


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- The adopted Local Plan is five years old and many of the policies, such as affordable housing could be out of date;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.

Appendix 1



Fenland Local Plan

Issues and Options Consultation

Draft for consideration by Cabinet on 18 September 2019

October 2019

Appendix 1

OS Map - Copyright Note

The maps within this document are reproduced from Ordnance Survey Material with the permission of Ordnance Survey on behalf of the controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office(c) Crown copyright. Unauthorised reproduction infringes Crown copy right and may lead to prosecution or civil proceedings

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

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.

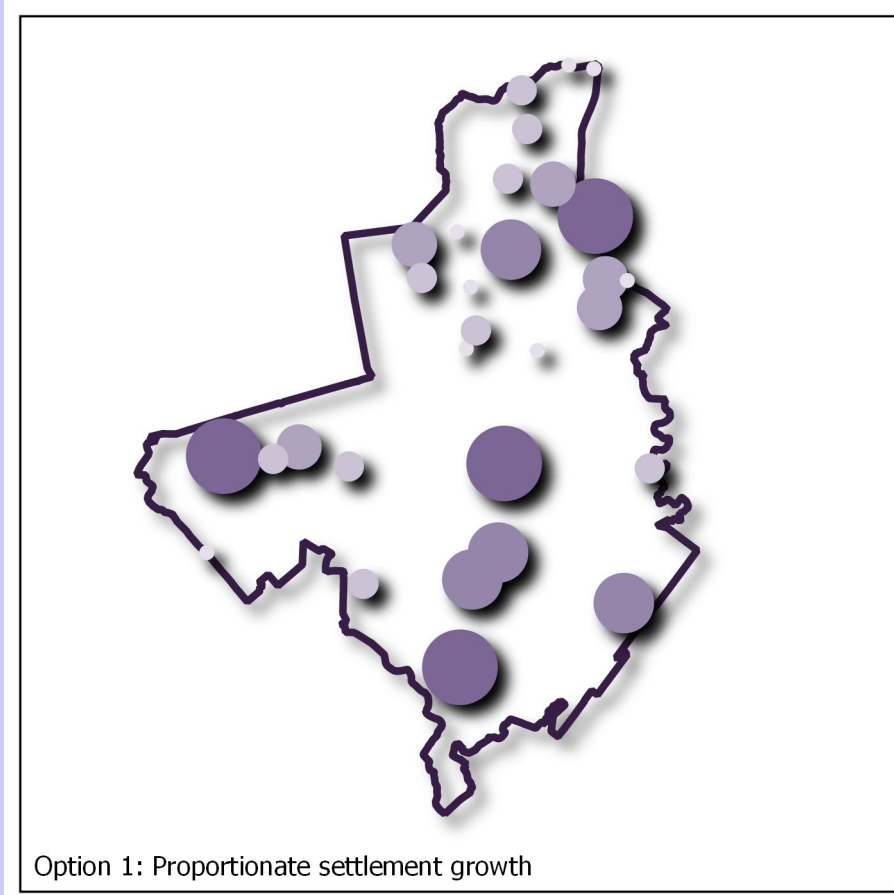
The sustainability of these options will also be assessed through the Sustainability Appraisal to ensure the chosen option is sustainable and deliverable.

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.

