/3/13 (CTB)	£8.16m	4,682	4,727
31/3/14	£7.89m	4,755	4,667
31/3/15	£7.45m	4,620	4,431
31/3/16	£7.21m	4,450	4,202
31/3/17	£7.02m	4,228	3,998
31/3/18	£6.91m	4,189	3,827
31/3/19	£6.98m	4,227	3,629
Change 2013 to 2019	- £1.18m -14.46%	- 455 -9.72%	- 1,098 -23.23%

3.3 The amount of CTS awarded since 2013 has reduced as a result of both the increase in contribution rate to 14% and a significant reduction in claims.

4 Feasibility of changes to CTS for 2020-21 – changing the contribution rate

4.1 Any potential impact resulting from changing the contribution rate would be shared between the major preceptors in proportion to their Council Tax requirements in the Collection Fund. The proportions based on 2019/20 Council Tax, is detailed in the table below. This shows that any changes to the contribution rate would generate significantly more savings/more cost to the County Council, as they receives a much higher proportion of Council Tax receipts overall.

How Council Tax allocated is split	
Authority	%
Cambridgeshire County Council	68.61
Cambridgeshire Fire Authority	3.70
Cambridgeshire Police & Crime Commissioner	11.64
Fenland District Council	16.05

(i) Increasing contribution rate from 14% to 20%

4.2 Changing the CTS reduction for working age customers from 14% to 20% is forecast to decrease CTS expenditure by £202,014, achieving gross savings to this Council of £32,423 (16.05%) based on current numbers of CTS claimants.

4.3 Changing the rate of contribution has also been shown to result in additional arrears and subsequent recovery action. Additional bad debts provision would be required for non-payment and to help maintain expected collection levels, extra resources would be required to undertake recovery work in respect of additional arrears that would accrue from working age customers having payment difficulties as a result of the proposed changes. The net additional cost is estimated to equate to 50% of the additional Council Tax raised:-

Additional Council Tax collectable @ 20%	£202,014
District share - 16.05%	£32,423
Estimated cost of additional recovery/bad debts provision	£16,211

4.4 As the Council is responsible for collecting Council Tax and administering CTS but only keeps 16.05% of the income, the potential benefit from increasing the CTS contribution rate from 14% to 20% is reduced by around 50%.

4.5 When the Council last considered increasing the contribution rate to 20% in 2016, Members asked Officers to request Cambridgeshire County Council to part-fund the above post's costs. However after considering the severe financial constraints that they were under, with the need to make significant savings, CCC felt that it would not be possible to agree to the funding request.

(ii) Reducing contribution rate from 14% to 8.5%

- 4.6 Changing the CTS reduction for working age customers from 14% to 8.5% is forecast to increase CTS expenditure by £280,717, a gross cost to this Council of £45,055 (16.05%) per annum based on current numbers of CTS claimants.
- 4.7 As increasing the contribution rate is likely to worsen collection rates as detailed above, reducing the contribution rate could result in an improvement in collection rates as well as increasing the ability to recover in year debt by deduction from DWP benefits. Consequently, taking these factors into account, the potential cost to this Council of reducing the CTS rate from 14% to 8.5% could be reduced by up to 50%, ie. £22,527 per annum.
- 4.8 There are also options available to Members to increase the CTS contribution rate to higher amounts, possibly 30% or even 40%. This would result in correspondingly higher amounts of gross Council Tax being received but would also result in higher bad debts provision for non-payment and the possibility of further resources being required to help maintain collection levels.
- 4.9 Previous experience shows that when a significant change in the level of support given takes place, there is a spike in the level of recovery action and also the amount that becomes outstanding. The last changes of this nature was between 2012 (the last year of the old CTB system) and 2013 (the first year of the new CTS system) when the minimum working age customer's Council Tax contribution increased from zero to 8.5% and 2014 when the contribution rate increased from 8.5% to 14%.
- 4.10 The table below compares Fenland's in year Council Tax collection rate with the National average.

	Effects of changing CTS reduction percentages			
	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2018-19
All England Authorities- Average In Year Council Tax collection rate	97.4%	97.0%	97.0%	97.0%
Cumulative change in National Average rate since 2012-13		-0.4%	-0.4%	-0.4%
Fenland increase in CTS reduction level		8.5%	5.5%	0.0%
Fenland In Year Council Tax collection rate	98.0%	97.7%	97.3%	96.8%
Annual Change in Fenland collection rate		-0.3%	-0.4%	-0.5%
Cumulative change since 2012-13		-0.3%	-0.7%	-1.2%

- 4.11 It can be seen that there is a reduction in Council Tax collection rates after the reduction in CTS is increased. However the collection rate effects are complicated and could be caused by a variety of other factors such as the impact of the nature of the employment economy with more casual/part-time

working patterns as well as fluctuating monthly Universal Credit awards. The eventual collection rate is currently around 98.8% - 99.0%.

- 4.12 Bearing in mind the previous consultation results from 2016, the financial constraints that prevented CCC from supporting the funding of additional recovery resources, together with data that suggests a further increase in the CTS reduction at Fenland will adversely affect collection performance, Members are asked to consider whether or not they wish to recommend to Cabinet that consultation be carried out on changing the contribution rate and what rate the consultation should be carried out on.

5 Feasibility of changes to CTS for 2020-21 – fluctuating earnings rule

- 5.1 Claims dependent upon Universal Credit (UC) have become increasingly apparent since the Council entered the UC full service during summer 2018, whereby the significant majority of new claims now go through UC and are received by the ARP through the Universal Credit Data Sharing hub (UCDS).
- 5.2 Currently, there are 941 CTS claimants who are in receipt of Universal Credit. 2,422 CTS claimants are in receipt of other passported benefits and yet to migrate to UC and 767 CTS and/or HB claimants are in receipt of tax credits and yet to migrate to UC. Local Authorities will continue to assess rent element for temporary accommodation and supported accommodation customers as well as Discretionary Housing Payments for UC customers.
- 5.3 UC is designed to be paid monthly, calculated on the customer's circumstances, including Real Time Information (RTI) earnings data from HMRC every month. Given customer's circumstances, especially earnings, fluctuate, this leads to monthly revised UC awards sent to the Council by the DWP.
- 5.4 The existing Council Tax Support scheme rules require the Council to revise awards when a customer's Universal Credit changes leading to reassessment of Council Tax Support. In turn this means customers receive a revised Council Tax bill for balance due for the year and have to amend their payment arrangements, typically direct debit instructions. Increasingly, this can be a monthly occurrence for customers.
- 5.5 We have seen an increase in customer contact regarding these notifications because customers are unsure as to what they have to pay due to the requirement to re-profile their Council Tax payments on receipt of UCDS files on a monthly basis. The uncertainty caused toward the customer also has an impact on Council Tax collection, as well as increased administration costs and postage associated with producing additional notification letters.
- 5.6 Within the Anglia Revenues Partnership, Waveney (East Suffolk) has been in the UC Full Service the longest, since May 2016, where we have seen a 72% increase in revised UC awards sent to the Council. Over time we expect this pattern to continue and increase for all the partner Councils, given full service has been rolled out nationally and UC is set to expand. Fenland entered the UC Full Service September 2018.
- 5.7 To ease the burden on the customer, and the Council we recommend a tolerance rule is introduced into the Council's scheme. This would have the effect of freezing a customer's assessment when a revised UCDS notification would otherwise trigger a reassessment. UCDS changes notified above the

tolerance level would be processed as usual, whereas changes within the tolerance level would not be updated, no correspondence issued to the customer, and without amendment to Council Tax repayments.

- 5.8 We have analysed UCDS award notifications for the past three months. The table below shows the level of reduction in reassessments for changes in UC banded in £5 increments, were a tolerance rule to be applied:

weekly earnings tolerance	£5	£10	£15	£20	£25
reduction in reassessments	14%	21%	32%	32%	36%

- 5.9 We recommend a weekly tolerance level of £15 (£65 monthly) to achieve a 32% reduction in revised Council Tax adjustments. We consider a £10, 21% reduction to be less effective, whilst there is little to gain by increasing the tolerance level. Setting the tolerance level at £15 equates to less than two hours employment at national minimum hourly rates.
- 5.10 With such a tolerance rule, UC customers can earn up to an extra £103 per month. An extra £103 per month will reduce UC award by £65 per month with the UC 63% taper (disregard) applied. An extra £15 per week would reduce CTS by £3 per week if we were to effect the change immediately. However, modelling has shown that the tolerance will reduce the number of re-assessments from an average of 9.28 over a year to an average 4.7 per year, with an average overall impact on CTS for the full year of only £3.43.
- 5.11 A relatively small tolerance level will ensure smoothing of customer's fluctuating UC awards and will not disadvantage those customers receiving greater or occasional beneficial changes.
- 5.12 The thresholds and percentage reductions detailed in the table at 5.8 above are an estimation based on experience of applying UC to date. Given all UC customers will be similarly affected by a tolerance rule we do not foresee any equalities issues. The impact is just as likely to be a minimal yearly decrease in CTS or a minimal yearly increase (around £3 p.a.) regardless of any customer group with the resulting reduction in re-assessments applying to all groups equally.
- 5.13 It should be noted where customers circumstances noticeably change, for example when employment ceases, the tolerance rule will not apply, given the change will be greater than £15 per week. In these circumstances the customer's Council Tax Support will be immediately adjusted to provide extra benefit.
- 5.14 It is also recommended that the changes to the Council Tax Support Scheme include discretion to reassess entitlement where a reduction in earnings occurs and it is clear that this level of earnings have and will be likely to continue at a lower level.
- 5.15 An additional safety net for claimants if errors occur is the ability to issue backdated adjustment credit and there is also provision within the scheme to award exceptional hardship. In addition, the proposals within this report include discretion to reassess a case where a customer has had a single reduction in their UC within the proposed £15 tolerance level which has not benefited the customer.

- 5.16 In looking at how a tolerance would apply, a typical case would currently have 12 monthly reassessments and 12 amended Council Tax bills during the year. However, with a tolerance rule a typical customer will only have 4 monthly reassessments and the weekly difference in support would be £0.27p per week.
- 5.17 We are working with our software supplier to introduce additional functionality to enable a tolerance rule, along with automation of these assessments.
- 5.18 Should the Panel approve the recommendation to introduce a tolerance rule, the Council will be required to enter a formal public consultation to amend the scheme for 2020 - 21.
- 5.19 Consultation responses will be reported to the Panel, Cabinet and Full Council as necessary to conclude the review in time for 28th February 2020, or by 11th March 2020 if continuing with the existing scheme.

6 Expected benefits of implementing fluctuating earnings rule

- 6.1 Reduced customer notifications and contact, and stable Council Tax repayment arrangements for customers.
- 6.2 Setting the tolerance at a low level with discretion to review will minimise any implications.

7 Stakeholders / Consultation / Timescales

- 7.1 Consultation will be required if Committee agree to the recommendation. Initial discussions indicate a six to eight week preceptor, stakeholder and web based consultation. ARP will work with the Policy and Communications teams throughout the partnership to organise a consultation.
- 7.2 We would consult all taxpayers, using a survey monkey consultation on the website along with targeted preceptor authorities and stakeholder direct consultation. The consultation would identify whether or not the respondent was in receipt of CTS.
- 7.3 It is anticipated an Equality Impact Assessment is likely to be required.

8 Future Years CTS Review – 2020 for 2021/22 Scheme

- 8.1 The Council Tax Support scheme is complex and includes many areas where potential changes could be made, all of which would have associated savings/cost to this Council and to CTS customers. For example, Peterborough City Council last autumn consulted on a wide range of potential changes to their scheme for 2019/20. At that time their CTS reduction rate was 30% (compared with our 14%). The potential options for changes to Peterborough's CTS scheme that were consulted upon were as follows:
 - (i) The existing 30% reduction that is applied at the end of the benefit calculation is replaced with a 30% liability reduction applied at the start of the calculation;
 - (ii) Alternative options for increasing the above 30% reduction, including: (1) increasing by 1% a year for 3 years; (2) increasing to 35%; (3) increasing to 40%;
 - (iii) Introducing a minimum award level of either £1 or £2 per week;

- (iv) A restriction to support being provided at up to Band C/D equivalent only (higher bands will be limited to the Band C/D level with their parish);
- (v) An increase to the non-dependent deduction levels;
- (vi) An assumed minimum earnings level for self-employed claimants;
- (vii) Removal of second adult rebate;
- (viii) Removal of extended payments;
- (ix) Removing the current disregard of Child Benefit and treating it as income;
- (x) Reducing the capital limit from £16,000 to £6,000 and
- (xi) Treating Universal Credit claim notifications as claims for Council Tax Support.

8.2 Following consultation, of the above Peterborough approved options (i), (x) and (xi). In addition they approved increasing the 30% reduction by 1% a year for 3 years starting in 2019/20.

8.3 It is important to understand that the financial impact of changes to Peterborough City Council's CTS scheme is significantly different to this Council. Peterborough as a Unitary Council receives the majority of any savings realised from any changes, around 85%, whereas this Council only benefits from 16% of any changes.

8.4 We could, if Members are in agreement, carry out the required detailed modelling on the above options to determine the impact on both this Council and the customer. Due to time constraints in the review of the scheme for 2020/21 and the time required to carry out the necessary modelling, it is proposed that the above options be considered as part of the review of the CTS scheme in 2020 to be implemented in 2021/22.

9 Next steps


9.1 This report has given the Panel an update on progress of the annual review of the Council's CTS scheme, with options to change the existing customer contribution rate and to introduce a fluctuating earnings rule.

9.2 The recommendations from this Panel will be reported to Cabinet at their meeting on 18 September 2019. If Cabinet approve any changes that require consultation, it is anticipated that this consultation will occur over an eight week period between September and November.

9.3 Ideally and subject to the timing of any consultation process and analysis of responses, the Overview and Scrutiny Panel will scrutinise the consultation responses and proposals after the consultation has ended, at their meeting on 2 December 2019. The final proposals would then be recommended to Cabinet and Council at their meetings on 13 December 2019.

9.4 If this timescale is not achieved then the Overview and Scrutiny Panel will review the consultation responses and proposals at their meeting on 13 January 2020 with the recommended final proposals being considered by Cabinet and Council at their meetings on 20 February 2020 (within the statutory deadline of 28 February 2020).

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Agenda Item No:	7	
Committee:	Cabinet	
Date:	18 September 2019	
Report Title:	Fenland Local Plan Issues and Options	

1 Purpose / Summary

For Cabinet to approve the Issues and Options version of the Local Plan for public consultation in October/November 2019.

2 Key issues

- In delivering a new Local Plan there are three rounds of statutory consultation that must be performed in order for the Plan to be legally compliant.
- The first round of consultation is called Issues and Options and a consultation document (see Appendix 1) sets out a series of questions to find out what priorities and policies should be included in the new Fenland Local Plan.
- As well as asking questions in relation to priorities and policies, this consultation also includes the call for sites process whereby landowners can submit sites for assessment for future inclusion in the Plan.
- At this stage no decision has been made and no sites have been identified.
- A further round of public consultation is scheduled to take place in Spring/Summer 2020 on the draft policies and sites.
- The Local Plan Member Working Group has provided leadership and guidance to the process to date and have commended this report to be forwarded to Cabinet for their consideration.

3 Recommendations

- It is recommended that Cabinet approve the Issues and Options version of the Local Plan for public consultation in October/November 2019.
- Cabinet delegate authority to officers to make minor, inconsequential amendments to the document prior to its publication (in order to correct matters of fact, add clarity to the reader or amend the graphic design of the report).

Wards Affected	All
Forward Plan Reference	
Portfolio Holder(s)	Cllr Dee Laws, Portfolio Holder for Planning
Report Originator(s)	Gemma Wildman, Local Plan Manager Carol Pilson, Corporate Director

Contact Officer(s)	Gemma Wildman, Local Plan Manager Carol Pilson, Corporate Director
Background Paper(s)	Local Development Scheme (LDS) 2019

4 Background / introduction

- 4.1 In February 2019 Full Council agreed to approve a timetable (known as the Local Development Scheme (LDS)) for preparing a new Local Plan for Fenland, based on the following main reasons:
- The adopted Local Plan is five years old and many of the policies, such as affordable housing could be out of date;
 - To take account of recent changes to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF); and
 - To take account of the recommendations from the Planning Advisory Service (PAS) report of August 2018.
- 4.2 The new Local Plan will set out how the district will grow and change to 2040. It will replace the Fenland Local Plan adopted in May 2014.
- 4.3 The LDS identified the Issues and Options consultation document as the first stage in the process of preparing a new Local Plan with consultation on it scheduled for October 2019.
- 4.4 The Issues and Options consultation document is attached at Appendix 1. It is structured around a questionnaire (see Section 3) which provides background information on a range of planning issues and sets out a series of questions about what could be included in the new Fenland Local Plan.
- 4.5 At this early stage no decisions have been made for the new Local Plan. For example, the Issues and Options consultation document does not include any draft policy wording, nor does not include any sites for future development.
- 4.6 In terms of future site allocations, as part of the consultation process we will ask the public, developers, landowners, agents and parish councils to suggest sites for future housing, employment, retail, leisure and other provision, that are available and deliverable. All sites will be assessed against a detailed assessment criteria and the preferred sites will be included in the next version of the Plan due for public consultation in May/June 2020.

Structure of the Issues and Options Report:

- 4.7 The Issues and Options Report will be structured around the following key questions:
- **What is your Vision for Fenland?**
- 4.8 This section will ask people to set out their vision for Fenland, what they would like the district to look like by 2040. This will help identify the important issues facing the district and what kind of policies are required to help deliver the vision.
- **How Should Fenland Grow?**
- 4.9 This section looks at how the district could grow, and includes strategic policies such as:
- Housing Growth Target
 - Economic Development

- Settlement Hierarchy and Settlement Boundaries
 - Options for distributing growth
- 4.10 The Issues and Options report explains that the Local Plan housing target must be calculated using the government standard method. This works out as 550 dwellings per year for Fenland (coincidentally, the same as the adopted Local Plan). If the Local Plan covers the period 1 April 2019 to 31 March 2040 then the Local Plan target will be **11,550** dwellings (though that figure is subject to change during the course of preparing the Local Plan due to potential government changes to the method, and more up to date data and national forecasts feeding into the calculations. That said, the expectation is that the figure is likely to be somewhere around 550 dwellings per annum throughout the 2-3 years of preparing and examining the Local Plan).
- 4.11 The report then asks people how best this level of growth should be distributed. It identifies the following six growth options:
1. Proportionate Settlement Growth
 2. Market Towns Led Growth
 3. Strategic Growth at more than one settlement
 4. New Settlements
 5. Small Site Focused
 6. Corridor Growth
- 4.12 The questions ask the public to provide comments about what they like and dislike about the above options as well as identifying their preferred option for the distribution of growth.
- 4.13 We are also interested in establishing people's views on settlement boundaries. This is an important question and an issue which will help determine what kind of Local Plan we produce (flexible or Plan led growth).
- **What policies should the new Plan include?**
- 4.14 In this section, we are interested to know what other policies the Plan could include. These other policies will be used by the Planning Team to appraise and reach decisions on all planning applications.
- 4.15 This section therefore identifies a number of topic and possible issues that could be covered, based on a review of national policy. For example:
- Climate Change
 - Health and Wellbeing
 - Design and Amenity
 - Meeting Housing Need
 - Employment
 - Community and Transport Infrastructure
 - Retail and Town Centre Uses
 - Development in the Countryside
 - Historic Environment
 - Natural Environment
 - Open Space and Recreation

- Flood and Water Management

4.16 Each topic is followed by a series of questions to help establish what policies and requirements should be included in a future draft Local Plan.

- **What policies should the new Plan include?**

- 4.17 Once the issues and questions have been established the report moves on to look at what people's priorities are.
- 4.18 The new Local Plan must be aspirational, but deliverable. If the Local Plan is excessive in its requirements, we may fail to meet the area's growth needs.
- 4.19 Therefore the Issues and Options document asks respondents to identify their top five issues.

Consultation

- 4.20 The Issues and Options report has been prepared with the guidance and leadership of the Local Plan Member Working Group, which has helped inform the preparation of the report.
- 4.21 Subject to Cabinet approval, public consultation on the Issues and Options document will take place in October and November 2019 for six weeks, in accordance with the requirements set out in the Council's Statement of Community Involvement (SCI).
- 4.22 A Town and Parish Conference is due to take place on 17 September 2019, this will provide an update on the new Local Plan and consultation process.
- 4.23 The Issues and Options consultation document and online questionnaire will be made available on the Council's website at: www.fenland.gov.uk/newlocalplan.
- 4.24 Copies of the Issues and Options consultation document and questionnaire will be made available at Fenland Hall and at the Boathouse as well as local libraries.
- 4.25 All comments received will be reviewed and will help inform the draft version of the Local Plan (due for public consultation in Spring/Summer 2020). All sites suggested to the Council during the consultation will be assessed against detailed assessment criteria.
- 4.26 Overall, the Local Plan will go through the following stages:
- Public consultation on the Issues and Options Oct/Nov 2019
 - Public consultation on the Draft Local Plan –May/June 2020
 - Public consultation on the final version of the plan –February/March 2021
 - Submission to Government –Spring 2021
 - Independent examination –Summer/Autumn 2021
 - Adoption –early 2022

5 Considerations

- 5.1 Cabinet is asked to consider the Issues and Options consultation document, and to determine whether to approve it for public consultation.

6 Effect on corporate objectives

- 6.1 The production of a new Local Plan will allow planning policies to be brought fully up-to-date with corporate objectives which amongst other things embrace growth for the area to improve the health, well-being and opportunity of Fenland residents. The Objectives identified in section 3 of the Issues and Options report link to the corporate objectives.

7 Community impact

- 7.1 Producing a new Local Plan allows for full community involvement with three stages of public consultation as outlined in the LDS. There is an opportunities to attend public hearings at the examination stage.
- 7.2 However, at this early stage in the process the Council are asking for the public's views on what could be included in a new Local Plan and what issues need to be addressed.

8 Conclusions

- 8.1 The attached Issues and Options consultation document is recommended for approval for public consultation in October 2019.



