

LOCAL DEVELOPMENT SCHEME

Fenland New Local Plan

MARCH 2025

SECTION 1 - INTRODUCTION

The Council is required to prepare a Local Development Scheme (LDS) under section 15 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended). The LDS sets out the local plan documents that the Council intends to take forward over the next three years and the timetable for producing them.

The Council's previous LDS was published in 2022 and outlined the programme for preparing a new Local Plan to be submitted in April 2023. This LDS provides an updated position and programme on the preparation and submission of a new Local Plan, to replace the 2014 Fenland Local Plan. It also sets out the timeframes of other planning policy documents to be prepared.

The LDS does not include the detailed timescales for the preparation of Neighbourhood Plans¹ as these are led by Town and Parish Councils on behalf of their local communities, and the timescales for their production are outside of our control. However, once 'made' by the Council, they will become part of the Development Plan and will be used in the determination of relevant planning proposals.

The Council's new LDS covering the period 2025-2028 was agreed at by the Assistant Director in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Flooding on 4 March 2025.

¹ Neighbourhood Development Plans (NDPs) were introduced by the Localism Act in 2011. They are community-led documents, prepared by Town and Parish Councils which set out the vision and planning policies for the use and development of land in particular neighbourhoods. They must be consistent with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and in general conformity with the strategic policies in the Local Plan. Once 'Made' (adopted), an NDP forms part of the Development Plan.

SECTION 2 - FENLANDS CURRENT DEVELOPMENT PLAN

The development plan is at the heart of the planning system with a requirement set in law that planning decisions must be taken in line with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

The statutory development plan for Fenland District comprises the documents set out below. These were all subject to community involvement, as well as independent testing (by the Planning Inspectorate or other independent examiners in the case of Neighbourhood Development Plans) and are the starting point for making decisions on planning applications.

The **Fenland Local Plan** – Adopted on 8th May 2014, it provides land use planning policies, allocates sites for development and identifies other areas designated for protection that will shape the growth and regeneration of the Fenland area up to 2036.

Minerals and Waste Local Plans – **Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Minerals and Waste Plan**, was adopted on 28 July 2021 and sets out the framework and specific proposals for all minerals and waste developments until 2036.

Made (adopted) **Neighbourhood Development Plans**. At the time of writing there are three made Neighbourhood Plans within the District: March Neighbourhood Plan (November 2017); Parson Drove Neighbourhood Plan (August 2020); Whittlesey Neighbourhood Plan (May 2023). There are also two parish councils who are actively preparing Neighbourhood Development Plans for their areas.

Fenland's Policies Map illustrates geographically how and where the policies and proposals in the Development Plan apply across the District and forms part of the Development Plan. The Fenland Policies Map includes inset maps for some areas to show information at a larger scale. The Policies Map will be updated each time that a Development Plan Document (Local Plan) or Neighbourhood Plan is made (adopted).

Supplementary Planning Documents

Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) build upon and provide more detailed advice or guidance on policies in an adopted local plan. As they do not form part of the development plan, they cannot introduce new planning policies into the development plan. They are however a material consideration in decision-making.

The Council has adopted several SPDs over the years. We are currently undertaking a review of existing SPDs and may as a result decide to update their content or withdraw/replace some of them.

More information on supplementary planning documents can be found on our website: www.fenland.gov.uk/planningpolicy

SECTION 3 – NEW LOCAL PLAN

In February 2019 the Council made the decision to review the 2014 Fenland Local Plan and prepare a new Local Plan for the District. Our new Local Plan will identify the strategic priorities and long-term vision for the area. It will contain a spatial strategy, identify specific locations for delivering development needs such as housing, employment, leisure and recreation and essential infrastructure, as well as other policies that will help aid decision making ensuring that all new developments are playing their part in terms of delivering good growth across the district.

Since February 2019, the Council has undertaken several consultation activities and prepared a range of technical evidence. However, progress on the new Local Plan has been slower than originally anticipated because of the COVID-19 Pandemic; increased uncertainty regarding changes to national planning policy and the plan making process; and internal resourcing issues following the decision by Peterborough CC to terminate the Service Level Agreement they had with Fenland DC to lead on and resource the Council's plan making process in April 2023.

The timetable for preparing the new Local Plan is set out in Figure 1. It should be noted that this programme will continue to be kept under review as discussions regarding Local Government restructuring progress.

Figure 1 – Timetable for preparing the new Local Plan

Regulation 18 – Preparation	
Issues and options	Completed – October 2019
Draft Local Plan	Completed – August-October 2022
Informal/focussed consultations – to be confirmed*	July-September 2025
Regulation 19 – Publication	
Publication Draft	May 2026
Examination in Public – all dates in this section other than the submission date are estimates.	
Submission (Regulation 22)	October 2026
Public hearings	<i>March 2027</i>

Main modifications consultation**	<i>September 2027</i>
Inspectors Report expected	February 2028
Adoption of the New Local Plan – March 2028	

*Additional engagement with key stakeholders will only take place if it is needed to help inform emerging policy directions including area/site policies. It is our intention that this engagement would be more informal in nature and focussed on specific topics and/or directed at specific stakeholders.

**As part of the examination process the Inspector may recommend main modifications to the plan where necessary to make the plan sound and legally compliant. Most plans are subject to such a request.

Supporting evidence and other planning documents

Whilst these documents do not form part of the Development Plan they help aid in the preparation or implementation of Local Plan policies and can form material considerations in decision-making.

- A detailed evidence base: providing a robust and comprehensive evidence base is fundamental to preparing sound planning documents. Technical evidence documents will be made available to view and download from the relevant Local Plan webpage.
- Sustainability Appraisal & Strategic Environmental Assessment: Sustainability Appraisal (SA) is required for all DPDs. It is an integral component of all stages of plan-making. The purpose of the SA is to promote sustainable development through better integration of sustainability considerations into the preparation and adoption of plans.
- Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL): CIL is a tax on new development, which helps fund a wide range of strategic infrastructure, such as public transport, parks and community facilities, needed to support growth. The Council is not currently preparing a CIL for the District, but we will continue to keep this option under review.
- Authority Monitoring Reports: The Government requires the Council to produce an Authority Monitoring Report on an annual basis. This monitors development across the District, for example the number of new homes, as well as changes to employment and retail floorspace.