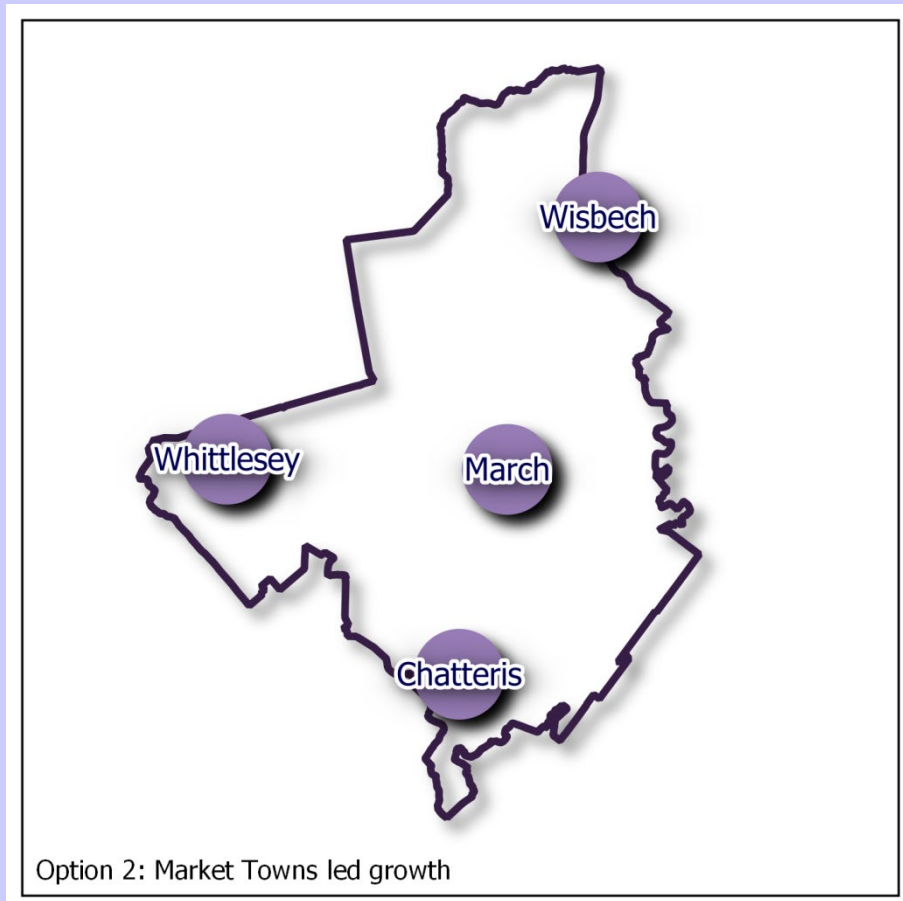


3. Questionnaire

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.



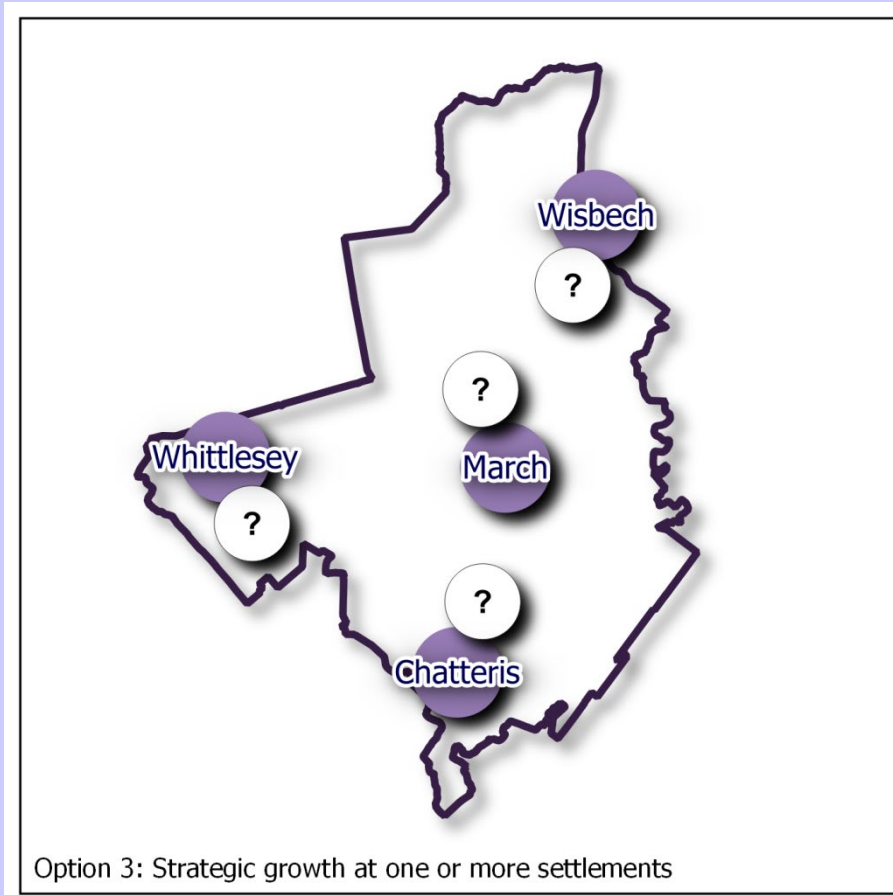
3. Questionnaire

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.