Fenland Local Plan

Issues and Options Consultation

Draft for consideration by Cabinet on 18 September 2019

October 2019

Appendix 1

OS Map - Copyright Note

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Appendix 1

The Future for Fenland

Introduction by the Leader of Fenland District Council - Councillor Chris Boden

As the Leader of Fenland District Council, I am pleased to present to you the Fenland Local Plan Issues and Options consultation document. This is an exciting time for Fenland as the Council starts preparing the new Local Plan that will set out the vision and policies to deliver the sustainable growth for Fenland to 2040.



I am passionate about consultation. I do not want to present a document to you which sets out a preferred approach on all matters, and asks whether you agree. That is not proper consultation.

I want to present to you the full range of options, and seek views on your preferences. Or, even better, you could give us new ideas or options we should consider.

I want to set out a simple, jargon free explanation of what this Plan can and cannot achieve, so you can make informed views.

This is your first opportunity to help shape the future of Fenland.

I know you all care passionately about Fenland and want to help ensure that the towns and villages grow and prosper in the best possible way to bring benefits to all local communities

We really value your views and input in the creation of the new Local Plan for Fenland. I encourage you to get involved at this early stage and to help shape the future growth of our district.

There will be more opportunities for you to get involved at later stages. Please keep an eye on our website at www.fenland.gov.uk/newlocalplan. But this first stage is, I believe, the most important – you can genuinely influence the direction of this new Plan for Fenland.

How to use this document

You can easily navigate this document by using the following colour coded sections, explained below.

1. Introduction

This section explains the purpose of the document and how you can make comments.

2. What is Your Vision For Fenland?

We want your views on what Fenland should be like in the future.

3. Questionnaire

The questionnaire section provides background information on a range of planning issues and poses a series of questions.

Part A – How Should Fenland Grow?

We would like to hear your views about options for distributing housing and employment growth across the district.

Part B – What Policies Should the Plan Include?

We are inviting your views on a range of important planning issues, such as design quality and standards for new houses which could be included in the new Local Plan

Part C – What are your Priorities for the Future of Fenland?

We want the new Local Plan to reflect your main priorities and concerns.

4. Neighbourhood Planning

This section explains the role of Neighbourhood Plans and the implications of preparing a new Local Plan for Fenland.

5. Site Assessment

We are inviting you to suggest new sites for future housing, jobs, green spaces and other uses that could be included in the new Local Plan. This section explains how you can submit sites and green spaces, and how these will be assessed.

6. Glossary of Terms

Throughout this document we have tried to avoid technical planning terms, but occasionally we must use them to comply with specific legal requirements under which this document has been prepared. Any technical terms are normally explained within the text. Where this is not possible, an explanation is provided in the glossary.

1. Introduction

What is the Local Plan?

A Local Plan is a document which explains to everyone where opportunities for growth in jobs and homes should be taken, how parts of the district will be protected or enhanced further, and what other infrastructure (such as schools, roads and play areas) are needed.

When finalised, it will set a clear ambition for the Council and community as to where development should go (and where it should not), what sort of development is needed, and benefits the Council should ask for through development (e.g. affordable housing).

But, we haven't decided any of this. Far from it.

We want you to tell us the 'where', 'when' and 'what'. This consultation document gives you that opportunity to do so.

By the end of the process of engaging with you and finalising a Local Plan, it will ultimately contain policies which are used in making decisions on planning applications.

It also provides a strategic framework for Neighbourhood Plans, which can be developed by your local Town or Parish Council if they choose to do so ([See Section 4](#)).

Does Fenland already have a Local Plan?

Yes, but it is now five years old (adopted in May 2014) and in need of a thorough revision. This new Plan will not simply roll forward the existing Plan and its proposals. This is a fresh start, and we are looking for your fresh ideas.

However, whilst we are preparing this new Local Plan, the May 2014 Local Plan will continue to be the basis upon which planning decisions will be made.

The implications of reviewing the Local Plan on Neighbourhood Plans is set out in [section 4](#)

Why do we need a new one?

Much has changed since May 2014.

Nationally, new government ambitions for planning were published in the [National Planning Policy Framework \(NPPF\)](#) in July 2018¹ together with substantial updates to other [national guidance](#)². Brexit could of course influence considerably how we grow and develop in the future, and could significantly influence migration trends in areas such as Fenland. We need to be mindful of all these matters, though not attempt to 'second guess' too much what we think will happen in the future.

At the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough level, we now have a Mayor and a 'combined authority', with ambitious proposals relating to growth, infrastructure and the environment. The Cambridgeshire Local Nature Partnership has a new vision to 'double land for nature'. All of these matters will need to be considered when preparing this new Plan.

¹ With subsequent minor amendments published in February 2019.

² See National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) - <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/planning-practice-guidance>

1. Introduction

More locally, Fenland District Council has set out a new vision and business plan for the area, which in summary is to:

Quality Organisation Supporting effective delivery of our priorities and services	Communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Support vulnerable members of our community• Promote health and wellbeing for all• Work with partners to promote Fenland through culture and heritage
	Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Deliver a high performing refuse, recycling and street cleansing service• Work with partners and the community on projects that improve the environment and our street scene• Work with partners to keep people safe in their neighbourhoods by reducing crime and anti-social behaviour and promoting social cohesion
	Economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Attract new businesses, jobs and opportunities whilst supporting our existing businesses in Fenland• Promote and enable housing growth, economic growth and regeneration across Fenland• Promote and lobby for infrastructure improvements across the district

The Local Plan will help considerably in achieving these ambitions.

And many more things have happened since 2014 which we need to consider for this new Plan. We'd like to hear from you if there is something we should take into account, no matter how big or small, local or national, it is.

What is in this consultation document?

We are currently at the first stage in the process of preparing a new Local Plan. We are consulting on issues and options to help identify what the new Local Plan should include and the type of policies required. Your views are essential at this early stage in helping to shape the growth of the district.

The **Questionnaire (Section 3)** includes a series of questions about planning issues relevant to the new Fenland Local Plan which we would like to hear your views on. You do not need to answer all questions, and can pick topics or issues you are interested in.

The questions are accompanied by background information about different topics to help you make informed opinions. The questions are set out in purple boxes, like the example below. However, you can let us know your views on any matter if you think it is relevant to preparing this Local Plan.

Questions

There are purple boxes throughout the document, these indicate a question we would welcome your thoughts on.

1. Introduction

How do I submit my comments?

This is the first opportunity for you to make comments on the emerging Plan and we encourage you to let us know your views and help inform the future of the district.

The [online questionnaire](#), and further information about this Issues and Options consultation, is available at: www.fenland.gov.uk/newlocalplan. The [online questionnaire](#) is our preferred method to receive comments. Alternatively you can download the questionnaire ([Form A](#)) from the Council's website.

Copies of the Plan and questionnaire are available at:

- the Council's customer service centre at Fenland Hall, County Road, March, Cambs, PE15 8NQ;
- the Boathouse Business Centre, Harbour Square, Wisbech, Cambs PE13 3BH; and
- local libraries in the district.

The [Form A](#) questionnaire can be returned by e-mail or post to:

localplan@fenland.gov.uk

or

Local Plan Team
Fenland District Council
Fenland Hall
County Road
March
PE15 8NQ

Please clearly show exactly which question or which part of the document you are commenting on.

The closing date for all comments is **11.59 pm on XX November 2019**. Please note that all comments will be available to view on the Council's website and will not be confidential. All comments received will be taken into consideration and will help inform the draft Local Plan to be published for public consultation in Spring/Summer 2020.

How we will protect your data

All personal information that you provide will be used solely by Fenland District Council for the purpose of the consultation on the Fenland Local Plan. Please note that each comment and the name of the person who made the comment will be featured on our website. Comments will not be confidential. This information will be held by the Council for four months after the adoption of the Local Plan.

Any personal information you give us will only be used in accordance with principles found in the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR). Please see www.fenland.gov.uk/privacy for further information.

The [Online Questionnaires](#) is provided by Survey Monkey a third party processors which is GDPR compliant and has its own privacy policy³

What is the process for updating the plan?

³ <https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/mp/policy/privacy-policy/>

1. Introduction

This is the first stage in a lengthy process of producing a new Local Plan. This Issues and Options document captures the key issues that we already know about and sets a steer as to how we will tackle the gaps. It does not yet include specific policies or specific allocations for new development.

A draft Local Plan incorporating draft policies and suggested sites for development will be published for consultation in Spring/Summer 2020. The Local Plan timetable is summarised below:

2019			2020												2021												2022				
Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	March	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	March	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb			
1							2										3		4	5										6	7

Stage	Description
1	<p>Issues and Options Consultation</p> <p>Current Stage – October and November 2019</p> <p>Opportunity for interested parties and statutory consultees to consider the options for the Plan before the draft document is produced.</p>
2	<p>Draft Local Plan</p> <p>Opportunity for interested parties and statutory consultees to consider the preferred policies and sites for the Plan before the final document is produced.</p>
3	<p>Proposed Submission Public Consultation</p> <p>The Council publishes the Local Plan for a six week period when formal representations can be made prior to submission to government.</p>
4	<p>Submission</p> <p>The Council submits the Local Plan to the Secretary of State together with the representations received during the Proposed Submission stage (Stage 3).</p>
5	<p>Independent Examination Hearing</p> <p>Held by a Planning Inspector into objections raised on the Local Plan.</p>
6	<p>Inspector's Report</p> <p>This will report whether the Plan is 'Sound' or 'Unsound'. The Inspector may make recommendations to make the Plan 'Sound'.</p>
7	<p>Adoption of the Local Plan</p> <p>Final stage; the Council will need to formally adopt the Local Plan and it will then be used in making planning decisions.</p>

For further information about the Local Plan, including supporting evidence documents please visit: www.fenland.gov.uk/newlocalplan

Local Plan Evidence Base

National policy requires that the preparation and review of all policies should be underpinned by relevant and up-to-date evidence.

A number of evidence documents are currently being prepared which will inform and justify policies contained in the draft Local Plan, for example:

- Housing and employment needs
- Development viability

1. Introduction

- Transport
- Flood risk and the water environment

This library of evidence documents is available on the [Council's website](#) and will continue to grow as the Local Plan progresses to adoption.

Additional Consultation

As well as consulting on this Issues and Options document we are also consulting on the following:

- **Site Allocations**

We are also giving you the opportunity to suggest new sites for future housing, Gypsy and Traveller pitches or sites, employment, retail, or leisure that could be included in the new Local Plan.

This Issues and Options document does not include any sites for new development. To submit potential sites for consideration please fill in the [online questionnaire](#), or Site Suggestion form ([Form B](#)).

Please see [Section 5](#) for further details about the site selection process and how to submit a site.

Following detailed site assessment, the preferred sites will be included in the draft version of the Local Plan due for public consultation in Spring/Summer 2020.

- **Local Green Spaces**

Local communities have the opportunity through the production of the Local Plan (or through their own Neighbourhood Plan) to identify Local Green Spaces for designation.

We are therefore asking you to nominate sites, by filling in the [online Local Green Space Nomination Form](#), or [Form C](#).

Full details about how to nominate a site and the assessment criteria are set out in [Section 5](#) of this plan.

Following detailed assessment, the preferred areas will be included in the draft version of the Local Plan due for public consultation in Spring/Summer 2020.

- **Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report**

It is a statutory requirement for Local Planning Authorities to carry out an appraisal of the sustainability of their Local Plan. Sustainability Appraisal (SA) is an iterative process undertaken alongside the preparation of the Local Plan. It assesses the extent to which policies in the Plan deliver development which is socially, environmentally and economically sustainable.

The [SA Scoping Report](#) is the first stage in the SA process. Through an assessment of the current social, environmental and economic situation in Fenland, the SA Scoping Report identifies which issues need to be addressed and identifies objectives to test the Plan and policies against. This assessment will help to establish the Issues, Vision and Objectives of the emerging Local Plan.

If you have any specific comments on the SA Scoping Report please let us know by using the above e-mail or postal address.

2. What is Your Vision For Fenland?

A Local Plan should set out a clear vision for what an area will be like at the end of the Plan's life (known as a plan period) and a list of objectives intended to achieve that vision. The vision and objectives in a Local Plan should provide a framework for the policies in the plan to sit within.

To help you think of a vision for the new Plan, below is a copy of the vision in the 2014 Local Plan. However, you don't need to follow this example – we'd like to know what your vision is.

Fenland Local Plan 2014- Our Vision Statement

Fenland will nurture, grow and promote its market towns and villages. They will be attractive places to live, set within our unique and protected Fens landscape.

Everyone will recognise the increase in opportunities presented to them, whether that be improved health and wellbeing, new homes, a wide range of new job opportunities or places to play.

Between 2011 and 2031, Fenland will be a growing district, growing by 11,000 new homes, meeting the housing needs of all our communities. There will be increased employment opportunities across the district and a bolstered tourism economy, and existing businesses will be encouraged to expand. Growth in homes and jobs will be closely linked to each other, with new infrastructure such as schools, roads, health facilities and open space provision planned and provided at the same time as the new buildings.

Growth will be focussed on our four market towns. But villages will not be left behind, with appropriate and sensitive development being permitted to ensure they remain thriving local communities.

New development will be safe and of a high quality design, with higher environmental standards than homes built in previous decades. The natural and historic environment will be protected and enhanced, with new development taking into account the surroundings of the area in which it would be situated.

Through growth, current issues such as health inequalities, community deprivation, infrastructure deficit and low skills, will be tackled and addressed. Growth will attract investment, attract businesses and attract new residents to the district.

Overall, sustainable growth will build a stronger, better and more sustainable Fenland.

Tell us what Fenland should be like in the future. Please go to the [online questionnaire](#)

Question 1: The Vision

What is your vision for Fenland - what should Fenland be like in the future?

As well as a vision, we need to establish some 'objectives' for the Local Plan. The objectives are particularly useful when we undertake a 'sustainability appraisal' of the emerging policies in future drafts of this Plan.

At this early stage in preparing a new Local Plan, we must, for legislative reasons, consult on a set of objectives which will be used as part of the sustainability appraisal process. We are doing this as a separate consultation document entitled [Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report](#) which has been issued for

2. What is Your Vision For Fenland?

public consultation alongside this Issues and Options document. The intention is to use the same objectives in both the sustainability appraisal process and in the Local Plan.

If you have any comments you would like to make on the SA Scoping Report, especially its proposed set of objectives, please contact us using our e-mail or postal address.

3. Questionnaire

This part of the document includes a series of questions about the new Fenland Local Plan. We would like to know your views on:

Part A – How Should Fenland Grow?

Part B – What Policies Should the Plan Include?

Part C – What Are Your Priorities For the Future of Fenland?

Please read the following section which sets out the background and context for different topics, before answering the questions.

Please fill in the [online questionnaire](#) or alternatively download [Form A](#) from our website (www.fenland.gov.uk/newlocalplan) and return:

- By email to localplan@fenland.gov.uk; or
- By post to Local Plan Team; Fenland District Council, Fenland Hall, County Road, March PE15 8NQ

You do not need to answer all questions, you can select topics or issues you are interested in.

3. Questionnaire

Part A – How Should Fenland Grow?

Part 3A of the questionnaire sets out the different options for growth in Fenland, focusing on the following topic areas:

- **Housing Growth Target** – How many homes should we aim to build?
- **Settlement Hierarchy** – How should we rank settlements based on their size, range of services and facilities.
- **Settlement Boundaries** – should we put firm development lines around the villages?
- **Overall Distribution of Growth** – how should growth be distributed?

What is the Housing and Jobs Growth target for Fenland?

As a starting point, we must use the government's standard method to calculate the number of new homes needed in Fenland. This figure is known as our 'Local Housing Need'.

As of March 2019, the Local Housing Need figure is calculated at **550 dwellings per year for Fenland**. This is, coincidentally, exactly the same as the annual figure in the adopted Local Plan 2014. Over the past five years, Fenland has delivered an average of 430 dwellings per year, so a figure of 550 is about 120 dwellings more than what we have recently achieved.

The Local Housing Need figure itself is adjusted by government each year, which can make it tricky during the preparation of a Plan (because the number can change through the process).

Only on an exceptional basis can a council apply a different target in its Local Plan to the 'Local Housing Need' figure set by government. In simple terms, a council would have to demonstrate that the 'Local Housing Need' figure is inappropriate and/or incapable of being met in the local area. Such exceptions could be that there simply is insufficient suitable land available, because of, for example, flood risk, Green Belt or the district has already grown to its administrative boundaries. Whilst Fenland has its challenges to accommodate growth, such as flood risk, it is extremely unlikely that a scenario will exist that we simply could not meet our 'Local Housing Need' national requirement.

National policy and guidance make it clear that this Local Housing Need figure should normally be treated as a minimum. Fenland could, if it had good reason to do so, plan for more than this amount. Or, we may be required to take some growth from an area which cannot meet all its needs, though at the current time, there are no known unmet requirements from neighbouring authorities.

To identify what employment land is required in Fenland, the Council will carry out an employment needs assessment which will look at economic models and forecasts to work out what our jobs growth targets should be, and what sort of employment land is needed. This will also help identify the most sustainable location for employment growth.

National policy also requires a Local Plan to cover a minimum 15 year period, from adoption. We think the end of this Local Plan should be 31 March 2040, which will be about 18 years from adoption. This slightly exceeds national minimum requirements.

Consequently, if 2040 is the end date, the total Local Housing Need for Fenland will be 11,550 dwellings between 2019 and 2040.

Question 2: Housing Need

3. Questionnaire

Part A – How Should Fenland Grow?

2a) This new Plan must have an end date of at least 2037. We think 2040 is about right. What do you think, and why?

2b) Government policy says our minimum housing target should be 11,550 new homes, to 2040. To attempt to go lower would highly likely breach national policy, but we could go higher. Should we? If so, why?

2c) We will undertake research to determine what appropriate job growth and employment land targets should be, and consult with you at the next stage on these findings. In the meantime, do you have any views on what sort of jobs we should try to facilitate, and what locations would be suitable for new employment land?

Settlement Hierarchy

A settlement hierarchy ranks towns and villages according to their size, range of services and facilities. The purpose of the hierarchy is to guide decision-making about the scale and location of new development and provision of new services and facilities, helping to achieve more sustainable communities.

Larger settlements have a greater population, and usually have more services and facilities. They generally provide sustainable locations for growth. However, this may not always be the case. A larger settlement may, for example, have physical constraints that cannot be overcome and therefore restrict the scope for further development. Conversely, a smaller settlement may be well located and with few constraints, and suitable for new development on a scale that might be accompanied by the provision of new services and facilities.

In 2014 the adopted Local Plan (Policy LP3) identified the following settlement hierarchy for the district:

Settlement Category	Villages
Market Towns	Wisbech, March, Chatteris and Whittlesey
Growth Villages	Wimblington, Doddington, Manea, and Wisbech St Mary
Limited Growth Villages	Coates, Elm, Friday Bridge, Leverington, and Parson Drove
Small Villages	Benwick, Christchurch, Eastrea, Gorefield, Guyhirn, Murrow, Newton, Turves, and Tydd St Giles
Other Villages	Church End, Coldham, Collett's Bridge, Foul Anchor, Pondersbridge, Rings End, Tholomas Drove and Tydd Gote

As part of the evidence base for the emerging Local Plan, a Settlement Hierarchy Study will be undertaken. Services and facilities will be reviewed to establish the most suitable category for each settlement.

At this early stage in the process, and to help the Council prepare that Study, we would like your views on the Settlement Hierarchy for Fenland and the position of market towns and villages.

Question 3: Settlement Hierarchy

3a) Do you agree or disagree that we should have a settlement hierarchy policy?

3b) What are your views on the existing settlement hierarchy? Should there be different categories?

3. Questionnaire

Part A – How Should Fenland Grow?

3c) Should any villages be moved up or down the hierarchy? If so, which ones and why?

Settlement Boundaries

Settlement boundaries are used to define the edge of a town or village. The primary purposes of settlement boundaries are to prevent the spread of development into the countryside, to maintain the character of each settlement, and control the growth within and outside each settlement in accordance with the settlement hierarchy. Settlement boundaries provide a clear approach to where future growth can take place and provide certainty, in line with the 'plan-led' system which government advocates.

Land outside of settlement boundaries is classified as 'countryside', and different policies apply. Policies in the countryside tend to be much more restrictive in terms of what sort of development is acceptable. Therefore settlement boundaries provide more certainty (rather than flexibility) as to what development can go where.

Even if this new Plan includes settlement boundaries, planning policies should also support the rural economy and enable the expansion of rural business and diversification of agricultural business. In exceptional circumstances, national policy supports housing development in the countryside that meets an identified local need for affordable homes.

Old Local Plans for Fenland included settlement boundaries, but the Local Plan adopted in 2014 removed those boundaries to allow for greater flexibility to support growth, but in doing so reduced certainty as to where development may or may not go.

The Council is considering the possibility of re-introducing settlement boundaries in this new Local Plan in order to provide greater certainty for residents and developers.

Question 4: Settlement Boundaries

4a) Would you support the re-introduction of settlement boundaries?

4b) If the Plan includes settlement boundaries, should the supporting policy result in:

i) a hard boundary with strict policies that limit development outside of the boundary?

or

ii) a flexible policy that could allow development which adjoins the settlement boundary, provided a number of sustainability criteria are met?

4c) If the Plan is to include settlement boundaries, how should we go about determining where they go? You may even want to send us a map of where you think the boundary should go, for any settlement you have an interest in.

3. Questionnaire

Part A – How Should Fenland Grow?

If it is decided that settlement boundaries should be included, a Settlement Boundary review will be undertaken. This will also link to the site assessment process and the selection of development allocations. This work, once completed, will be made available to support the draft version of the Plan due for consultation in Spring/Summer 2020.

How should the future growth of Fenland be distributed?

Once the Local Plan growth targets for homes and jobs have been identified it is then important to establish how this proposed growth should be distributed across the district. This section looks at the various options for how growth can be distributed. We would like to know your views on this important element of the new Local Plan.

In the adopted Local Plan (2014), Policy LP4 and LP6 set out the distribution of growth across geographical areas, with a focus of growth to the market towns.

Fenland Local Plan (2014) Growth and Distribution

	District Total	Wisbech	March	Chatteris	Whittlesey	Other Locations
Total Housing (Number)	11,000 (100%)	3,000 (27%)	4,200 (38%)	1,600 (15%)	1,000 (9%)	1,200 (11%)
Total Employment (Hectares (ha))	85ha (100%)	30ha (35%)	30ha (35%)	20ha (24%)	5ha (6%)	0 (0%)

The following pages set out six possible options to deliver growth. At this early stage, we would like to know your views.

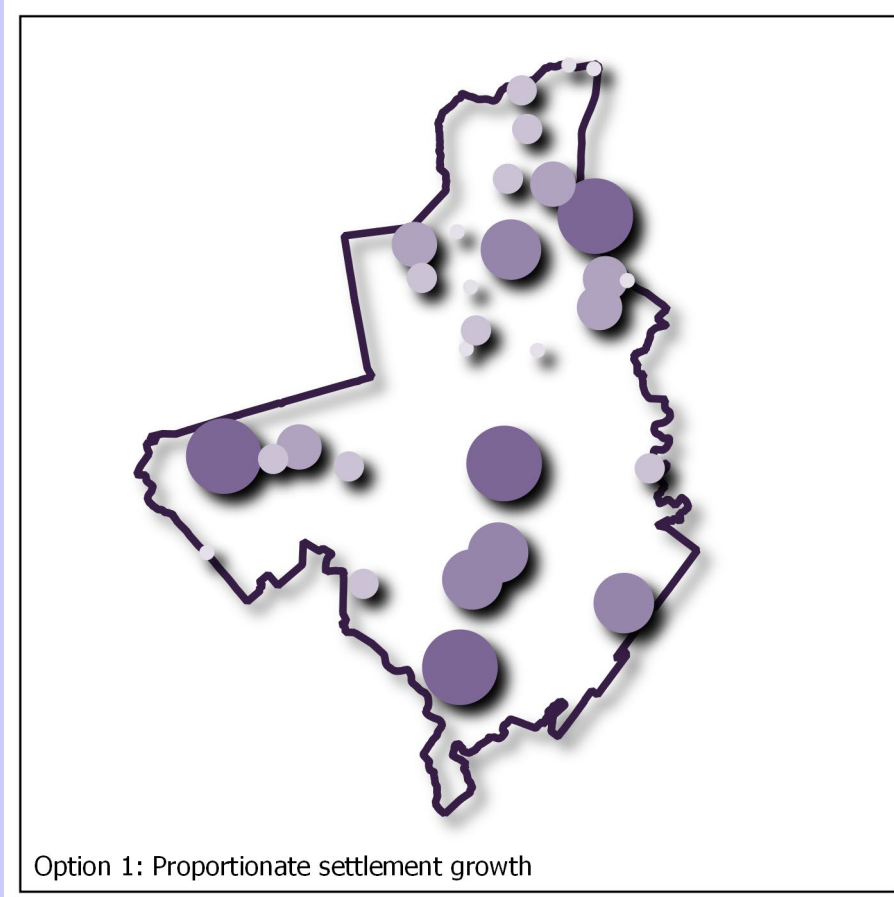
The sustainability of these options will also be assessed through the Sustainability Appraisal to ensure the chosen option is sustainable and deliverable.

3. Questionnaire

Part A – How Should Fenland Grow?

Option 1: Proportionate Settlement Growth

Each settlement receives growth proportionate to the size of its population. For example, a village with 5% of the district's total population would receive approximately 5% of total new development.

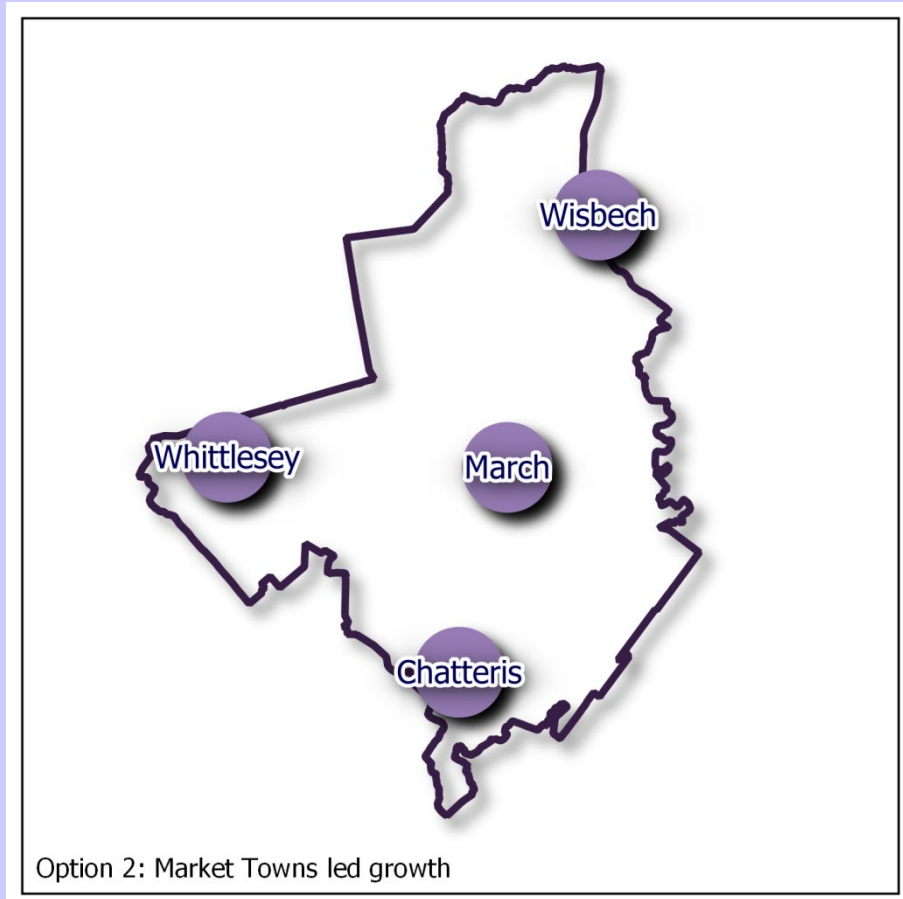


3. Questionnaire

Part A – How Should Fenland Grow?

Option 2: Market Towns Led Growth

New development is mainly directed to the market towns of Wisbech, March, Whittlesey and Chatteris, with the remainder distributed across villages. For example, 90% of growth is allocated to the market towns, 10% to villages.



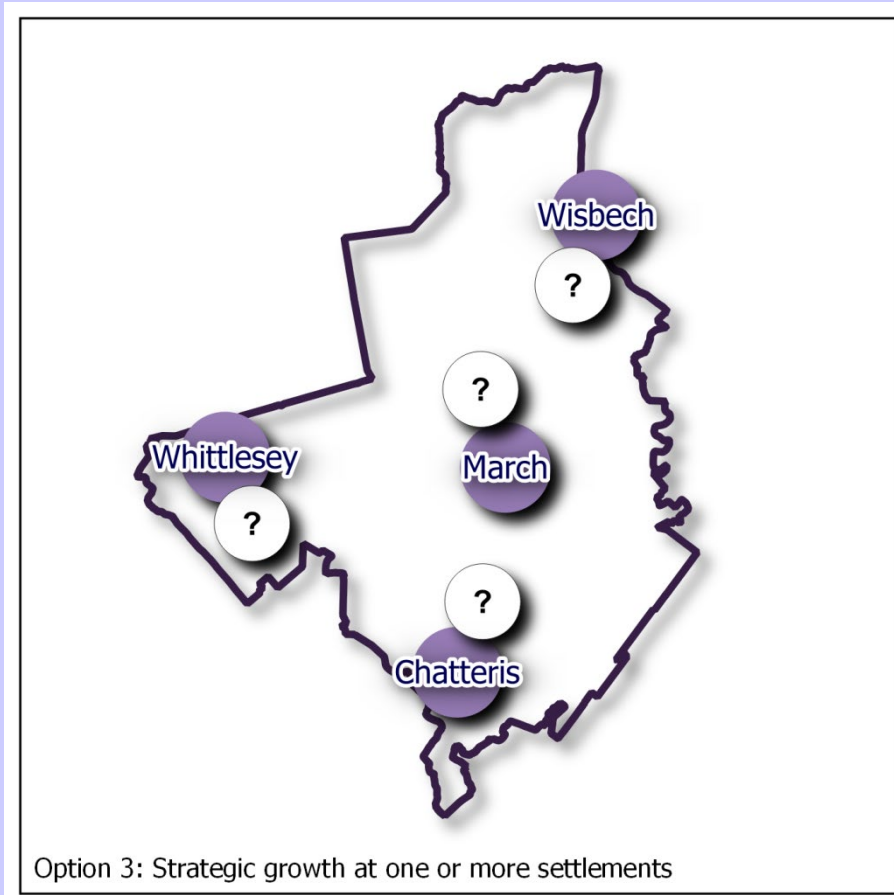
3. Questionnaire

Part A – How Should Fenland Grow?

Option 3: Strategic Growth at One or More Settlements

Growth is focused principally in one or more existing settlements. For example, through significant expansion of Wisbech and/or another market town.

This option does not assume that all growth would be accommodated in this way, but would still allow for small development of existing towns and villages.



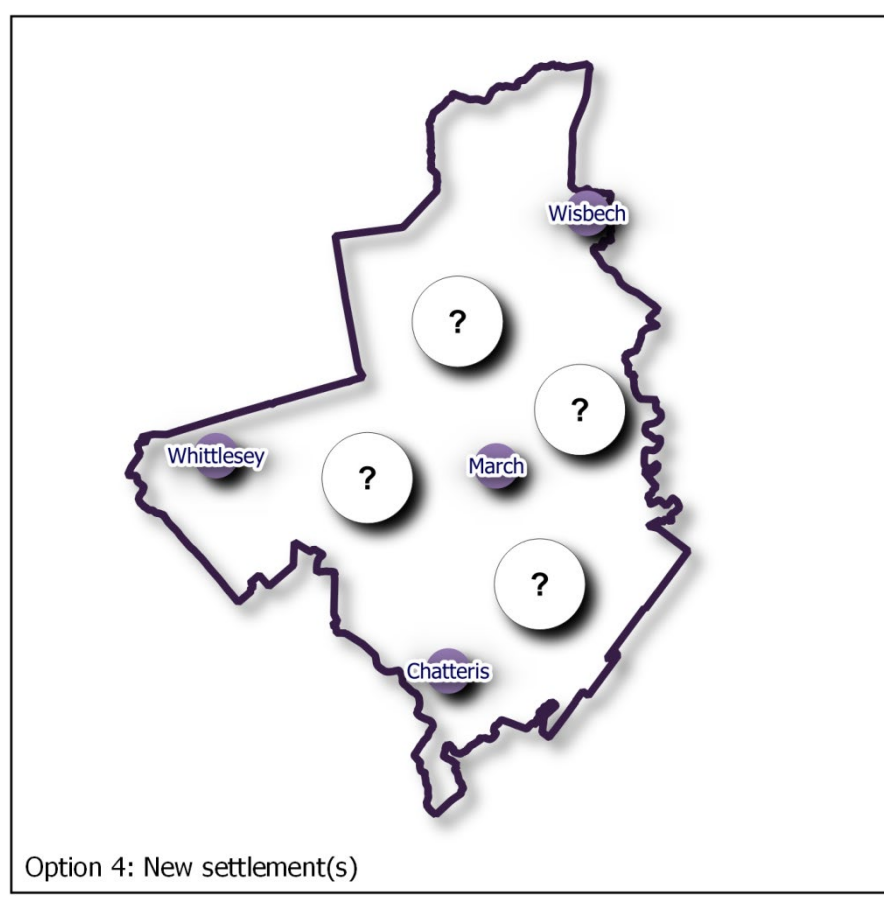
3. Questionnaire

Part A – How Should Fenland Grow?

Option 4: New Settlement(s)

Growth could be delivered at one or more entirely new settlements, for example, the creation of a new town or village, distinct and separate from existing settlements.

This option does not assume that all growth would be accommodated in this way, but would still allow for small development of existing towns and villages

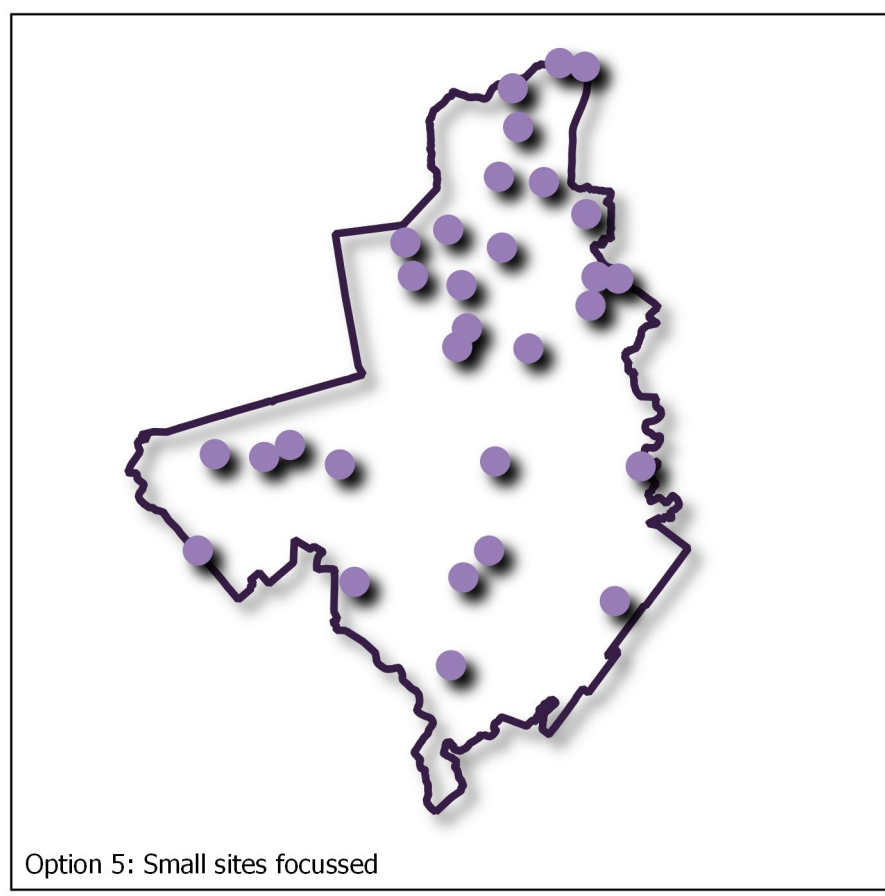


3. Questionnaire

Part A – How Should Fenland Grow?

Option 5: Small Site Focus

New development will take place across many small sites, which are typically built out more quickly than larger sites. This option prioritises delivery of growth, rather than necessarily sustainable growth. For example, small sites could be located anywhere in the district, probably increasing the amount of development in villages and rural areas.



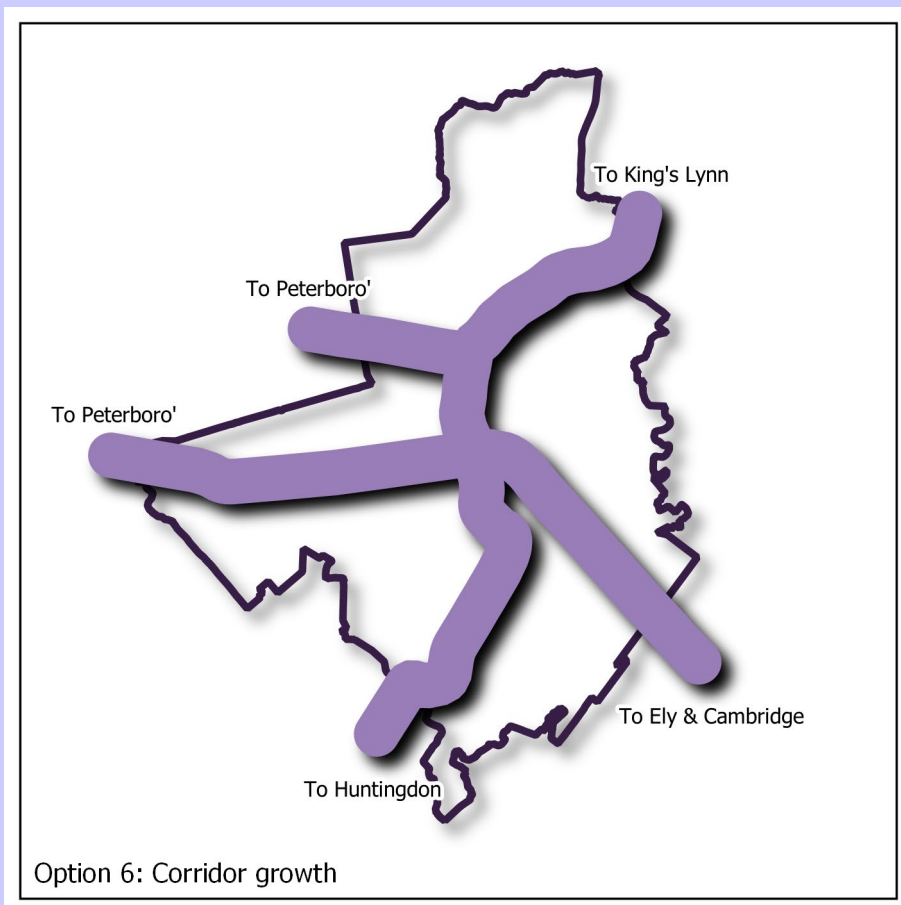
3. Questionnaire

Part A – How Should Fenland Grow?

Option 5: Corridor Growth

New development is directed to settlements located along main transport routes. For example:

- East – west (Rail) from Whittlesey, March to Manea including villages located between; and/or
- East – west (Road A47) Guyhirn and Wisbech, including villages in between
- North – south from Wisbech, March to Chatteris, including villages located between.



3. Questionnaire

Part A – How Should Fenland Grow?

The above options set different ways that the future growth of the district could be delivered.

Please let us know which options you like or dislike and why. Please let us know your preferred option. This may include elements of each option or a completely new approach.

Question 5: Growth Options

- 5a) Which option/s do you prefer?
- 5b) What are the positive and negatives of the option/s?
- 5c) Which option/s do you dislike and why?
- 5d) Are there alternative options, not shown above, which should be considered?

How are sites identified to deliver the growth?

Generally, the 2014 Local Plan indicates broad areas for growth, rather than identifying specific sites. To meet new national policy, we will need to be more specific for the new Local Plan.

We would like to invite the submission of sites for possible inclusion in the new Local Plan. If you would like to submit a site for consideration or understand more about how sites will be chosen, please see [Section 5](#).

Settlement Policies

The current Fenland Local Plan includes a section which sets out specific policies and requirements for each of the market towns. This includes a brief description of the town and a key diagram that highlights areas for growth. However, there are alternative options, as set out in the following question.

Question 6: Settlement Policies

- 6a) Should the Plan include:
 - Option 1. Bespoke policies for each market town only?;
 - Option 2. Bespoke policies for each market town and other higher-order settlements, such as large villages; or
 - Option 3. Bespoke policies for all settlements in the settlement hierarchy?

3. Questionnaire

Part B – What Policies Should the Plan Include?

In Part 3B we are seeking your views on a range of important planning issues, such as design quality and minimum standards for new development, which could be included in the new Local Plan. These will then be put into policies, which will be used to make decisions on all planning applications.

It is important to note that policies included in the Local Plan must comply with national policy (the NPPF) and other national guidance (the NPPG). Policies must also be based on evidence to justify what we are asking for.

For some planning issues national policy is very specific about what we can and can't do. For other issues there is greater scope to respond to specific local circumstances.

We will also need to consider development viability and make sure that requirements which are included in the Plan will not make future development unviable.

Following a review of national policy and guidance, we have identified the following topics and issues which the new Local Plan could address through its policies:

- **Health and Wellbeing**
- **Climate Change**
- **Design and Amenity**
- **Meeting Housing Need**
- **Employment**
- **Retail and Town Centre Uses**
- **Community and Transport Infrastructure**
- **Historic Environment**
- **Natural Environment**
- **Open Space and Recreation**
- **Flood and Water Management**

The next few pages of this document discusses the above topics and explains the requirements of national policy and the options available for the new Local Plan, and includes a series of questions.

3. Questionnaire

Part B – What Policies Should the Plan Include?

Health and Wellbeing

The government's health profile for Fenland⁴ shows that life expectancy, obesity and physical activity are all significantly worse than the England average. It is an objective of the Council to turn that around and promote health and wellbeing for all.

National policy recognises that planning policy can have a major influence on helping to create healthy, inclusive and safe communities by setting design and quality standards for new homes, ensuring good access to open space and other community facilities such as jobs, schools, shops, doctors, libraries and community centres.

Obesity and the associated health problems are issues facing many local councils and are a major public health concern. Nationally concerns have been raised about the over concentration of hot food takeaways in certain areas, particularly the proximity to schools. Local Plan policies can have an influence on the location and concentration of such uses, and could include policies to promote healthier eating.

The current Fenland Local Plan supports the importance of health in the planning process and includes a policy setting out such requirements. This policy also says that *'For major developments, the Council will require a Health Impact Assessment (HIA) to be submitted with a planning application'*. This means that applications should take into account the wide range of health-related factors early in their preparation of a scheme, to demonstrate that health has been fully considered.

Question 7: Health and Wellbeing

7a) Do you think the new Local Plan should include specific policies about health and wellbeing?

7b) Do you think the Local Plan should include a policy to restrict the amount, or location of, hot food takeaways?

7c) Do you agree or disagree that developers of large schemes should submit a Health Impact Assessment to show how the new development will help achieve healthy and safe communities?

Climate Change

"Climate change is one of the greatest challenges of our time", according to many global and national organisations. The G20 group of the world's richest nations has stated so, as did the World Health Organisation. David Attenborough has championed such views, and demonstrated such threats via television to living rooms around the world.

The national planning policy framework devotes an entire chapter to meeting the challenges of climate change, and says the planning system should:

⁴ <https://fingertips.phe.org.uk/profile/health-profiles>

3. Questionnaire

Part B – What Policies Should the Plan Include?

“shape places in ways that contribute to radical reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, minimise vulnerability and improve resilience; encourage the reuse of existing resources, including the conversion of existing buildings; and support renewable and low carbon energy and associated infrastructure”

It specifically says Local Plans should:

“take a proactive approach to mitigating and adapting to climate change, taking into account the long-term implications for flood risk, coastal change, water supply, biodiversity and landscapes, and the risk of overheating from rising temperatures”

“Policies should support appropriate measures to ensure the future resilience of communities and infrastructure to climate change impacts.”