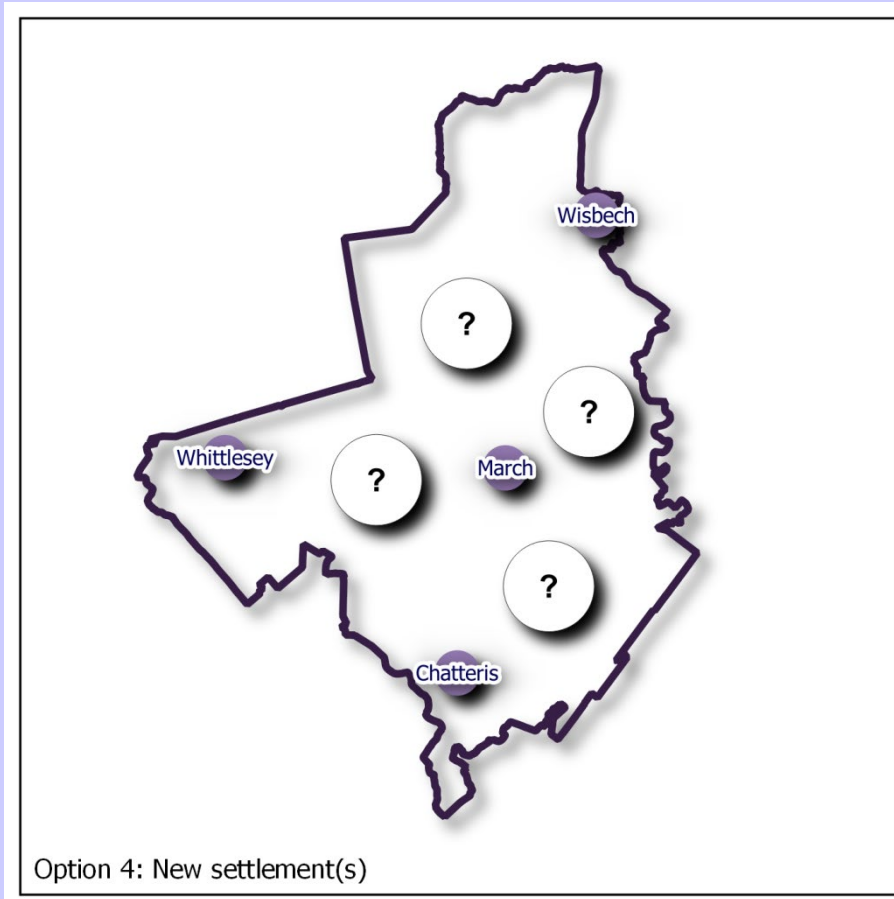
3. Questionnaire

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

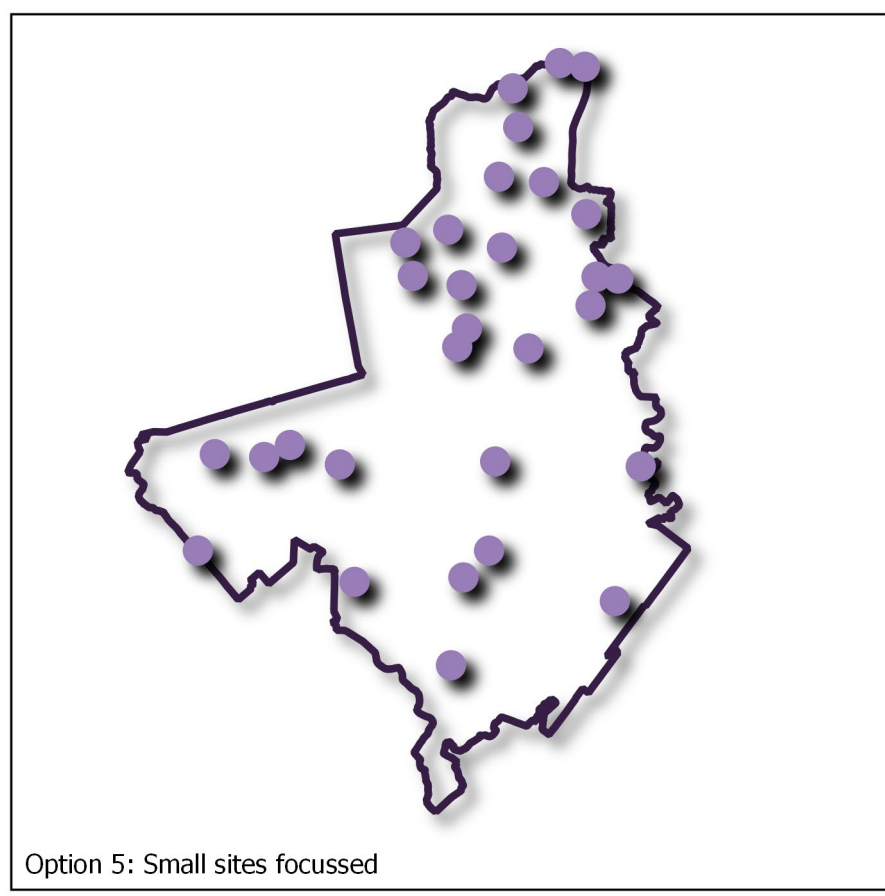


3. Questionnaire