Not only is it national policy for Local Plans to consider climate change matters, but it is a legal requirement to do so. The Planning Act ⁵ requires local planning authorities to include in their Local Plans:

“policies designed to secure that the development and use of land in the local planning authority’s area contribute to the mitigation of, and adaptation to, climate change”.

In preparing this new Local Plan we intend to provide a wide-ranging set of policies which will demonstrate Fenland’s leadership in tackling and adapting to climate change.

We welcome your views on how best to achieve this. The following lists topic areas where we believe planning policies could be created for Fenland, and your views as to which of these we should proceed with would be appreciated:

- **Renewable Energy**

National policy says Local Plans should help increase the use and supply of renewable and low carbon energy and heat. Local Plans should:

- a) provide a positive strategy for energy from these sources, that maximises the potential for suitable development, while ensuring that adverse impacts are addressed satisfactorily (including cumulative landscape and visual impacts);*
- b) consider identifying suitable areas for renewable and low carbon energy sources, and supporting infrastructure, where this would help secure their development; and*
- c) identify opportunities for development to draw its energy supply from decentralised, renewable or low carbon energy supply systems and for colocating potential heat customers and suppliers.”*

Question 8: Renewable Energy

⁵ Section 19(1A) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004

3. Questionnaire

Part B – What Policies Should the Plan Include?

8a) Should the Local Plan require (rather than just encourage) developers to incorporate renewable energy generation?

8b) Should the Local Plan allocate specific areas in Fenland where commercial windfarms would, in principle, be suitable?

8c) are there any opportunities to co-locate new development with existing or new renewable/low carbon energy supply systems?

- **Energy Efficiency**

Local Plans can set energy performance (or energy efficiency) standards for new housing that are higher than the Building Regulations, up to a set level⁶.

Question 9: Energy Efficiency

9a) Should the Local Plan require developers to go beyond basic Building Regulation minimum standards, and build homes and other buildings with greater energy efficiency?

- **Facilitating a Low Carbon Future**

It is likely our future energy demands will be met by electricity generated from low carbon sources (e.g. renewable or nuclear energy). This means gas in homes and petrol/diesel in cars will likely become a thing of the past, quite possibly before the end date of this new Local Plan (2040).

There is currently no requirement for electric car charging points; national policy only says to enable them in the future. Therefore, it is up to local policies to determine if this should become a local requirement or not. However, government is currently consulting on changes to Building Regulations which could mean in the future all new homes must have electric charging points.

Question 10: Facilitating Low Carbon Future

10a) Should the Local Plan ensure buildings are designed to minimise energy use, by taking in to account layout, building orientation and landscaping?

10b) Should the Local Plan encourage or require large scale proposals to increase the use and supply of low carbon energy and heat infrastructure to new homes and buildings?

10c) Should the Local Plan require all new development to put in place vehicle electric charging points?

10d) Should the Local Plan require new development to be entirely electric based (i.e. not connected to

⁶ the equivalent of [Level 4 of the Code for Sustainable Homes](#).

3. Questionnaire

Part B – What Policies Should the Plan Include?

the gas network), thereby future proofing the development to how homes and businesses will be powered in the future?

Minimise Carbon Losses from Wider Activities

Whilst using gas, petrol and diesel to power our homes and cars is an obvious contributor to greenhouse emissions and climate change, there are other less obvious activities which can result in high levels of greenhouse emissions. In Fenland, the biggest contributor is through the farming of peat soils.

Question 11: Minimise Carbon Losses from Wider Activities

Should the Local Plan:

- 11a) Set out a specific policy on the loss of peat-based soils, and the carbon impacts of it?
- 11b) Require developers, as part of their contribution to open space provision, to create 'carbon sinks', such as through tree planting, creation of wet-grasslands or preservation/restoration of peat soils?

- **Other Proposals to Reduce Greenhouse Emissions**

The Local Plan could require developers to create new communities which directly or indirectly help minimise carbon emissions.

To illustrate the point, a locally grown vegetable or fruit will not have required carbon emissions to transport it, plastic packaging to preserve it, or refrigeration to maintain its freshness. For example, one pack of asparagus grown in Peru (which is where most UK consumed asparagus comes from) causes 1.44kg of CO₂ to be emitted into the atmosphere⁷, often referred to as 'food miles'. That's the equivalent amount of CO₂ emissions as driving a typical family car 10km⁸! If grown locally, the emissions are negligible.

Question 12: Other Proposals to Reduce Greenhouse Emissions

12a) Should the Local Plan require developers to provide allotments or other growing areas, which can help reduce damaging 'food miles'?

12b) Should the Local Plan make provision of cycle and footways, which are designed in a way so that they become the natural choice to use for short journeys, rather than the car?

⁷ See <https://www.independent.co.uk/environment/green-living/food-miles-the-true-cost-of-putting-imported-food-on-your-plate-5333264.html>

⁸ See, for example, https://ec.europa.eu/clima/policies/transport/vehicles/cars_en

3. Questionnaire

Part B – What Policies Should the Plan Include?

Design and Amenity

Good design can help create attractive places and spaces for people to live, work and visit and can contribute to the creation of healthy and sustainable places. Design is not only about appearance, it is also about how places function.

Achieving good design is about creating places, buildings, or spaces that work well for everyone, look good, last well, and will adapt to the needs of future generations.

National policy says that Plans should set out clear design vision and expectations, so that it is clear what will be acceptable, and that design policies should be developed with local communities, so they reflect local aspirations. Working with the community allows for a better understanding of issues and how places and communities work.

The current Local Plan includes a policy about creating high quality environments across the district. This policy is supported by more detailed and specific design issues as part of the policies for each market town.

Locally, specific policies could address issues such as:

- Layout – the way in which buildings and spaces relate to each other
- Form – the shape of buildings
- Scale – the size of buildings
- Detailing – the important smaller elements of building and spaces
- Materials – what a building is made from

Policies can also address issues such as the need for adequate internal space, living and storage space, and adequate daylight, sunlight, and privacy.

The new Local Plan could also include policies to address the following issues:

- Shop frontages, security shutters and canopies
- Community safety
- Residential annexes

Policies could encourage the use of toolkits such as;

- [Building for life](#)
- [Dementia friendly housing charter](#)
- [Building Better Building Beautiful](#)⁹

⁹ Interim report prepared by Building better, building Beautiful Commission

3. Questionnaire

Part B – What Policies Should the Plan Include?

Question 13: Design and Amenity

- 13a) Do you think the new Plan should include a strategic design policy for the district?
- 13b) Do you think there is a need for different local design policies for each individual town and / or village?
- 13c) Are there any specific local issues which need to be addressed through design policies?
- 13d) Should the Local Plan require developers to use national toolkits, such as Building for Life?

- **Optional Standards for Local Plans**

Since the adoption of the 2014 Local Plan, the government has set out policy preventing Local Plans from setting their own standards for the design of new homes. New national standards have, instead, been introduced via the Building Regulations system. However, government allows three exceptions to this general rule. A Local Plan can require:

1. Internal minimum space standards for all homes, but the standards can only be those as prescribed by government¹⁰;
2. Water efficiency measures in new houses which would aim to reduce average household use of water down from 125 litres per person per day (as required by Building Regulations) to 110 litres per person per day; and
3. Higher access standards in relation to access to, from and within buildings, than required by Building Regulations. Such higher standards are generally beneficial to people who are disabled, elderly or have limited mobility, and also allow homes to more easily be adapted in the future.

A Local Plan can only require one or more of these optional standards if the standard will address a clearly evidenced local need, and the viability implications of introducing the standard will need to have been adequately considered.

The Council is preparing a viability study to support the draft Local Plan due to be published for consultation in Spring/Summer 2020. This will assess if new development can viably support these standards, but your views would also be welcome.

Question 14: Optional Standards

14a) Do you think the Local Plan should include any of the following optional standards (subject to need and viability testing)? If so why?

- i) Internal Space standards of new homes
- ii) Water efficiency of new homes
- iii) Access standards to new homes

¹⁰ Technical housing standards – nationally described space standard

3. Questionnaire

Part B – What Policies Should the Plan Include?

14b) Do you have any evidence to suggest the introduction of the above standards would significantly affect viability of housing schemes?

Size, Type and Tenure of Housing

Earlier, this consultation document discussed the overall level of housing that might be needed in Fenland. However, the housing policies in the new Local Plan will need to address many different housing issues, which are explained below.

- **Meeting the Housing Need of different groups of the community**

National policy says that Local Plans should '*set out the size, type and tenure of housing to meet the needs of different groups in the community*'. This could include families with children, older people, students, people with disabilities, services families, people who rent their homes, and people wishing to commission or build their own homes.

The Council will, over the coming months assess the local need for different sizes and types of homes and the amount and type of affordable housing required. This will inform the draft policy in the new Local Plan to be consulted upon next year. However, at this early stage, we would like your views on the types and size of homes you think are needed in the area. For example is there a need for:

- Bungalows?
- Family homes?
- Small starter homes?
- A specific type of home in a certain location or village?
- Affordable housing on 'exception' sites where normal market housing would not otherwise be permitted?
- 'Community led' housing, whereby schemes prepared and promoted by a locally established, open to all, not-for-profit organisation are in principle supported?
- Specific types of affordable housing, such as to rent or shared ownership?
- Accessible and adaptable homes, built to a higher standard than Building Regulations to allow homes to be easily adapted in the future, for disabled, elderly or people with limited mobility?

The 2014 Local Plan requires sites of five dwellings or more to provide 20% affordable homes. However, the latest national policy does not permit the Council to ask developers to provide affordable housing on sites of less than 10 homes (or 0.5ha). We will assess the thresholds for how much affordable housing the new Local Plan could seek through a viability assessment which will be published to support the draft Local Plan in Spring/Summer 2020.

Question 15: Meeting Housing Need

15a) What size, types and tenure of homes do you think are needed, either across Fenland or in your local area?

3. Questionnaire

Part B – What Policies Should the Plan Include?

15b) Do you think the Local Plan should have a rural exception site policy to help provide affordable homes in areas with a need?

15c) Should the plan encourage 'community-led' based housing schemes?

- **Gypsy and Travellers**

Government's overarching aim is *'to ensure fair and equal treatment for travellers'*¹¹The Council will assess the needs of the Gypsy and Traveller community through a needs assessment to be prepared over the coming months and ensure their needs are met through the Local Plan.

If you think you have a suitable site for Gypsy and Traveller accommodation, please let us know via the [Online Site Form](#) or [Form B](#) (see section 5)

Question 16: Gypsy and Travellers

16a) The Local Plan must meet the needs of the Gypsy and Traveller community. Accordingly, should large scale housing sites be required to include an element of Gypsy and Traveller provision as part of the masterplanning of the site?

16b) What other suitable locations for Gypsy and Traveller pitches are there?

- **Park Homes and Houseboats**

The government recently introduced new requirements¹² for Local Plans to review the need for moorings for houseboats and sites to accommodate permanent caravans such as park homes.

Therefore, as part of the evidence base for the Local Plan, the Council will carry out a review over the coming months to help establish if there is any need for such forms of accommodation and this will help inform any policies in the new Local Plan. In the meantime, your preliminary views would be welcome.

Question 17: Park Homes and Houseboats

17a) Is there a need for moorings for houseboats or sites for caravans in Fenland? Any evidence to support your comments would be welcome, or suggestions as to how such need could be identified in Fenland.

¹¹ Planning Policy for Travellers Sites

¹² The Housing Act 2016

3. Questionnaire

Part B – What Policies Should the Plan Include?

- **Plots for Custom and Self-Build**

The government introduced new rules¹³ that place a requirement on councils to maintain a register of people who wish to find land to build their own homes (known as self-build or custom build homes). Councils are also required to grant planning permission on sufficient serviced plots of land to meet the identified need for self-build and custom build.

Question 18 - Plots for Custom and Self-Build

18a) Should we require larger housing sites to provide serviced plots for self-build and custom build?

18b) Should we allocate sites which are set aside only for self-build and custom build?

Employment

Fenland's economy has seen a continued shift away from the land-based sector, where employment has reduced due to productivity improvements and new working methods. However, its association with the food based industry has continued. The majority of employment in Fenland is manufacturing, wholesale and retail, business services, healthcare, and education sectors. Together these account for a large proportion of overall total employment.

National policy places significant weight on the need to support economic growth and productivity. A priority of the Council is to attract new business, jobs and opportunities, whilst supporting existing businesses.

An objective of national planning policy is *“to help build a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right types is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth...”*

Planning policies should *“set out a clear economic vision and strategy to encourage sustainable economic growth”*. Planning policies must also be flexible enough to accommodate needs not anticipated in the Plan.

National policy says that planning policies should recognise and address specific locational requirements of different sectors and should help businesses to invest, expand and adapt.

Policies should also be flexible enough to accommodate needs not anticipated in the Plan, allow for new and flexible working practices, and to enable quick responses to changing economic circumstances.

Planning policies should enable the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business in rural areas. The Local Plan policy could support the rural economy through:

- Supporting food production
- Agricultural diversification
- Rural tourism and leisure

¹³ The Self-build and Custom Housebuilding Act 2015

3. Questionnaire

Part B – What Policies Should the Plan Include?

To identify what employment land is required in Fenland, the Council will carry out an employment needs assessment which will look at economic models and forecasts and will help identify the most sustainable location for growth.

Question 19: Employment

19a) Should the Local Plan retain existing employment areas in employment use, or should other uses be allowed in these areas?

19b) Do any employment sectors in Fenland have specific locational requirements which should be addressed through the Local Plan?

19c) Are there any barriers to employment growth which the Local Plan could help to address?

19d) How should the Local Plan support the rural economy?

Retail and Other Town Centre Uses

Shopping habits and the wider retail economy are changing. The prevalence of online shopping is creating a very challenging environment for high street retailers. Such changes mean the role and function of our town centres are also changing. National policy says that Local Plans need to consider a range of uses to help provide a positive strategy for the future role of town centres.

The current Local Plan includes a range of retail policies. Work on the new Local Plan offers an opportunity to address the changes affecting town centres to ensure that the Local Plan contributes to the ongoing success of the high street.

The current Fenland Local Plan sets the following retail hierarchy:

- Town Centres – Wisbech and March
- District Centres – Chatteris and Whittlesey
- Other Local Centres

As part of the evidence base for the Local Plan, the Council will carry out a review of the existing centres and also review the boundaries and the main shopping areas (known as Primary Shopping Areas) to make sure these are up to date and still represent the main shopping areas. The current boundaries are shown on the [Policies Maps](#).

National policy says applications for retail or leisure uses should be located in town centres first. Only if no suitable sites are available in town centres should edge of centre or out of centre sites be considered.

Applications for large out of centre retail or leisure uses are required by national policy to carry out an [Impact Assessment](#). This is to check the effect on town centres and what harm this could have on the future success of the centre.

3. Questionnaire

Part B – What Policies Should the Plan Include?

National policy says that Local Plans can set a threshold at what point an Impact Assessment would be required. If there is no local threshold then the default threshold is 2,500sq m gross floorspace. That's about the size of a medium supermarket.

The 2014 Local Plan reduced that threshold to 500sq m gross floorspace, which is approximately the size of small-medium discount style supermarket, on the basis that anything bigger than 500 sq m could result in harm to the high street.

Question 20: Retail and Other Town Centre Uses

20a) Do you agree that the Local Plan should strengthen the role of town centres to encourage people to shop and visit?

20b) Should existing shops be protected or do you think other types of development such as leisure and recreation should be encouraged in the town centres?

20c) Should the retail hierarchy be amended? What changes should be made and why?

20d) Do you think the boundaries of any Town Centres, District Centres, Local Centres and Primary Shopping Areas need to be extended or reduced? If so, which and why?

20e) Should the new Local Plan set a threshold for when an Impact Assessment for out of centre retail is required, such as 500 sq m in the current Plan? If so what should the threshold be?

Community and Transport Infrastructure

The new Local Plan will ensure that new development is supported by appropriate infrastructure for transport, schools, health, open spaces, community facilities and water supply and treatment.

The Council will work with Cambridgeshire County Council, the Combined Authority and other service providers to identify infrastructure needed to support growth. The new Local Plan will require new development to contribute toward this infrastructure.

- **Community Infrastructure**

The new Local Plan should plan positively for the provision of community facilities (such as local shops, meeting places, sports venues, open space, public houses and places of worship) and other local services to enhance the sustainability of community and residential environments.

National policy says that Local Plans '*should guard against the unnecessary loss of valued facilities and services, particularly where this would reduce the community's ability to meet its day to day needs*'. Therefore the new Local Plan could include policies to protect existing community facilities.

3. Questionnaire

Part B – What Policies Should the Plan Include?

Questions 21: Community Infrastructure

21a) Do you think the Local Plan should include a policy to protect the loss of existing community facilities?

- **Transport**

The main transport and infrastructure requirements for the Fenland area are set out in the [Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Local Transport Plan \(LTP\)](#) which is a document prepared by the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority. Therefore, any Local Plan policies must support this. However, the Combined Authority has just completed a consultation on a new version¹⁴.

National policy says that local policies must take into account any increased traffic and congestion and impact on highway safety and address potential impacts on the transport network. Therefore, as part of the evidence base for the Local Plan, we will work with Cambridgeshire County Council to assess the impact of the Local Plan growth requirements on local roads to minimise any congestion.

National policy also says that policies should promote opportunities for walking, cycling and public transport and should aim to prioritise pedestrian and cycle uses, helping to reduce the reliance on the car.

There is no national requirement for car parking standards and councils can decide to include car parking standards or not. However, if a council wants to set minimum parking standards, national policy is clear that this must be supported by evidence.

Questions 22: Transport

22a) Should the Local Plan place a strong emphasis on encouraging walking, cycling and public transport or does the rural nature of Fenland mean the private car will always need to be accommodated as a priority?

22b) Do you think the new Local Plan should set parking standards? If so please provide further comments to explain what standards you think are needed and where they should apply.

Historic Environment

The Fen landscape has a unique rural character; large scale, flat, open landscape with extensive views to the horizon. The huge skies give the area a strong sense of place and tranquillity.

¹⁴ <https://www.cambridgeshirepeterborough-ca.gov.uk/assets/Transport/Draft-LTP.pdf>

3. Questionnaire

Part B – What Policies Should the Plan Include?

Each of the four market towns in the district has its own individual, historic character which has evolved over time.

In Fenland there are 20 scheduled monuments, 10 conservation areas and over 650 listed buildings of special architectural or historic interest. The gardens of Peckover House in Wisbech are included in Historic England's register of parks and gardens of special historic interest.

Special protection is given to buildings and areas designated as special architectural or historic interest by law through the Listed Building Act¹⁵, because they are irreplaceable and should be conserved. Therefore any Local Plan policies must comply with this legislation.

National policy says that "*Plans should set out a positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment*".

The new Local Plan could achieve this by identifying standout buildings of local importance or designating areas that need additional protection to protect the historic environment.

Question 23: Historic Environment

23a) Should the Local Plan go beyond the minimum requirements for protecting the historic environment?

23b) Should the Plan identify buildings of local importance?

23c) Are there any areas that you think require additional protection that are not already identified as conservation areas?

Natural Environment

"*Our natural environment is our most precious inheritance*" according to the government's 25 Year Environment Plan¹⁶, which also states that the government's aim is to be "*the first generation to leave [the] environment in a better state than we found it and pass on to the next generation a natural environment protected and enhanced for the future*".

National planning policy is more specific as to what development should do, including a requirement for a 'net gain' in biodiversity.

Natural Cambridgeshire, the Local Nature Partnership for our area, has recently (June 2019) agreed a vision to double the area of rich wildlife habitats and natural green space across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, with the aim of creating a world-class environment where nature and people thrive, and businesses prosper. The Combined Authority for our area endorsed that vision in July 2019.

¹⁵ [Planning \(Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas\) Act 1990](#)

¹⁶ [A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment \(2018\)](#)

3. Questionnaire

Part B – What Policies Should the Plan Include?

This new Local Plan can play a major role in meeting both national policy and local vision, by placing the natural environment at the heart of planning decision making.

To do so, we think the following opportunities exist:

- **Require Net Gain in Biodiversity**

National policy encourages net gain for biodiversity. Biodiversity net gain requires developers to ensure habitats for wildlife are enhanced and left in a measurably better state than they were pre-development. They must assess the type of habitat and its condition before submitting plans, and then demonstrate how they are improving biodiversity – such as through the creation of new habitats, enhancing existing habitats, providing green roofs, green walls, street trees or sustainable drainage systems.

The government has recently consulted on mandatory requirements for all new development to deliver biodiversity net gain. Which means in the future this could be a requirement for all developments.

- **Protect the Network of Sites Designated for Nature**

National policy says that Plans should distinguish between the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites.

Fenland is home to the Nene and Ouse Washes, both of which are of national and international importance for their nature conservation value¹⁷, being designated as Special Areas of Conservation, Special Protection Areas, Ramsar Sites and Sites of Special Scientific Interest. In addition, the district contains a number of local nature reserves and county wildlife sites.

- **Clear and Ambitious Policy for Trees and Woodlands**

The new Local Plan can provide protection to existing trees and woodland, and encourage opportunities for new tree planting.

- **Use of Opportunity Mapping Evidence**

Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Biodiversity Group¹⁸ has identified and mapped opportunities to create new areas of habitat across the district.

The new Local Plan can support opportunities to create new habitats in areas which would provide the most ecological benefit.

- **Protection of Best and Most Versatile Agricultural Land**

¹⁷ designated as Special Areas of Conservation, Special Protection Areas, Ramsar Sites and Sites of Special Scientific Interest.

¹⁸ [Mapping Natural Capital and Opportunities for Habit Creation in Cambridgeshire \(May 2019\)](#)

3. Questionnaire

Part B – What Policies Should the Plan Include?

Fenland has a high proportion of high-quality agricultural land; in accordance with national policy this must be protected.

National policy says that planning policies and decisions should promote the effective use of land in meeting the need for homes and other uses, including use of previously developed land (also known as Brownfield land).

- **Air Quality**

The Fenland area has four Air Quality Management Areas which have been identified by the Council as not likely to meet national air quality objectives.

National policy says that Local Plans should identify opportunities to improve air quality or limit impacts, such as through traffic and travel management. The cumulative effects of developers should also be considered.