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.



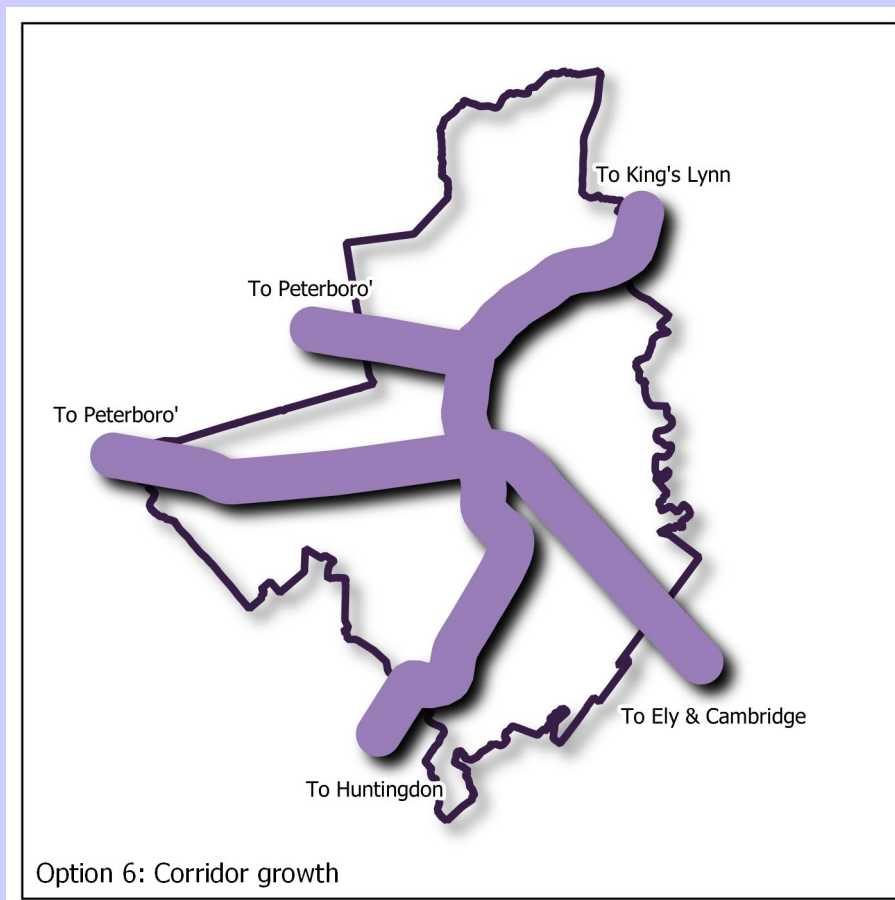
3. Questionnaire

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.