- **Landscape**

The new Local Plan can protect the special qualities of the local landscape.

Question 24: Natural Environment

24a) How do you think the Local Plan should protect and enhance biodiversity and the natural environment?

Open Space and Recreation

Open space and opportunities for sport and physical activity are important for the health and wellbeing of communities.

National policy makes clear that existing open spaces and sports facilities, including playing fields, should not be built on unless there is a clear surplus or the loss would be replaced by an equivalent or better provision in a suitable location.

- **Open Space Standards**

The new Local Plan can require new development to provide open space. The 2014 Local Plan sets standards for the provision of the following types of open space:

- Country parks
- Children's play
- Natural green space

3. Questionnaire

Part B – What Policies Should the Plan Include?

- Allotments
- Amenity greenspace
- Sports pitches and playing fields

During preparation of the new Local Plan, open space standards will be reviewed. Alongside, or shortly after, consulting on this Local Plan, we intend to undertake separate more detailed consultation on open space needs and desires, so please check our website for further details on this.

Question 25: Open Space Standards

25a) What type of open space should new development provide?

25b) What do you think of the quality of open space in your area?

25c) Should the Plan identify other areas of open space to be protected?

25d) Do you have any specific standards that should be applied to all development schemes (such as a certain area of land for open space per certain development size)?

25e) Should we work with neighbouring authorities with the aim of establishing common standards across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough?

- **Local Green Space**

Local Green Spaces designation is a requirement set out in national policy, which allows local communities to identify and protect areas of open space that are of particular importance.

Therefore, as part of the Issues and Options consultation we are inviting communities to identify areas for consideration as Local Green Spaces. To nominate a green space please complete the [Online Questionnaire](#) or submit [Form C](#). See also [section 5](#)

Flood and Water Management

Flood risk is an important issue for the district due to the flat and low-lying landscape of the area and impact of climate change, with related sea-level rises and increased incidents of heavy rainfall. On its flood zone maps, the Environment Agency identifies specific zones of flood risk across Fenland.

National policy is clear that inappropriate development in areas at risk of flooding should be avoided by directing development away from areas at highest risk.

The new Local Plan will be informed by a Strategic Flood Risk Assessment, which will enable the formulation of policies and selection of sites.

3. Questionnaire

Part B – What Policies Should the Plan Include?

The [Cambridgeshire Flood and Water Supplementary Planning Document](#) (SPD) provides guidance for new developments to reduce flood risk, such as by providing sustainable drainage systems.

Management of water is important, not only to reduce flood risk, but also to protect and improve water quality, habitats and biodiversity.

Question 26: Flood and Water Management

26a) Do you have any views on how new development could reduce flood risk?

Any Other Comments

This consultation document has set out what is proposed for the new Local Plan, but there may be additional items not covered in this consultation which you would like to raise.

Question 27: Any Other Comments

27a) Is there anything else you would like to raise – has anything been missed, or are there any general comments you would like to make?

3. Questionnaire

Part C – What are Your Priorities for the Future of Fenland?

Now you have read Part 3B which sets out different planning issues, we would like to know which you think are the most important. We have summarised the main issues identified by Part 3B below.

The new Local Plan must be aspirational but deliverable. If the Local Plan is excessive in its requirements, we may fail to meet the area's growth needs.

We would like to understand your broad priorities for the future growth of Fenland.

As such, we'd really welcome you completing the following question, to help us understand, overall, which issues are most important to you.

Question 28: Your Priorities

28a) What, overall, are your priorities? Please select up to five from the following list:

- New buildings which have high energy efficiency and/or renewable energy included, such as solar panels;
- More genuinely affordable housing;
- New homes which are easily adaptable and accessible for the disabled or elderly;
- New homes which have room sizes of at least a minimum set size;
- Attracting inward investment to Fenland and creating more jobs
- New community facilities as part of a new housing area, such as community hall, corner shop, small health centre;
- Investment in walking and cycling infrastructure;
- Good quality, accessible open space (parks, play areas, etc);
- Genuine efforts to create areas for nature;
- Protecting the character of towns, villages and the countryside;

28b) Please identify any other top priorities.

4. Neighbourhood Planning

Neighbourhood planning gives Parish and Town Councils direct power to develop a shared vision for their area and shape development and growth. Once a Neighbourhood Plan has been 'made' (adopted) it forms part of the development plan for the district, so it has the same legal status as a Local Plan.

If an area has a Neighbourhood Plan, any planning applications in that area will be determined using the Local Plan (the 2014 version at the moment, in Fenland), the Neighbourhood Plan, national policy and any other material consideration.

Several Parish and Town Councils in Fenland have shown an interest in preparing Neighbourhood Plans. The March Neighbourhood Plan was approved at referendum and came into force in November 2017. In addition, the following areas have been designated as Neighbourhood Areas, paving the way for a Neighbourhood Plan to be prepared if the local Parish Council wants to¹⁹:

- Parson Drove
- Whittlesey
- Doddington

Please see <https://www.fenland.gov.uk/neighbourhood-planning> for more details on Neighbourhood Planning, and whether anything is being prepared in your local parish.

Fenland District Council is very supportive of Parish and Town Councils that want to prepare a Neighbourhood Plan

Neighbourhood Plans must work alongside a Local Plan, and not conflict with what are known as 'strategic policies' in the Local Plan, such as minimum housing targets. However, a Neighbourhood Plan has considerable scope to include detailed policies and, if it wants to, the allocation of sites for development.

It is also worth noting that if there is conflict between a Local Plan and a Neighbourhood Plan, the most recently adopted Plan takes precedence when determining planning applications.

This new Local Plan must also set housing targets for those areas which are formally designated as Neighbourhood Areas.

Question 29: Neighbourhood Planning

29a) The new Fenland Local Plan must set a housing target for all Parish and Town Councils which are designated as a Neighbourhood Area. Do you have any views on what those targets should be, or how we should calculate it?

29b) Should we set a housing target for all parish areas, so that a Parish or Town Council has clarity as to what level of homes are needed in their area should they wish to prepare a Neighbourhood Plan?

29c) Is there anything else this Local Plan could do to help preparation of Neighbourhood Plans?

¹⁹ Tydd St Giles has also been designated, but the Parish Council advised Fenland District Council on the 13 January 2016 that it has taken the decision to no longer progress the Tydd St Giles Neighbourhood Plan.

5. Site Assessment

How development sites will be identified: The 'Call for Sites' Exercise

As a minimum, the new Local Plan must identify sufficient land for development to meet the overall housing need over the course of the Plan period. The new Local Plan must identify:

- Specific deliverable sites to meet housing needs in the short-term (0-5 years); and
- Specific developable sites or broad locations for growth in the medium term (6-10 years), and where possible for the long term (11+ years).

National policy requires 10% of the area's housing requirement to be met by small sites no larger than one hectare (2.47 acres). For Fenland, this means over the Plan period 1,150 new homes should be built on sites no larger than one hectare.

The new Local Plan will also identify sites and locations for other forms of development, for example employment, retail, leisure and community facilities, and Gypsy and Traveller pitches.

Valued local green spaces will be granted protection from development, akin to 'Greenbelt' status by the new Local Plan.

The Council is undertaking a Call for Sites Exercise alongside the Issues & Options consultation. To provide a supply of sites to meet the area's development needs, the Council is inviting land owners, agents, developers and other individuals and organisations to submit sites to be considered for inclusion in the new Local Plan.

Any sites or Broad Concept Areas identified in the 2014 Local Plan must be re-submitted as part of this process. Existing sites and broad areas for growth will not automatically be carried forward in the new Local Plan.

Individuals, Town and Parish Councils, and other community organisations are also invited to nominate valued local green spaces.

How sites will be assessed and selected

The Council will assess all site submissions it receives against a detailed set of criteria²⁰, as set out in the [Site Assessment Methodology Report](#). The assessment criteria is based on the principles of sustainable development and mirrors the sustainability appraisal framework.

For consistency, the assessment criteria will be scored using a colour matrix (traffic light system), as set out below. This provides a clear and easy to understand scoring system.

²⁰ Available at: <https://www.fenland.gov.uk/newlocalplan>

5. Site Assessment

Score	Potential outcome
A	Potential to deliver major economic, environmental or social benefits
B	Potential to deliver minor economic, environmental or social benefits
C	Either neutral impact or middle value
D	Low risk of economic, environmental or social harm
E	High risk of economic, environmental or social harm

Preferred sites will be selected, taking into account the site's availability, suitability and economic viability reflecting the overarching growth strategy and wider sustainability issues.

Local green space nominations will be assessed against criteria set out in national policy²¹.

The Council's preferred sites and proposed Local Green Spaces will be set out in the draft Local Plan, which is due to be published in Spring/Summer 2020.

How to make a site submission or nominate a Local Green Space

As explained on page 3, to submit a site or to nominate a local green space, please use the online form available at: <https://www.fenland.gov.uk/newlocalplan>

Alternatively, complete [Form B: Site Submission](#) or [Form C: Local Green Space Nomination](#) available at <https://www.fenland.gov.uk/newlocalplan>, and send:

- By email to localplan@fenland.gov.uk; or
- By post to *Local Plan Team, Fenland District Council, Fenland Hall, County Road, March PE15 8NQ*

Site submissions for residential development must be at least 0.15 hectares or able to accommodate at least 5 dwellings.

To make a submission or nomination, you must supply your name and contact information. To find out how the Council will protect your personal data, see [Section 1](#).

All site submissions and local green space nominations must be accompanied by a map on a suitable Ordnance Survey base, clearly showing the location and extent of the site, and must be received by **XX** November 2019

²¹ Para. 100, National Planning Policy Framework

6. Glossary of Terms

Throughout this document you will find a number of technical planning terms. We have tried to explain these clearly within the text. However, here is a quick summary of the terms used to help you understand the planning process.

Adoption - the formal decision by the Council to approve the final version of a document, at the end of all the preparation stages and examination in public, bringing it into effect.

Affordable Housing - housing for sale or rent, for those whose needs are not met by the market (including housing that provides a subsidised route to home ownership and/or is for essential local workers).

Amenity - a general term used to describe benefits or features associated with a property or location, that contribute to its character, comfort, convenience or attractiveness.

Biodiversity - a contraction of biological diversity, all species of life on earth including plants and animals and the ecosystem of which we are all part.

Brownfield Land – Land that has been previously used

Conservation Area - a formally designated area of special historic or architectural interest; its character must be preserved or enhanced.

District Centre - an area, defined on the Policies Map, which usually comprises groups of shops often containing at least one supermarket or superstore, and a range of non-retail services, such as banks, building societies and restaurants, as well as local public and community facilities such as a library.

Gypsies and Travellers - Persons of nomadic habit of life whatever their race or origin, including such persons who on grounds only of their own or their family's or dependants' educational or health needs or old age have ceased to travel temporarily. This excludes members of an organised group of travelling showpeople or circus people travelling together as such.

Health Impact Assessment (HIA) - a method of considering the positive and negative impacts of development upon human health

Infrastructure - a collective term which relates to all forms of essential services like electricity, water, and road and rail provision.

Listed Building - a building or structure designated by the Secretary of State under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 for its special architectural or historic interest, and therefore included in a 'list' of such buildings and structures.

Local Centre - an area, defined on the Policies Map, which usually includes a range of small shops of a local nature, serving a small catchment. Typically, local centres might include, amongst other shops, a small supermarket, a newsagent, a sub-post office and a pharmacy. Other facilities could include a hot-food takeaway and laundrette. In rural areas, large villages may perform the role of a local centre.

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) - the government's national planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied.

National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) - Provides guidance for local planning authorities and decision takers, both drawing up plans and making decisions about planning applications. The guidance is categorised into subject categories.

6. Glossary of Terms

Objectively Assessed Need - The identified housing need to meet the needs of the local authority area over the plan period.

Open Space - areas of undeveloped or largely undeveloped land for leisure purposes – including village greens, allotments, children’s playgrounds, sports pitches and municipal parks.

Park Home - a residential mobile home, similar to a bungalow or caravan in style. Installed as a dedicated site or 'home park' that is either privately owned or owned by a Local Authority. They are designed to be lived in permanently and provide opportunity for residents to own a home, but pay rent to the owner of the site.

Primary Shopping Area - an area where retail and the number of shops in a town centre is most concentrated. The extent of this area is defined on the Policies Map.

Registered Park and Garden - a park or garden that is included on Historic England's 'Register of Parks and Gardens of special historic interest'. Registered parks and gardens are designated heritage assets of national significance.

Scheduled Monument - a nationally important archaeological site that has been designated by the Secretary of State under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979, and therefore included in a 'schedule' of such monuments.

Sequential Approach - an approach to planning decisions which may require certain sites or locations to be fully considered for development before the consideration moves on to other sites or locations. The approach could apply to issues such as retail development, the use of previously developed land or the use of land at risk from flooding.

Settlement Boundary - a boundary on a map beyond which the local planning authority proposes that a village should not be able to extend.

Settlement Hierarchy - settlements are categorised into a hierarchy based on the range of facilities, services and employment opportunities available, plus the ability to access other higher ranking settlements by public transport.

Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) - SPDs expand on policies or provide further details to policies contained in a Local Plan.

Sustainability Appraisal (SA) – a formal, systematic process to assess the environmental, economic and social effects of strategies and policies in a SPD from the start of preparation onwards. The process includes the production of reports to explain the outcomes of the appraisal.

Tenure - the financial arrangements under which someone has the right to live in a house. The most frequent forms are tenancy, in which rent is paid to a landlord, and owner-occupancy.

Agenda Item No:	8	
Committee:	Cabinet	
Date:	18 September 2019	
Report Title:	Open Spaces - Play Areas	

Purpose / Summary

Further to a recent motion at Council on 23 May 2019, and a subsequent Cabinet discussion regarding the Council's approach to play areas within our open spaces, this paper sets out the further information requested by Cabinet.

Key issues

The Council recognises the importance of play areas for our local communities, for both health and community cohesion.

Fenland manages many open spaces throughout the District - around 135 hectares in total. This includes 5 open cemeteries, 42 play areas, 6 skate parks and 20 closed churchyards.

Play areas receive a weekly safety inspection from a qualified member of the grounds maintenance contractor. Additionally, FDC commissions an annual comprehensive ROSPA (Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents) inspection of the play areas. As a result of weekly inspections, maintenance is carried out on issues identified.

Since 2015, the Council has facilitated spending of £622,577. In this financial year, 2019/20, this will be further supplemented by spending of circa £350,000 on further improvements. These improvements have been funded mainly by Section 106 funding, as well as leveraging in supplementary third party grants from bodies such as FCC Community Fund (formerly WREN) and Amey Cespa Community Fund.

The Council is responsible for maintaining its play equipment and it continues to replace individual items of equipment in play areas as and when required from the revenue repair budget.

As requested, this paper provides a complete list of areas where FDC owns and/or maintains play equipment including a very brief summary of the equipment at each site, its state of repair/maintenance and its likely lifespan.

At the last meeting, Cabinet paused on projects within Manea Parish Council and Wisbech Town Council areas to allow further consultation on potential future projects, the feedback on which we have now received.

Recommendations

- Cabinet notes the report recognising that the Council manages many play areas and maintains them safely.
- Cabinet agrees projects with Wisbech Town Council and Manea Parish Council can proceed as part of the ongoing consultations with these 2 Councils.
- Cabinet notes the equipment FDC maintains and the current lifespan of that equipment as set out at Appendix 1.

Wards Affected	All Wards
Forward Plan Reference	
Portfolio Holder(s)	Cllr Peter Murphy, Portfolio Holder for Environment
Report Originator(s)	Phil Hughes, Head of Leisure Services phughes@fenland.gov.uk Carol Pilson, Corporate Director cpilson@fenland.gov.uk
Contact Officer(s)	Carol Pilson, Corporate Director cpilson@fenland.gov.uk Phil Hughes, Head of Leisure Services phughes@fenland.gov.uk
Background Paper(s)	Council Motion 23 May 2019; Fenland District Council Play Equipment Cabinet paper July 2019; Fenland District Council play areas Minutes Cabinet meeting July 2019

1 Day to day management of Fenland's Play Areas

- 1.1 The Council manages and maintains many play areas on our open spaces. Further information may be found on the Council's website at:
<https://www.fenland.gov.uk/playareas>
- 1.2 Each play area has an average of 5 pieces of equipment available - the Council is looking after hundreds of different pieces of equipment.
- 1.3 A weekly safety inspection is carried out at all play areas and skate parks, with any significant issues attended to promptly.
- 1.4 The Council uses a revenue budget to maintain the play areas safely and replace minor items. In the past 5 years the council has spent £139,037 on play park repair and maintenance (excluding grass cutting, staff resources, ROSPA inspection and Tivoli inspections) from the FDC revenue budget.

2 Improvement or Replacement of Play Areas

- 2.1 Fenland saw a significant programme of key play area replacements take place 10 years ago. Whilst the replacement programme has slowed down since then, significant investment continues, as highlighted by investment over the past 4 years in the following table:
- 2.2 Open Spaces capital spend in the past 4 years:

	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	Total
Wenny Rec', Chatteris		131,072			
Manor Play area, Whittlesey	111,491				
The Avenue, Gaul Rd, March		45,039			
Wisbech Park - Bandstand			62,113		
Benwick Play Park			103,375		
Bath Road Skate Park				75,000	
Jasmin Park, Wisbech				13,607	
Wisbech Park				23,880	
Water Tower Play, Whittlesey				57,000	
Total	£111,491	£176,111	£165,488	£169,487	£622,577

- 2.3 Improvement and replacement works are currently reliant on Section 106 contributions, often supplemented by third party grant applications. In the past Fenland has been successful with attracting matched funding from Amey Cespa Community Fund, WREN (now renamed FCC Communities Foundation) and Clarion Futures. FDC funds general maintenance and repair of the equipment.
- 2.4 The Council works with Town and Parish Councils, usually allowing them to take the lead on broad decisions of what to replace or refurbish in order to incorporate local knowledge of the area to ensure new provision meets local needs.
- 2.5 We work together with our partners to ensure that equipment has a reasonable geographic spread, focusing on key areas that the whole area can benefit from, trying to ensure that no wards are left behind in terms of their provision.

3 Committed 2019 / 2020 programmed works

3.1 Due to procurement, in the coming months Fenland will be:

- Replacing play equipment in Wenny Rec, Chatteris £45,000
- Replacing the skate park in West End Park, March £130,000

4. Current play area conditions survey

4.1 Fenland's play areas have been assessed, with a summary of each facility, approximate installation date and equipment condition detailed in Section 5, the Appendix.

4.2 Currently the Council does not have a formal equipment register to log equipment and location. As part of our Tree Management Plan work, software should soon be available to log play area equipment, including ancillary equipment such as benches and bins.

4.3 The conditions survey work will inform the planned play area replacement works over the coming 5 years in consultation with the Portfolio Holder and local Members.

5.0 Appendix 1; Play Area conditions survey

Play Area Conditions Survey; Summary

5.1 Fenland Council supports 42 play areas and 6 skate parks. Inspection of equipment at every site takes place weekly through the contractor, currently Tivoli, and annually through ROSPA (most recently March 2019).

5.2 The sites are spread about the district amongst 4 towns (Wisbech and Chatteris have 9 play areas each, March has 8 and Whittlesey has 6) and 8 villages (Coates and Eastrea have 2 areas each, the others one).

5.3 There are other play areas in the district managed by Clarion, housing developers, Town and Parish Councils and these have not been included.

5.4 Size of the play areas varies, as does the nature of the equipment, but in total there are 342 pieces of play equipment across the Fenland managed sites. This does not include bins, benches, fences or signage.

5.5 In general the equipment is in reasonable to good condition. Where items have been vandalised beyond repair or have become structurally unsafe, these have been removed. Where items can be repaired they have been and Tivoli carries equipment which can remedy many eventualities without further intervention.

5.6 Three areas have been greatly improved in 2019. The Water Tower Park at Whittlesey, the new Skate Park at Bath Road, Wisbech and, shortly, the toddler and junior play area at Wenny Rec, Chatteris as well as the skate park at West End Park in March will be refurbished.

5.7 The table and comments below list the existing stock, note the approximate installation date(s) and anticipated replacement dates that should be considered as part of the play area future investment programme. Any dates, historic or predicted, are indicative only. Whilst a piece of equipment or the entire stock of a park may be expected to last 15 - 20 or more years, heavy usage, vandalism, extreme weather or misuse will inevitably reduce the lifespan.

Benwick

- High Street. All equipment is in good condition. New site installed 2018. Replacement 20+ years

Chatteris

- Cricketers Way. Installed circa 2002. Equipment showing signs of deterioration. Fence and multiplay both with decay to timber. Replacement 4 years
- Furrowfields Rec. Equipment is in reasonable condition with some deterioration to surfaces. Installed c 2012. Replacement 6+ years
- Hunters Close. Equipment in reasonable condition although slide has been bent. Installed by developer c 2005. Replacement 10+ years
- Huntingdon Road (Infant and Junior). Surfaces in poor condition. Benches need replacement. Equipment in average condition but dated – possibly pre-2000. Replacement max 2+ years
- Larham Way. Equipment very dated – possibly pre-2000. Below average condition. Replacement 1 year
- St Paul's Drive. Old equipment in rusty and poor condition – installed before 2000. Benches need replacement. Lifespan 1 year.
- Wenny Rec. New equipment to be installed Sep/Oct 2019. Replacement 20+ years
- Willey Terrace. Surface deterioration. Equipment old, (installed c 2012) limited but functional. Lifespan; 5 years.

Coates

- North Green. Equipment meets current standards. Installed 2014. Replacement 15+ years
- South Green. Limited equipment (installed c 2015) but slide (pre-2000) is in poor condition. Remove slide imminently and do not replace as a slide is available at North Green. Other equipment replace 10+ years

Doddington

- Beech Avenue. Equipment in reasonable condition (possibly pre-2000) but surfaces have deteriorated. Replacement 5 years. Current equipment is rather dated and would benefit from additional more up to date equipment adding.

Eastrea

- Springfields. All good condition (installed 2014). Replacement 20+ years
- Thornham Way. All in reasonable condition - installed c 2005. Replacement 10+ years. Would benefit from revenue funded painting in 2019/20.

Friday Bridge

- West Drive. Reasonable condition. Installed by developer c 2010. Replacement 10+ years

Manea

- Williams Way. Good condition. Installed c 2012. Replacement 20+ years.

- Skate Park; maintained by Parish Council and requires imminent replacement, scheduled for 19/20.

March

- Albert Drive. Installed 2011. All good condition. Replacement 20+ years
- Dagless Way. Installed c 2012. Good condition. Replacement 20+ years
- Gaul Road. Installed c 2012. Equipment in good condition. Some deterioration of surfaces. Replacement 20+ years
- North Drive. Installed c 2014. All in reasonably good condition. Replacement 20+ years
- Robingoodfellows. Installed c 2012. Mixture of new and old equipment. Replacement of new 20+ years. Replacement of old (swing) 1-2 years from revenue budget.
- The Avenue. Installed c 2012. Good condition. Replacement 20+ years
- West End Park. Installed c 2009. Good condition. Replacement 15+ years
- West End Park Outdoor Gym (Parts 1&2). Installed c 2014. Periodic repairs to equipment but generally in good condition with infrequent use. Replacement 10+ years

Parson Drove

- Installed c 2002. Mix of old (c 2002) and new equipment (c 2015). Replacement of old equipment and expansion of current offer imminent through S106 funding. Replace other equipment 15+ years.

Wimblington

- Relatively new, with limited equipment. Replacement 10+ years.

Whittlesey

- Burdett Grove. Installed c 1996. Old equipment requires replacement. Replacement 2021/22.
- Manor Field. Installed c 2015. All in good condition. Replacement 15-20 years
- Pinewood Avenue. Installed c 1996. Old equipment – lifespan 1 year.
- Snowley Park. Installed c 2002. Old equipment – fence repairs required. Lifespan 1 year.
- Station Road. Installed c 2013. All in good condition. Replace in 20 years
- Water Tower Park. Installed 2019. No changes required. Replace in 25 years
- Wimblington. Installed c 2000. Average condition. Replacement 7 - 10 years

Wisbech

- Barton Rd. Installed in different stages. Swings and multi-point swings relatively new (c 2012) and other equipment c 2005. Average to good condition. Replacement 10 years
- Burcroft Rd. Installed new swings and see saw in 2018. Replacement 20 years. Limited equipment in this space.
- Conference Way. Installed c 2000. All equipment in average condition. Replacement 5 years

- Heron Road. Installed c 2001. Average condition – paintwork needs work in 2019 / 20 from revenue budget along with the replacement of bins and bench. Surfaces showing signs of wear. Minor repairs within 1 year. Replacement 7 years
- Jasmine Close. Installed climbing unit 2018. Swings installed c 2000. Replace swings within 5 years.
- Malt Drive. Installed c 2001. Equipment is old but in average to good condition. Paint work required in 2019 / 20 from revenue budget. Lifespan 5-10 years.
- Westmead Ave. Installed c2003. Average condition. Surface needs attention in 2020. Replacement 5-10 years
- Wisbech Park (Harbour Line). Wooden equipment installed c 2012 in average condition – some pieces already removed. Lifespan as equipment wears.
- Wisbeck Park. Installed over multi-years. Most recent 2018, oldest c2000. Consequent mix of condition – replacement of toddler equipment 2020 / 2021, junior equipment 15 years.

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Agenda Item No:	9	
Committee:	Cabinet	
Date:	18 September 2019	
Report Title:	Coates Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan	

1 Purpose / Summary

To seek approval from Members to go out to public consultation on the Coates Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan.

2 Key issues

The Coates Conservation Area Appraisal Management Plan has been prepared for the following purposes:

to satisfy Policy LP18 of the adopted Fenland Local Plan which states that *"the Council will protect, conserve and seek opportunities to enhance the historic environment throughout Fenland and will look to achieve this by keeping up-to-date and implementing conservation area appraisals and management plans"*.

to satisfy S71(1) Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 which places a duty on Local Planning Authorities to formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of conservation areas.

to support the Whittlesey Neighbourhood Planning Team by providing an evidence base from which they can develop their neighbourhood plan which covers Coates as part of the parish of Whittlesey.

to provide guidance that will be a material consideration in the determination of planning applications.

to provide a framework of objectives for the Council to follow as proactive actions for preserving and enhancing the character and appearance of the Whittlesey Conservation Area.

3 Recommendations

Cabinet to approve the Coates Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan to go out to public consultation.

Wards Affected	Coates and Eastrea Ward
Forward Plan Reference	
Portfolio Holder(s)	Cllr Chris Seaton - Social Mobility and Heritage Cllr Denise Laws - Planning

Report Originator(s)	Katie McAndrew– Conservation Officer
Contact Officer(s)	Katie McAndrew, Conservation Officer- 01354 622321 Nick Harding, Head of Planning - 01354 622315 Carol Pilson, Corporate Director - 01354 622360
Background Paper(s)	Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 Adopted Fenland Local Plan (May 2014) SPD Delivering and Protecting High Quality Environments in Fenland (July 2014) Historic England, Understanding Place: Conservation Area Designation, Appraisal and Management". (2011)

1 Background / Introduction

These documents provide an up to date appraisal and management plan for the Coates Conservation Area. The current Coates Conservation Area document was published in August 1993 and is now significantly out of date. It references the superseded Fenland District Wide Plan 1993, it references obsolete legislation and includes no images to help people appreciate the interests of the conservation area. It is essential to have accurate and up to date documents for the Coates Conservation Area to support initiatives for the area, including providing an evidence base for the Whittlesey Neighbourhood Planning Team.

2 Considerations

Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990

S71(1) Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 states that *"It shall be the duty of a local planning authority from time to time to formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of any parts of their area which are conservation areas"*. The production of the Coates Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan accords with this duty.

S72 (1) Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 states that in respect of determining applications affecting conservation areas the Local Planning Authority shall have *"special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area"*. The Coates Conservation Area Appraisal is intended to identify the architectural and historic interests of the Coates Conservation Area and would be a material consideration in the determination of applications affecting the Conservation Area in line with S72 (1). The objectives set out in the *management plan* will support decision making that aligns with S72 (1).

Local Policy: Fenland Local Plan (May 2014)

Under Local Plan Policy LP18 the Council commits to *"keeping up-to-date and implementing conservation area appraisals and management plans, and using such up to date information in determining planning applications"*. The production of the Coates Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan seeks to meet this Local Plan policy commitment.

Local Plan Policy LP3 identifies Coates as a "Limited Growth Village" where a small amount of development and new service provision would be encouraged and permitted in order to support sustainability. The production of the Coates Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan would support the management of change within the conservation area.

Historic England Guidance - Conservation Area Designation, Appraisal and Management: Historic England Advice Note 1 (February 2019)

Historic England (formally English Heritage), the statutory advisors to the government on heritage matters, provide advice on the production of the appraisals and management plans in their guidance document - Conservation Area Designation, Appraisal and Management: Historic England Advice Note 1. Within this guidance it states that it is good practice to review and update these documents from time to time. The existing document is now 26 years old and requires updating in accordance with good practice to ensure it is current and remains relevant.

Structure and Layout of Document

Coates Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan

The Coates Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan is laid out following the methodology and best practice guidance set out in Historic England's guidance document Conservation Area Designation, Appraisal and Management (February 2019)

Given the modest size of the Coates Conservation Area and the fact the document is produced is relatively short it is felt the conservation appraisal and management plan can be presented together as one document. The document is therefore issued as one document structured into three parts. As is standard in the production of these types of documents the first part covers the introduction and the legislative and policy framework under which the document is produced. It then provides a detailed assessment of the character and appearance of the conservation area with the aim of clarifying what its special architectural and historic interest is. Part two covers proposals to amend the boundary specifically to remove two areas of mid-20th century housing which it is felt does not contribute to the special interest of the conservation area. Part three provides a framework for managing change, addressing issues and identifying enhancements within the conservation area over the next five years, with the overarching objective being to ensure the Coates Conservation Area retains and enhances its qualities as an area of special architectural and historic interest

Consultation and Adoption

The public consultation period for these documents is scheduled to take place between Monday 30th September 2019 and Monday 28th October 2019 by means of (i) a public display in Coates during the consultation period. The display consisting of information boards with copies of the appraisal and management plan available for review. The public may leave feedback in a suggestions box that sits alongside the display, (ii) a one day public event whereby the Conservation Officer will be available at a location in Coates to answer any questions regarding this document and the accompanying management plan, (iii) website publicity whereby copies of the Coates Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan will be available to download on Fenland District Council's website and advertising whereby the consultation period will be advertised by means of a press release detailing the dates of the consultation period are cited alongside the details of where the documents can be viewed and (iv) those properties affected by the boundary review (as they are proposed to be removed from the conservation area) will be consulted directly. We will use the Council's social media channels and press releases to support the consultation.

In accordance with S72 (3) Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 the Council shall have regard to the public views expressed during the consultation period. Comments received from public consultation will be reviewed and the document may be amended to take account of such comments were they are valid.

3 Effect on Corporate Objectives

The Coates Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan will assist in the delivery of the Council's corporate objectives (as set out in the Business Plan 2019/20) specifically Communities and Environment.

4 Community Impact

Once adopted, the Coates Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan will have an impact on the community within the Coates Conservation Area and will be seeking to achieve improvements in the quality of this environment.

Appendix A

Coates Conservation Area Appraisal - September 2019 - (Pre Consultation Draft)

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Part 1

1. Introduction

The historic centre of Coates comprising of North Green and South Green is designated a conservation area. This conservation area status is a legal recognition that the area has **special** architectural and historic interests and there is a presumption that the character and appearance of the area should be preserved and enhanced. The purpose of this conservation area character appraisal is to clearly identify what the **special** interests of the Coates Conservation Area are and what elements of the built and natural environment contribute to its special interest. The boundary of the Coates Conservation Area is shown on Map 1.

A conservation area was first designated in Coates on 7th October 1976 and is focused on the central core of the village taking in North Green and South Green and the property immediately around these open spaces. The boundary to the Coates Conservation Area has never been amended or altered since designation.

The Appraisal and Management Plan Process

This appraisal and management plan have been prepared following the methodology set out in Historic England's guidance document 'Conservation Area Designation, Appraisal and Management' (Feb 2019). It will set out the legislative and policy background associated with the need for the appraisal and management, before first appraising the **special** historic and architectural interest of the Coates Conservation Area and secondly considering management requirements to maintain the conservation area's special qualities.

This Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan was approved by Fenland District Council's Full Council on **XX XXXXX XXXX**. Prior to its adoption it was subject to local consultation as required by S71 (2) Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. Full details of the public consultation process are set out under Annex 3.

Appendix A

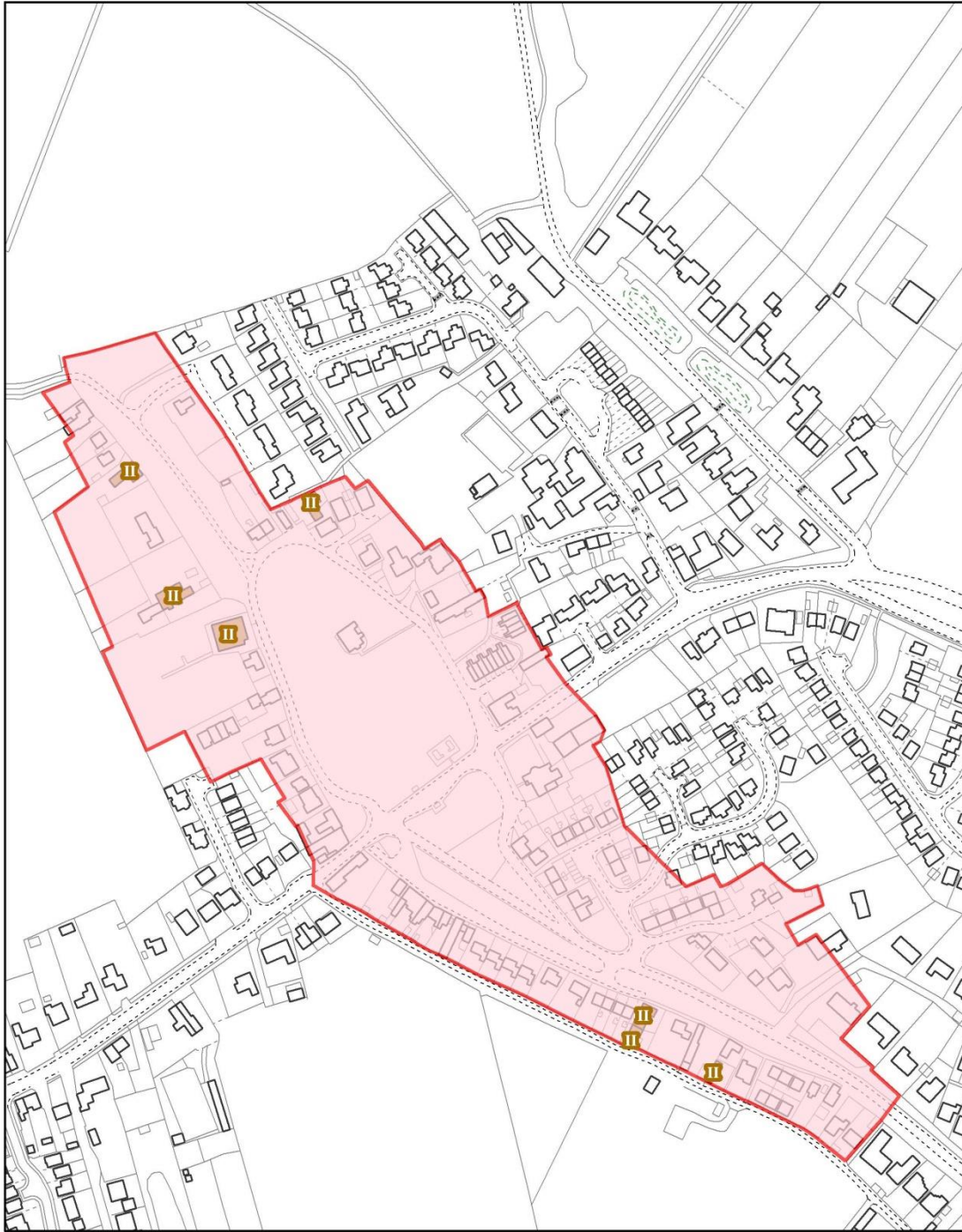
Coates Conservation Area Appraisal - September 2019 - (Pre Consultation Draft)



Coates Conservation Area Boundary (as original designation)

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Appendix A

Coates Conservation Area Appraisal - September 2019 - (Pre Consultation Draft)



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2. Legislation and Policy: The requirement to produce a conservation area appraisal and management plan

The legislation governing the designation of conservation areas and the legal duties towards their care now falls under the provision of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. It is under Section 69 of the act that gives local planning authorities the power to recognize areas which are considered to be of ***“special architectural and historic interest the character and appearance of which it is desirable to preserve and enhance”***, defining them within a boundary and designating them as a conservation area. This conservation area character appraisal and management plan is prepared in accordance with Section 71(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, which places a duty on the Local Planning Authority to *“from time to time to formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of any parts of their area which are conservation areas”*.

Local Planning Policy

The Fenland Local Plan was adopted on 8th May 2014. This local plan forms the policy basis for growth and regeneration in Fenland over the next 20 years. In the context of planning, applications for planning permission must be determined in accordance with the local development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Within the Fenland Local Plan (2014) Policy LP18 specifically relates to the historic environment and states that *“The Council will protect, conserve and seek opportunities to enhance the historic environment throughout Fenland”* and one of the ways it will achieve this is by *“keeping up-to-date and implementing conservation area appraisals and management plans, and using such up to date information in determining planning applications”*. This conservation area appraisal has been produced with due regard to satisfying policy LP18.

Local Plan Policy LP12 (Rural Areas Development Policy) applies to villages in Fenland including Coates. Part (d) of the policy states that where development is concerned *“the proposal is of a scale and in a location that is in keeping with the core shape and form of the settlement, and will not adversely harm its character and appearance”*. This conservation area appraisal will support policy LP12 by clearly identifying what aspects of the built and natural environment make up the character and appearance of the Coates Conservation Area.

National Planning Policy Framework

The National Planning Policy Framework (Feb 2019) sets out Government planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied. It identifies how planning policy is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development through economic, social and environmental factors. A core principle of the NPPF is to *“conserve heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance, so that they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the quality of life of this and future generations”*. The NPPF seeks to promote positive planning which can shape and direct development. This character appraisal has been produced to accord with the NPPF as a positive planning tool which serves to identify the significance of the

Appendix A

Coates Conservation Area Appraisal - September 2019 - (Pre Consultation Draft)

Coates Conservation Area so that significance can be given appropriate regard in the consideration of planning proposals.

Under the NPPF (Feb 2019) Annex 2 it defines Designated Heritage Assets as “A World Heritage Site, Scheduled Monument, Listed Building, Protected Wreck Site, Registered Park and Garden, Registered Battlefield or Conservation Area designated under the relevant legislation”. **Coates Conservation Area is a designated heritage asset.** Within the conservation area there are 7 listed buildings which are also designated heritage assets. A full list of the listed buildings is provided in Annex 1.

3. Planning Controls

Conservation area designation brings with it certain planning controls which mean that planning permission is required for certain aspects of development which may not have required planning permission if they were not located in a conservation area. A full account of additional planning controls associated with conservation area designation is provided in Annex 2. In addition to this in determining planning applications associated with buildings or land within a conservation area the duty in law under S72 (1) of the Act states that “**special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character and appearance of that area**”. The character and appearance of the Coates Conservation Area, as identified in this appraisal, shall inform planning decision making so that it aligns with the duty in law.

4. Summary of Special Interest

Date of Original Designation:	8 th October 1976
Dates of Boundary Amendments:	None
Location:	Coates, Cambridgeshire
Changes to Boundary through this review:	Yes – amendments to the line of the boundary.
General Character:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Rural village▪ Centrepiece of the village is the large The Green, which is an extraordinary settlement feature for this Fen location.▪ Dwellings are modest in form and size. No more than two storey.▪ Buff brick, pantile and slate are the more prevalent building materials seen within the town.▪ The oldest surviving cottages are timber-frame, brick and thatch.
General Condition:	Good
Scheduled Monuments:	0

Appendix A

Coates Conservation Area Appraisal - September 2019 - (Pre Consultation Draft)

Listed Buildings:	7
Negative Factors:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Green vulnerable to damage▪ Appearance of part of the war memorial railings
Heritage at Risk:	Not identified as being “at risk”

Section 1 – Character Appraisal

5. Assessing Special Interest

Location & Topography

Coates is a Fen village located in East Anglia, in the north of the county of Cambridgeshire, in the district of Fenland. It is located within the parish of Whittlesey and is 2 1/2 miles east of Whittlesey and 8 miles west of the town of March. The village is located on part of a gravel capped “island” within the low-lying Fenland and is one of a number of these geological “islands” (areas of higher land) within this Fenland area the others including Whittlesey, Eastrea, Eye, Crowland and Thorney. Coates was once a small settlement on part of an island surrounded by marshland but it is now a village surrounded by prime agricultural land. The prime agricultural land has been created by man through the draining of the Fens (land reclamation) which was undertaken from the mid 17th century. To the north of the town lies the river Nene and Nene washes, which is an area of wildlife rich washland on the bank of the river.

Geology

Coates is situated upon bedrock from the Jurassic period specifically a formation of Oxford Clay-mudstone which formed 156-165 million years ago in shallow seas. The overlying superficial deposits, those being the younger geological deposits over the bedrock, are of sand and gravel. These superficial deposits were formed up to 2 million years ago in the Quaternary period and were formed in a shoreline environment. The soil is chiefly a black loam.

Coates in Context

Archaeology

There has been human activity within the parish of Whittlesey since at least the Late Neolithic Period/Early Bronze age (2500 – 2000BC). At Coates archaeological investigation has identified evidence of a possible Bronze Age or Early Iron settlement as post holes, pottery and flint have been found in the locality (CHER MCB17257). The existence of early Bronze age activity in Whittlesey parish has also been evidenced in recent years by the substantial finds associated with a Bronze age settlement at the Must Farm site in the west of the parish. Sites recognised as Scheduled Monuments within the Whittlesey parish include Suet Hill Round Barrow Cemetery, a Bronze age burial site (2000-700BC), and the Bowl Barrow south of Buntings Farm, comprising of funerary monuments of earthwork mounds (2400 – 1500BC).

Appendix A

Coates Conservation Area Appraisal - September 2019 - (Pre Consultation Draft)

It is known that the Romans (43AD to 410AD) were active in the area. The Fen Causeway (Fen Road), a Roman Road, ran through the area north of the current settlement and provided a Roman route through the marshland of the Fens from Norfolk through Whittlesey to Water Newton (just outside Peterborough). A Roman field system and trackway with later field ditches has also been identified at Whittlesey Washes, again to the north of the town, and this is protected as a Scheduled Monument. Roman artefacts and pottery fragments have been found scattered in fields around Coates.

Less evidence of Anglo-Saxon (410-1066AD) living has been found within the Parish of Whittlesey and none in Coates. There has, however, been some archaeological evidence of late medieval activity in Coates through evidence of quarrying, field boundaries and water features and some evidence of post medieval activity in the form of building material finds (MCB17083).

History of Coates

Archaeological evidence identifies human activity in the area from the Bronze age era although it is not known when a settlement at Coates was first established or what form it originally took. Up until the 17th century Coates would have stood above the surrounding Fen marshes, marshes comprising of peat fen with water logged ground, with reeds growing over it and served by a communication network of canals and rivers. The inhabitants of these lands would have used the surrounding land for fowling, fishing and catching eels which would have been a food source and traded.

Land ownership in Fenland from the 10th century onwards was dominated by monastic estates. The Fenland monasteries were “*refounded*” from 970 onwards and they were “*endowed with enormous estates (augmented through purchase and bequests) by the King and leading members of his court*” (Oosthuizen 2000). The Benedictine Abbey of Ely owned the Isle of Ely including Wisbech, March and most of Whittlesey. The land where Coates is located was under the ownership of The Benedictine Abbey of Ely and fell within the parish served by St Mary’s Church in Whittlesey. The monastic estates of Whittlesey were seen as generating a good income, indeed it is noted that “*Judging by the value of the manors, Whittlesey was a*



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prosperous place in the Middle Ages” (BHO)

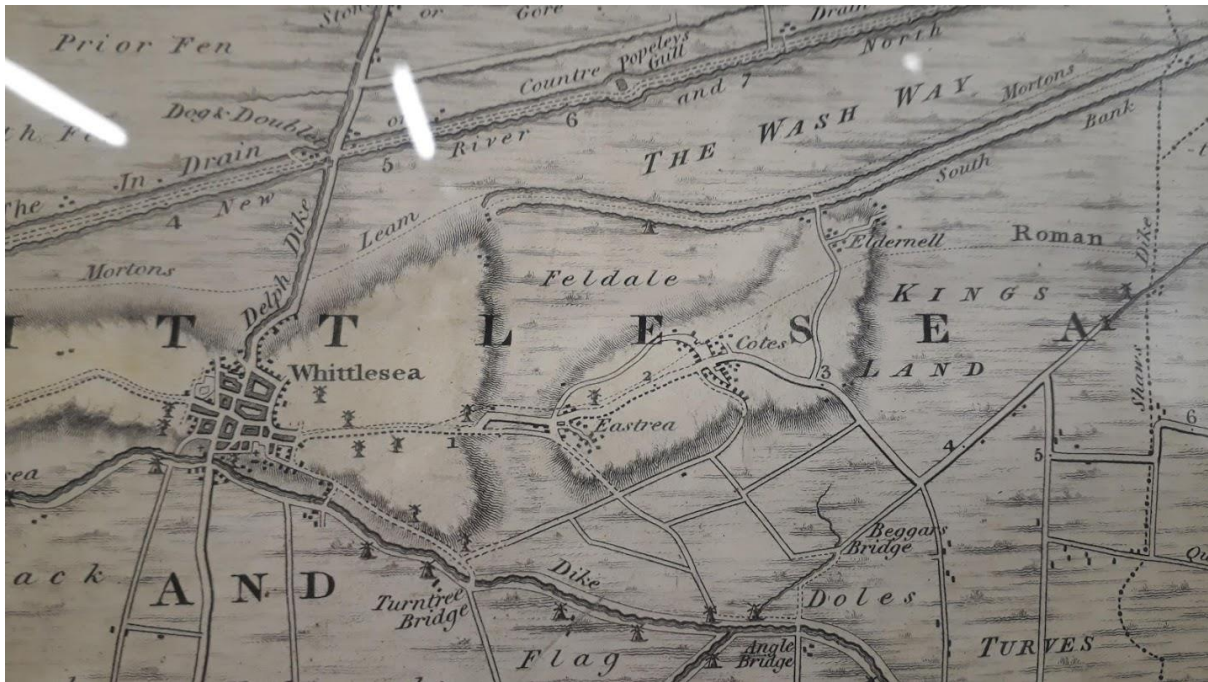
A Map of ye Great Levell of ye Fens. 1658 Jonas Moor map

The ownership of land where Coates is located changed in the 16th century with the dissolution of the monasteries. The monastic estates were broken up and lands passed to private owners. A large amount of land within the Whittlesey area formed the Whittlesey Manors which was owned by the Lord of the Manor and this appears to have included land at Coates. In the early 17th century the Duke of Bedford and associated investors set about draining the Fens, They were seeking to capitalise on its fertile lands for grazing and arable farming. In the mid 17th century the Dutchman Cornelius Vermuyden was appointed to oversee the draining of the Fens. Within the area around Whittlesey and Coates Vermuyden’s plans involved widening the Nene and creating the washes to hold excess river water in winter. By the end of the 18th century it is estimated that there was 1550 acres of open field and 2400 acres of pasture created.

Coates is referenced on the Jonas Moor map of 1658 as Cotes and depicted as a handful of dwellings enclosed by a rectangular boundary suggesting an established settlement of properties over and above a lone farmhouse. There is documentary reference to Quakers and other non-conformists living in Coates in the late 17th century. There is also a documentary reference in 1699 to a sports event being held on Coates Green indicating the Green had existed at this time. The earliest surviving buildings in Coates date to the late 17th and early 18th century and are **98 South Green (grade ii)**, **22 North Green (grade ii)** and **45 Feildside (grade ii)**. These properties are constructed in timber frame and brick with thatch roofs.

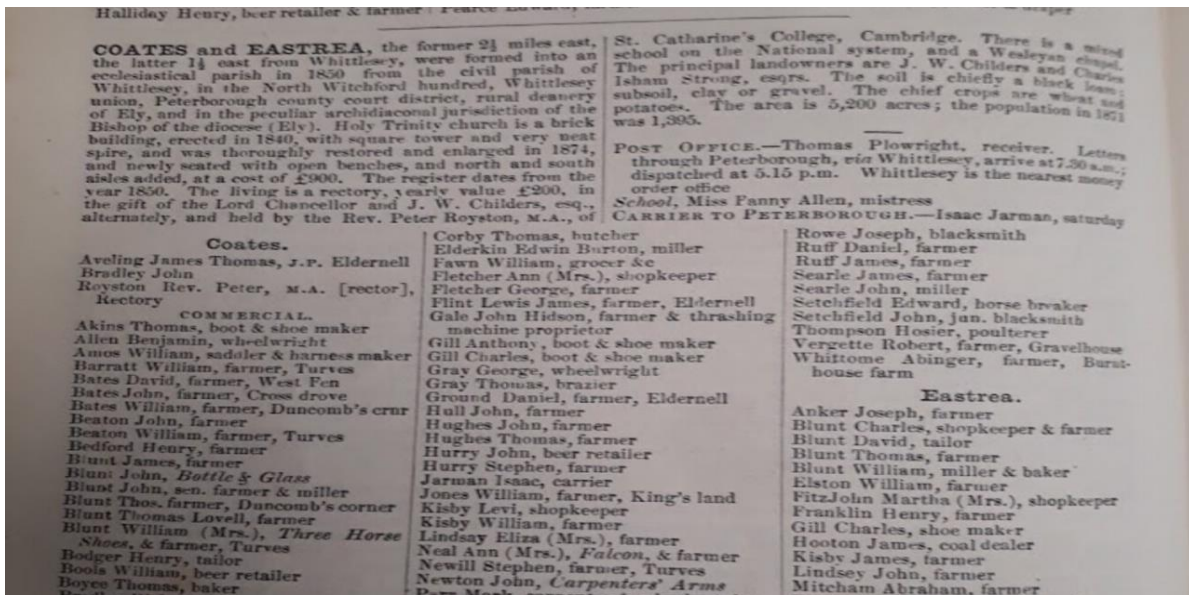
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Baker Map 1821

From Cotes to Coates, the 1841 Tithe map and records refer to the settlement as the Hamlet of Coates. It is clear, however, it is already a well established village set around The Green, the footprint of the Green seen today. In 1841 there are 50 dwellings (19 on the north side and 30 on the south side) around The Green mainly described as cottage and yard/garden but some more specifically to the north are referred to as house and garden. There is a mix of tenure between owner occupiers and tenanted property and there is no dominating property owner. This was an agricultural community with those living in the village working as farmers or predominantly agricultural labourers although there were other professions which supported the agricultural community including wheel wrights, shoemaker, blacksmiths, tailor and publican. The non-conformist chapel was built on The Green in 1831 (enlarged 1866) and in 1840 the **Church of England Church of Holy Trinity (grade ii)** was built to the east side of The Green.



Post Office Directory 1875 Entry.

Coates does not grow as a settlement in the Victorian era, indeed the population of the village itself declines towards the end of the 19th century. From having a population of 600 - 700 in 1841 the population of the village is recorded in the 1861 census as being 709 residents occupying 181 dwellings, in the 1881 census as 694 residents occupying 164 dwelling and by 1901 there are 587 residents occupying 150 dwellings. The Post Office Directory of 1858 still describes Coates as “the pleasant hamlet of Coates” under the entry for Whittlesey but in later decades it is recognised under its own entry for Coates and Eastrea; “formed into an ecclesiastical parish, July 9 1850, from the civil parish of Whittlesey” (Kelly’s Directory 1892). The OS maps of 1887 and 1901 show the footprint of village changes little in the 19th century from that presented on the Tithe map of 1841. It is clear that the settlement pattern around The Green well established in the 19th century. The buildings which stood around it included many thatched cottages. Buildings including the Fire Engine House, and Sunday School date to this era.



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South Green

The footprint and character of Coates appears to change little in the first half of the 20th century and it remains a village serving an agricultural community. Kelly's Directory 1929 cites numerous commercial businesses in the village including a blacksmiths, wheelwright, thatcher, beer retailer as well as two pubs, a post office, a Barclay's Bank, public hall, school, parish church and Methodist Chapel. The 1926 OS map indicates trees around North Green but South Green was more open. From the mid 20th century onwards the character of the village would change as the cottages that had existed around the Greens were demolished and replaced with new houses. At this time the footprint of the village also expands as housing development starts to occur on the east side of South Green between South Green and March Road and then to the north of The Fold. In the 1990s there has been tree planting schemes which have seen new trees planted across the Greens particularly across South Green which has changed the context of the space. Notable buildings/structures erected in the 20th century are Church View built in 1914 and the War Memorial erected in 1920.



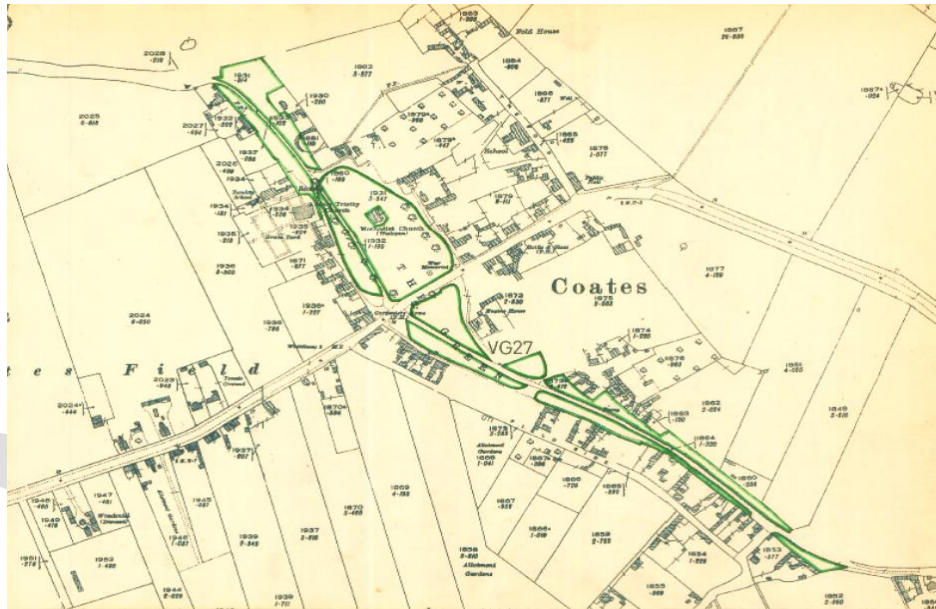
North Green

Up until the turn of the 21st century Coates Green was owned by the Lord and Lady of the Manor of Whittlesey. In 1999 on the death of the last Lady of the Manor, Nancy Bowker, the Whittlesey Manors including Coates Green was gifted to the Whittlesey Charities. While owned by the Lord of the Manor and now Whittlesey Charities Coates Green has historically served as public open space for use by the village community. Historically residents of the village grazed their livestock on Coates Green and it was known for geese grazing on it. Coates Green appears on Cambridgeshire County Council's Register of Common Lands and Village Greens as a Registered Village Green (VG27) which affords it protection and prevents it from

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being built on. Its registration as a village green was finalised on 1st October 1970 and under this registration it states the inhabitants of Coates have the right to use the village green for lawful sports and pastimes. Coates Green is maintained by Fenland District Council.



Village Green Designation Map (1970)

6. Character Analysis: Overview

Green Space and Trees

Coates sense of place is defined by its Green which is the focal point of the village and the fundamental element of the character and appearance of this conservation area. Coates Green is a sizeable area of grassed public open space in total approx 8.2 acres in size which it is bisected by the A605 Whittlesey to March road. Indeed it is considered an unusual feature for a Fenland settlement, where greens are not a common aspect of settlement morphology, which adds to its interest. In describing Coates Pevsner observed *“The village has an uncommonly large Green at r. angles to the main road and cut in half by it”*(Pevsner). The Green is irregular in its shape with the largest part of the Green to the north of the A605 and is known today as North Green. The smaller section of green to the south of the A605 is known today as South Green and it tapers away in a southerly direction and it dissected by a number of roads leaving fragments of green alongside the road.

The natural quality of Coates Green is enhanced by the presence of trees upon it. These are all deciduous trees and as such the appearance of the greens does differ between summer when trees are in leaf and winter when leaves have fallen. The oldest trees and most prominent trees on the green are the European lime trees (common lime trees) found on the east and west sides of North Green. These lime trees stand dominant on North Green and are by far the tallest trees. At the northern end of north green there is a mix of younger trees including Norwegian Maple,

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Rowen, Ash, Horn beam and Cherry. On South Green the trees are young trees, of native and ornamental types including Norway Maple, Horse Chestnuts, Oaks and Cherry Trees. The churchyard also affords a pleasant green space and within it is a fine mature Holm Oak and yew trees. There are no specific Tree Preservation Orders in place within the Coates Conservation Area and all trees are protected by virtue of being within the conservation area.



Trees on Green

Built Environment

The focus of the conservation area is Coates Green and the boundary takes in property which largely sits around the green either facing the green or appearing gable end on to it. 2/3 of the dwellings within the conservation area date to the mid 20th century onwards and comprise of a mix of generic 20th century buildings. In this respect there are not strong architectural and historic qualities across the conservation area's built environment. There are, however, obvious aspects to the character and appearance of buildings. Buildings are modest in scale and of one, one half storey or two storey in height. Property is predominantly of brick construction and presents a variety of grey, creams and buff bricks with some properties rendered. Where dormer windows exist it is in one half storey property only.

7. Character Analysis: Detailed

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North Green

North Green comprises of the largest single area of grassed green which is that bound by the A605 on its southern side and enclosed by the road running around it. In addition to this North Green continues northwards in the form of a narrower section of elongated green which extends to the northern field edge of the village and has the road running through the middle of it. Upon the larger section of North Green standing alone in the centre of the green and drawing the eye is the former Methodist Chapel. This Victorian chapel building, circa 1841, is of simple form and style but by virtue of its positioning it stands out as a feature building within the village and makes an intrinsic contribution to the special architectural and historic interests of the conservation area and the village's sense of place.

The only other built structure found on North Green is the Coates War Memorial which sits adjacent to the A605 towards the south east corner of North Green. The war memorial takes the form of stone obelisk generously enclosed by fencing much of which is comprised of concrete posts with tubular metal bars. The enclosure around the memorial reinforces the presence of the memorial on the vast green and with its well maintained hedging and some flowers it creates an attractive semi private space on the otherwise open green. The concrete posts and tubular metal bars do not form a particularly attractive boundary to the war memorial and it is felt this offers an opportunity for enhancement.



War Memorial

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A key feature of North Green is the trees upon it which add to the strong natural qualities of this part of the conservation area. The oldest and largest trees on North Green are lime trees which make a fundamental contribution to the character and appearance of the conservation area. A total of nine mature lime trees survive which each are around 150+ years old. Given the size of the green these large trees sit comfortably within the space complimenting the vast expanse of the green. A number of other mature trees are worth noting around North Green including the Horse Chestnut at the Rectory. Younger trees are also found around North Green and these collectively contribute to the natural qualities of the green.

There are no physical boundaries surrounding North Green to separate it from the roads around it and through it. The edge of the green is entirely open and at any point you can step off the road or path and on to any part of North Green. The mature and semi mature trees that sit towards the edge of the green are seen as natural features on the green and not as a boundary treatment. The open nature of the green forms part of the character and appearance of the space and reinforces its intent as a space welcoming to be used by the local community. North of former chapel there is a playground area which also emphasises the fact this is a village green for community recreation. The nature of the green edge is such that it is susceptible to suffering from damage and erosion particularly if cars repeatedly park around the edge.



Church from the Green

The open character of the green means it is viewed from all angles in all directions across it. The most familiar view is that looking northwards from the A605 up the green towards the former Methodist Chapel. There is a great awareness of the

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expanse of North Green when looking across it. It is also noticeable, particularly in summer when the trees are in leaf, that the buildings around the green somewhat fade into the background obscured by the trees on the green and the focus of view is very much the natural space. It is noted that there are particularly attractive views at the northern end of the green looking north along the narrow stretch of green where the road runs through it. As the dwelling houses sit back behind the green they are unobtrusive and the view taken in is one of green lined by trees. In winter, when trees are not in leaf, views are afforded into the open countryside to the north beyond the village. These views are important as they create a strong visual connection between the settlement and the fields beyond serving to reinforce the rural context of Coates.



Countryside view

Around the largest area of North Green the settlement pattern comprises of buildings fronting the outer edge of the surrounding road. Buildings generally face onto the green although a few sit gable end onto the green. Where front gardens exist these are narrow spaces and there is a mix of low level front boundary treatments. At the northern stretch of North Green the settlement pattern differs as houses sit to back behind the green accessed from driveways which cross the green. The buildings around North Green are notably modest in scale and of simple architectural styles which is a characteristic of this rural village settlement and the conservation area. The historic buildings which tend to be those which are more characterful, that

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stand out in the street scene include the **Church of Holy Trinity (grade ii)**, **22 North Green (grade ii)**, **40 North Green (grade ii)** and Church View 44 North Green.

The Rectory (grade ii) is a historic building dating back to 1773. Although the larger of the dwellings within the village it sits fairly discretely in private grounds to the north side of the church. Adjoining the Rectory on its west side is the former Sunday School which is an attractive non-domestic building which can best be seen from the churchyard. Unfortunately this building now stands in a poor state of repair and needs refurbishment. The churchyard itself is worth noting a tranquil natural space within the conservation area. The Holme Oak is a fine tree within the churchyard and in spring the Magnolia trees come out in their delicate pink blooms.

South Green

The green to the south of the A605 is called South Green. It is smaller than North Green and more fragmented as a result of the roads which run through it. South Green is triangular in shape tapering away as it heads south. The largest section of South Green abuts the A605 and is open and without any boundary enclosure. The trees on the space are young trees with the exception of two Norway Maple on the east side. There are no buildings on this area of South Green and the focal point is childrens play equipment. The rest of South Green presents itself as wide stripes of verge to the sides of the road with young deciduous trees throughout. These green spaces offer less opportunity for recreation given their size but contribute to the strong natural qualities of the conservation area.

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South Green

Buildings around South Green are predominantly from the mid 20th century onwards and sit to the footpath edge or behind front gardens. The buildings around South Green are notably modest in scale and of simple architectural styles which is a characteristic of this rural village settlement and the conservation area. The historic buildings which survive on South Green tend to be more the characterful building in this part of the conservation area and include the pair of adjoining thatched dwellings known as **98 South Green (grade ii)** and **45 Feildside (grade ii)**. 98 South Green fronts the green although 45 Feildside is discretely sited behind. **The cottage to rear of South Green (grade ii)** is also discretely sited and not entirely visible from South Green itself although its thatched roof can be seen from the green. These three early buildings are located close together at the southern end of the conservation area.

Feildside

Feildside is a lane which forms the western boundary to the conservation area south of the A605. The lane is no more than a farm track, untarmaced. On the east side of Feildside is the rear boundaries, rear access and garaging of South Green property. Boundary treatments are a mix of modern walling, fencing and hedging. The interest of this conservation area boundary is in the nature of the unmade track. To the west of Feildside are currently feilds which give rise to its name.

Buildings of Local Importance

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Buildings of Local Importance identified in the text above are:

- Former Sunday School, North Green (identified as a BLI since 1993)
- Former Methodist Chapel, North Green (identified as a BLI since 1993)
- Church View, North Green (identified as a BLI since 1993)
- Coates War Memorial, North Green (identified as a BLI since 1993)
- Fire Engine House (identified as a BLI since 1993)

DRAFT

Part 2

Boundary Review

Coates Conservation Area was designated in October 1976 and the boundary has not changed since its original designation. As part of this appraisal process the boundary line of the conservation area has been reviewed to ensure it still covers an area which can be determined to be of special architectural and historic interest.

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In this instance it is felt the Coates Conservation Area boundary requires amendment to reflect the fact that a part of the conservation area does not have a special architectural and historic interest. The boundary is to be amended on its east side to remove an area of mid-late 20th century housing development which is not of special interest and does not have a tangible relationship with Coates Green. The areas to be removed are as follows:

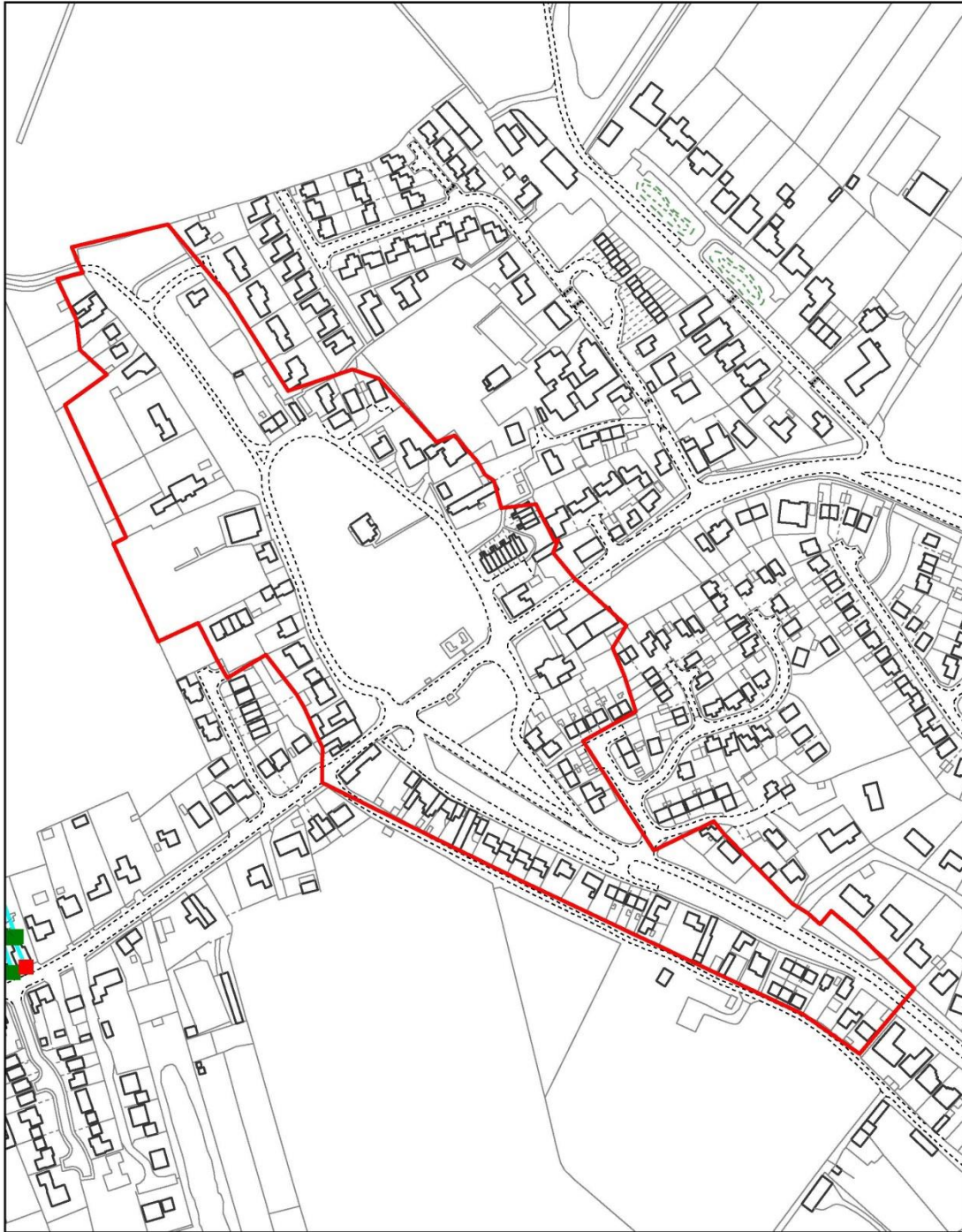
- Sunnyville Road and the entrance to Barnfeild Gardens is included within the conservation area. These streets were created in the mid 20th century and are not considered to be part of the historic footprint of the village. The housing on these streets does not front South Green. Property on Sunnyville Road was built circa 1970 and comprises of generic modern housing. Given it does not relate to the green and is not of architectural or historic interest it is proposed that the boundary is realigned to exclude Sunnyville Road property.
- 37 – 42 South Green were erected after the conservation area boundary was designated. 40, 41, and 42 are bungalows which are well set back from the green. 37, 38 and 39 sit behind them and are not clearly visible from South Green.



A map showing the proposed boundary is provided in Map 2.

Map 2 - Proposed Coates Conservation Area Boundary

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Part 3

Management Plan

The Management Plan is intended to provide a strategy for managing change, addressing issues and identifying enhancements within the Coates Conservation Area to ensure the conservation area retains its qualities as an area of special architectural and historic interest. The objectives developed are intended to effect positive changes within the Coates Conservation Area to enhance its character and appearance and better reveal its significance.

The fundamental factors which contribute to the special character and appearance of the Coates Conservation Area are identified in the character appraisal. Given the interest of the conservation area there are only a few issues which threaten this particular conservation area's character and appearance.

Objectives

Preserving the Green

Coates Village Green is the defining element and fundamental feature of the Coates Conservation Area therefore preserving the character and appearance of this open green space is fundamental to preserving and enhancing the interests of the conservation area. As a designated village green it is protected from development and will never be developed upon but there remains some threats which may harm its interests and the quality of the green. The grassed edges of the green are considered to be vulnerable to being eroded and damaged by vehicles repeatedly and regularly being parked on it.

Objective 1 - *The Council will seek to ensure the proper attention is paid to the care of the green by ensuring that action would be taken if vehicles were being parked in the green in a manner which breaches planning controls.*

Coates War Memorial

Coates War Memorial occupies a prominent position on North Green adjacent to the A605. The memorial has historic importance within the village commemorating those villagers who lost their lives in World War I and World War 2. It is also a notable historic feature within the conservation area. In many towns and villages war memorials are listed and recognised for their architectural and historic interests. It is disappointing that the Coates War Memorial is not afforded the same recognition.

Photographic evidence shows that the enclosure around the war memorial has change in the last century and has been enlarged. The enclosed space is well maintained although the nature of the enclosure on the north, west and east side which is formed from concrete bollards and steel poles is considered to detract from the setting of the war memorial and wider appearance of The Green. It is felt there is

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an opportunity to enhance the setting of the war memorial and appearance of the green by providing better quality railings.

Objective 2 - *To seek to promote the historic importance of the war memorial and enhance its setting by (i) putting the memorial forward for listing and (ii) seeking to facilitate an enhancement scheme to replace the modern sections of railings around the memorial.*

Trees within the Conservation Area

The natural qualities of the Coates Conservation Area are enhanced by the presence of trees, particularly on the green and within the churchyard area. These are predominantly deciduous trees and as such the appearance of the conservation area does differ between summer when trees are in leaf and winter when leaves have fallen which adds to its seasonal interest. The oldest trees and most prominent trees within the conservation area are on the green are the European lime trees (common lime trees) found on the east and west sides of North Green. These lime trees stand dominant on North Green and are by far the tallest trees. Care is required to effectively manage the lime trees along with other trees on the green.

Objective 3 - *Tree management on North & South Green should be implemented to ensure the trees are maintained in a healthy and safe condition to the end of their safe useful life. This can be achieved by (i) an annual tree inspection noting any defects within the trees that require remedial action. Such regular inspection will also highlight any problems that may affect the long-term potential of the trees and give early evidence that future removals/replacements may be required, (ii) undertaking operations such as the removal of basal and trunk growth on the mature trees, particularly lime, is carried out as part of programmed maintenance and (iii) Only removing tree for reasons of health & safety following a full inspection and ensuring due regard is given to planting a replacement tree to ensure continuity of tree cover on both greens.*

Development site opportunities

Coates Conservation Area draws its boundary tight around the village green and its peripheral houses and it is already densely developed. In this context development opportunities within the conservation area are limited. There are, however, a few sites and poor quality buildings which currently detract from the character and appearance of the conservation area and offer an opportunity to enhance the conservation area through appropriate redevelopment. Development of these sites will need to be initiated and undertaken by the land/property owners. Where required the Council can support these owners by providing appropriate planning and

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conservation advice to help ensure such developments enhance the character and appearance of the conservation area:

- 6 March Road
- 14 March Road

Delivery

The three objectives cited within this Management Plan are to be delivered in conjunction with Fenland District Council as they fall under the Council's work remit. The delivery of these objectives will require the input of the Conservation Officers, the Arboricultural Officer and may involve collaboration with other teams like the Legal Department. Fenland District Council will use its available resources to help deliver the objectives contained in this Management Plan.

The Parish of Whittlesey benefits from a strong civic voice and a committed Town Council. There are a number of established community groups and organizations within the parish that take an interest and seek to promote Whittlesey and Coates cultural heritage and its built environment. These groups include The Whittlesey Society and Whittlesey Museum. The Management Plan provides an opportunity for local groups to get involved in the delivery of some of the objectives specifically objectives 2.

Monitoring

During the 5 year period this Management Plan is set to cover it is important to be able to monitor progress of objectives and measure success at the end of the period. Monitoring procedures should be easy to implement and transparent. In this regard the following monitoring should be followed:

- Annual Review** – Fenland District Council's management team, the conservation section and stakeholders referenced within the document shall convene on an annual basis. The purpose of the meeting will be to specifically review the objectives set out in this management plan and report on the progress being made under each objective.
- Measuring Success (Objectives)** – Success can be measured against completed objectives. It is considered that objective 2 has a clear outcome and success will occur when the objective is met. It is not felt objectives 1 and 3 will ever be clearly completed and are open ended objectives covering a long term strategy of care.
- Recording Success (The Photographic Record)** – In collaboration with the annual review it would be beneficial to keep a photographic record of objective related buildings and streets so successes can be visually convey through "before and after" photographs.

Annex 1: Building on the National Heritage Listed for England – Listed Buildings

- **22 North Green, Coates. Grade II**

Cottage, subdivided, and now one dwelling. Late C17, and early C19 with C20 small addition at rear. Timber framed, and later brick, plaster rendered.

- **The Rectory, North Green, Coates. Grade II**

Rectory. 1773 (dated stone) and mid C19. Yellow gault brick with steeply pitched slate roof and sawtooth eaves cornice.

- **Church of Holy Trinity, North Green. Grade II**

Parish Church. 1840, 1874 and 1890 by J. Wild.

- **40 North Green, Coates. Grade II**

Pair of Cottages. Late C18 or early C19. Brick, rendered with long straw thatch and saw tooth eaves cornice.

- **98 South Green, Coates. Grade II**

Cottage. Late C17 or early C18, and 1784. Originally timber framed but the frame has been substantially replaced or cased by brick.

- **45 Fieldside, Coates. Grade II**

Cottage. Probably late C17 or early C18 in origin, altered and repaired in C19 and C20.

- **Cottage, Rear of 91 South Green, Coates. Grade II**

Cottage. C18 and C19. Originally of claylump which has been replaced entirely by late C18-C19 cellow brick, part now painted, and one gable end rendered.

Annex 2: Planning Controls and Enforcement

Development Control

This Management Plan seeks to establish a proactive framework for managing change, addressing issues and identifying enhancements within the Coates Conservation Area to ensure it retains its qualities as an area of special architectural and historic interest and to better reveal these interests. The Local Planning Authority does however manage change within conservation areas on a day to day basis through the process of development control. Where planning permission or listed building consent is required for works to buildings within a conservation area there are statutory considerations the Local Planning Authority has to follow in determining such applications. Buildings located within a conservation area are also subject to some additional planning controls. The following section identifies the Acts and statutory guidance which contribute to the framework of development control and the process of considering applications.

Town and Country Planning Act 1990

The Town and Country Planning Act 1990 is at the heart of the planning system although it is modified by The Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and more recently by the Enterprise and Regulatory Reform Act 2013. S57 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 sets out the requirement that ***“Planning Permission is required for the carrying out of any development of land”*** although it allows for certain development to be exempt from planning permission if it is covered by a development order such as The Town & County Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 as detailed below. S55 of The Town and Country Planning Act 1990 defines development. S38 (6) of The Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 instructs that ***“if regard is to be had to the development plan for the purpose of any determination [of planning permission] to be made under the planning Acts the determination must be made in accordance with the plan unless material consideration indicate otherwise”***.

The Enterprise and Regulatory Reform Act 2013 made changes to the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 simultaneously in respect to the demolition of unlisted buildings within conservation areas. The changes made in respect of demolition resulted in Conservation Area Consent becoming obsolete and instead Planning Permission is solely required for works of relevant demolition in a conservation area under

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provisions now covered by the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. Planning Permission is required for demolition of a building exceeding 115 cubic metres or to take down any wall, gate or fence over 1 metre high abutting a highway or over 2m elsewhere. Undertaking works of relevant demolition in a conservation area without planning permission constitutes a criminal offence under S196D of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

The Town & Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015

The designation of a conservation area has implications under The Town & Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015. For the purposes of this act, as stated under Schedule 1 Part 1, land within a conservation area is reference as Article 2 (3) land.

Under this act certain works to unlisted dwelling houses which would have otherwise been possible to proceed without planning permission will require planning permission because the dwelling house is in a conservation area. Matters pertaining to the requirement of planning permission for dwellings houses are detailed in Schedule 2, Part 1 of the act and the act should be fully consulted before undertaking works to dwelling houses within a conservation area. Examples where planning permission will be specifically required if a dwelling house is located within a conservation area includes where works consisting of the cladding of any part of the exterior of a house with stone, artificial stone, pebble dash, render, timber, plastic or tiles or extending to the side of the house or extension consisting of a two storey rear extension. The installation of microwave antenna (satellite dishes) is also more greatly controlled if they are on dwellings within a conservation area.

Certain changes of use will require planning permission if a building is located in a conservation area. Such matters are detailed under Schedule 2, Part 3 of the act and this should be fully consulted when considering change of use of buildings within a conservation area. For example planning permission is required where buildings operating as shops, financial or professional services, betting offices or pay day loans offices and seek to change use to a building functions for assembly or leisure. Planning permission is also required where buildings are to change use to a dwelling house from a building operating as a shop, financial or professional services, betting office or mixed use.

Certain non-domestic extensions will require planning permission because a building is located in a conservation area. Such matters are detailed under Schedule 2, Part 7 of the act and this should be fully consulted when considering the extension of non-domestic property in a conservation area. For example planning permission is required for the extension of a shop or financial or professional services establishment or office building. Planning permission would also be required for the erection of a collection facility or modification of the loading bay of a shop.

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The installation, alteration or replacement of microregeneration solar PV or solar thermal equipment is more closely controlled where buildings are located in conservation areas. Such matters are detailed under Schedule 2, Part 14 of the act and this should be fully consulted when considering installing such equipment. For example, planning permission is required if it is the intention to install the equipment on roofs fronting a highway.

Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990

The legal duties in respect to the consideration of listed building consent applications and planning applications affecting listed buildings and buildings in conservation areas falls under the provisions of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. With regard specifically to conservation areas the act requires that in determining planning applications within conservation areas ***“special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving and enhancing the character or appearance of that area”***.

With regard to listed buildings, S16 of the act concerns the determination of Listed Building Consent and requires that ***“in considering whether to grant listed building consent for any works the local planning authority or the Secretary of State shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses”***. S66 of the act concerns the determination of planning permission in respect of works to listed buildings and requires that ***“in considering whether to grant planning permission for development which affects a listed building or its setting, the local planning authority or, as the case maybe, the Secretary of State shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses”***.

Fenland Local Plan (May 2014)

Planning law requires that applications for planning permission must be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Relevant material considerations may include other legislative direction (such as the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) 1990), statutory guidance (like to NPPF) or other general guidance but such considerations should be weighted accordingly. The Fenland Local Plan was adopted in May 2014. Policy LP18 of the Fenland Local Plan (May 2014) specifically concerns the historic environment.

Within the Vision Statement set out in the local plan a commitment is made seeking that ***“The natural and historic environment will be protected and enhanced with new development taking into account the surroundings of the area in which it would be situated”***. Objectives 3.1 and 3.2 reinforce the vision and intrinsically inform how the Council will approach development affecting the district’s conservation areas and other heritage assets. Objective 3.1 seeks to ***“Preserve and where appropriate, enhance buildings, monuments, sites and areas and***

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landscapes that are designated or locally valued for their heritage interest; and protect/enhance their settings". Objective 3.2 seeks to ***“create places, spaces and buildings that are well designed, contribute to a high and local distinctiveness of townscape character”***.

National Planning Policy Framework (Feb 2019)

The National Planning Policy Framework sets out Government planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied. It identifies how planning policy is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development through economic, social and environmental factors. A core principle of the NPPF is to “conserve heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance, so that they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the quality of life of this and future generations”. Section 16 covers conserving and enhancing the historic environment and paragraphs 184 – 202 provide guidance on the determination of applications.

Enforcement

The character and appearance of a conservation area can be diminished or harmed by unauthorised works being undertaken to listed buildings within it, where breaches of planning occur, where unauthorised advertisements have been used or where tree protection offences have occurred. Where buildings or sites within conservation areas are neglected and allowed to fall into disrepair this can also impact negatively on the interests of a conservation area. In these circumstances, the Local Planning Authority has a range of enforcement powers available at their discretion to address these issues.

Unauthorised Works to Listed Buildings

Any works to listed buildings that involve their alteration, extension or demolition are controlled by the mechanism of Listed Building Consent and proposals that would fail to preserve a listed building's interests would not be granted consent. The interest of a listed building maybe harmed by inappropriate and unauthorised works and failure to obtain listed building consent itself or breaching a condition attached to a listed building consent constitutes a criminal offence under S9 Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and owners can be prosecuted for undertaking such works.

The Local Planning Authority has the power to address unauthorised works to listed buildings under S38 Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and can issue a listed building enforcement notice. A Listed Building Enforcement Notice would state steps required to restore the building to its former state or state steps required to alleviate the effect of the unauthorised works or steps required to bring the building back to a state it would have been if conditions attached to a listed building consent had been complied with.

Breaches of Planning Control

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A breach of planning control is defined under S171A Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and occurs where development has been carried out without the required planning permission or where there has been a failure to comply with a condition under which planning permission has been granted. It is at the discretion of the Local Planning Authority to take action against breaches but where such breaches cause harm to the interests of a conservation area enforcement action should be pursued. The Local Planning Authority can serve an Enforcement Notice which would state what action is required to remedy the breach. It is an offence to fail to comply with an Enforcement Notice once the period for compliance has elapsed.

Unauthorised Advertisements

Unauthorised advertisements may relate to illegal hoardings, fly-posting, graffiti or adverts along highways. There are a range of provisions under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 for dealing with these issues.

Tree Offences

Tree Preservation Orders are made to protect specific trees in the interest of amenity. Anyone who contravenes an order by damaging or carrying out works to a tree has committed an offence and can be fined. They can also be required to replace the tree under a tree replacement notice.

Securing repairs to listed buildings

Under S48 and S54 Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 the Local Planning Authority has powers to address listed buildings which have fallen in to disrepair. Under S54 an Urgent Works Notice can be served on unoccupied listed buildings. An Urgent Works Notice would cover works (the minimum required) considered urgently necessary for the preservation of a listed building to keep the building wind and watertight, supported against collapse and secure from unauthorised entry. Such a notice would require an owner to undertake specified work in a particular timeframe otherwise the local authority would step in and execute the works. A S48 notice, also known as a Full Repairs Notice, could specify works for the full repair of the building although should an owner fail to execute such works the Local Planning Authority would have to be in a position to review the viability of compulsory purchase.

Securing repairs to unlisted buildings in conservation areas

Under S76 Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, the local planning authority could apply the provisions of a S54 urgent works notice (as detailed above) to an unlisted building.

S215 Notice

S215 Town & Country Planning Act 1990 provides Local Planning Authorities with the power to take steps required for land and buildings to be cleaned up when their condition adversely affects the amenity of an area. Under S219 of the act Local

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Planning Authorities have the power to undertake the clean up works themselves, at cost to the Local Planning Authority, and recover the costs from the landowner.

Annex 3: Public Consultation

In accordance with S71 Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, the Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan (2019) are put to public consultation from Monday 30 September 2019 and Monday 28 October 2019. The consultation is being undertaken in the following way:

- **Public Display** – A public display is being presented Coates during the consultation period. The display consisting of information boards with copies of the appraisal and management plan available for review. The public may leave feedback in a suggestions box that sits alongside the display
- **Public Event** – The Conservation Officer will be available for a public event in Coates for 1 day to answer any questions regarding this document and the accompanying management plan.
- **Web Site Publicity** – Copies of the Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan (2019) are available to download on Fenland District Council's website via [the following link \(tbc\)](#)
- **Advertising** – The consultation period will be advertised by means of a press release. Within the press release, the dates of the consultation period are cited alongside the details of where the documents can be viewed.
- **Direct Consultation** – For those building owners who have property that is proposed to be removed from the conservation area they will be directly contacted by letter. They will be made aware that their property is to be removed from the conservation area and asked to comment.

Annex 4: References

Books

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Oosthuizen S (2000), An Atlas of Cambridgeshire and Huntingdonshire, The Lavenham Press
N Pevsner (1977) The Buildings of England: Cambridgeshire, Penguin Books Ltd
Bevis T (1992) Water water everywhere: The Draining of the Fens
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Hiller R (1981), Clay that Burns: A history of the Fletton Brickmaking Industry.
Whittlesey Society, Millennium Memories of Whittlesey, Parrot Print Ltd
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Whittlesey Society (2004), Millennium Memories of Whittlesey No 5, Parrot Print Ltd

Directories

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Slater's 1950
Post Office Directory of Cambridge, Norfolk & Suffolk 1858
Cassey's Cambridgeshire Directory 1864
Kelly's Directory of Cambridge, Norfolk and Suffolk 1875
Kelly's Directory of Cambridgeshire, Norfolk and Suffolk 1892
Articles

Maps

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Cambridgeshire Records Society, Jonas Moore's Map of the Great Level of the Fens 1658

1841 Tithe Map

1887 OS County Series 1:2500 Cambridgeshire and Isle of Ely

1901 OS County Series 1:2500 Cambridgeshire and Isle of Ely

1926 OS County Series 1:2500 Cambridgeshire and Isle of Ely

1970 OS Plan 1:2500

Websites

British History Online (BHO) <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/cambs/vol4/pp123-135> (viewed 23/03/2017)

Dissertation

1982 – Institute of Geological Natural Environment Research Council The sand and gravel resources of the county around Whittlesey Cambridgeshire S Booth

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**DRAFT 6 MONTH CABINET FORWARD PLAN –
Updated 10 September 2019**



(For any queries, please refer to the published forward plan)

CABINET

CABINET DATE	ITEMS	LEAD PORTFOLIO HOLDER
17 Oct 2019	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Discretionary Rate Relief Policy Chatteris Land Agreement – CONFIDENTIAL ITEM 24 High Street, Wisbech – CONFIDENTIAL ITEM Cabinet Draft Forward Plan 	Cllr Boden Cllr Benney Cllr Seaton Cllr Boden
4 Nov 2019	(Additional meeting to be arranged) <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Commercial & Investment Strategy Cabinet Draft Forward Plan 	Cllr Boden Cllr Boden
19 Nov 2019	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Treasury Management Strategy Statement & Annual Investment Strategy Mid-Year Review 2019/20 Street Lighting Motion – update Growing Fenland Wisbech 2020 Vision Cabinet Draft Forward Plan 	Cllr Boden Cllr French Cllr Benney Cllr Boden Cllr Boden
13 Dec 2019	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Draft Business Plan Draft Budget 2020/21 & Mid Term Financial Strategy Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme Review 2020/21 Single Use Plastics – Update Cabinet Draft Forward Plan 	Cllr Boden Cllr Boden Cllr Boden Cllr Tierney Cllr Boden
16 Jan 2020	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Cabinet Draft Forward Plan 	Cllr Boden
20 Feb 2020	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Business Plan Corporate Budget 2020/21 & Mid Term Financial Strategy Cabinet Draft Forward Plan 	Cllr Boden Cllr Boden Cllr Boden
19 Mar 2020	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Cabinet Draft Forward Plan 	Cllr Boden

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