

# **Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report for the Fenland 50 Local Plan**

**2025**



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# Contents

- 1. Introduction ..... 2**
  - Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report..... 2
  - Background to Fenland..... 3
  - Fenland Local Plan ..... 5
  - National Policy Background..... 5
  - Council’s Strategic Priorities ..... 6
  - Sustainability Appraisal Themes..... 7
- 2. Sustainability Appraisal Process ..... 9**
  - Appraisal Process..... 9
  - Structure of this Report..... 11
- 3. Review of Sustainability Issues ..... 13**
  - 3.1 Healthy Communities ..... 13
  - 3.2 Jobs, Education and Housing ..... 31
  - 3.3 Transport ..... 45
  - 3.4 Heritage, Place Making and Landscape ..... 56
  - 3.5 Resilience to Climate Change and Flood Risk ..... 68
  - 3.6 Land Use and Wildlife..... 77
  - 3.7 Water Resources ..... 89
  - 3.8: Pollution and Waste ..... 96
  - 3.9 Sustainable Resources ..... 105
- 4. Sustainability Appraisal Objectives Framework..... 112**
- 5. Next Steps..... 128**
- Appendices ..... 132**
  - Appendix A: List of relevant Policies, Plans, Programmes, Strategies and Initiatives (PPPSIs) ..... 132

# Figures

- Figure 1: Map of Fenland..... 4
- Figure 2: Key Fenland Sustainability Themes and Associated Sustainability Topics ..... 8
- Figure 3: Sustainability Appraisal Process..... 9
- Figure 4: Sustainability Appraisal Scoring System .....12
- Figure 5: Population by age group 2021 .....15
- Figure 6: Population by broad ethnic groups 2021 .....16
- Figure 7: Population by religion 2021 .....17
- Figure 8: East of England Migration Patterns – Non-UK Born Population, 2001-2011 .....17
- Figure 9: Wider Determinants of Health.....19
- Figure 10: Population health status for Fenland, East of England and England .....19
- Figure 11: Comparison of key health indicators for Fenland, East of England and England 2019 onwards .....20
- Figure 12: Long term health problem or disability .....22
- Figure 13: Settlements in Fenland District with GP surgery facilities .....22
- Figure 14: Top 10 most deprived LSOAS in Cambridgeshire and their change since 2015 .....23
- Figure 15: Comparison of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough districts for 2015 and 2019 24
- Figure 16: English Indices of Deprivation 2019 for Fenland .....25
- Figure 17: Percentage distribution in 2019 and 2015 of LSOAs in Fenland in each decile of the Index of Multiple Deprivation .....26
- Figure 18: Gross weekly pay (£) for all full time workers in Fenland, Cambridgeshire and England 2002 - 2023 .....34
- Figure 19: Unemployment in Fenland, Cambridgeshire and England between 2005-2024.35
- Figure 20: Gross Value Added (Balanced) for Fenland (2019).....36
- Figure 21: Level of highest qualification for Fenland, East of England and England residents aged 16+ (2021) .....38
- Figure 22 – Ownership and tenancy by type (2021) .....40
- Figure 23 – Net additions for Fenland 2002 to 2023.....41
- Figure 24: Estimated size of social/affordable rent housing needed, based on housing register information (2019).....41
- Figure 25: Homes with inadequate levels of insulation across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough (2020) .....42
- Figure 26: Mode of commuting proportion split, 2011 vs 2021 census .....48
- Figure 27: Distance travelled to work (2021) .....49
- Figure 28: Cambridgeshire and Peterborough proportion workforce working from home (2021) .....50
- Figure 29: Percentage of residents in Fenland and Cambridgeshire within 15 minutes walking or public transport of a range of facilities and services .....51
- Figure 30: Designated Heritage Assets in Fenland .....58
- Figure 31: Landscape character types and areas.....61
- Figure 32: Global temperature and carbon dioxide.....70
- Figure 33: Events causing loss 1980 to 2019 .....71

Figure 34: Industry, commercial and public sector emissions across the CPCA area, 2019 ('000 tCO2).....	72
Figure 35: Fenland greenhouse gas emissions estimates 2005-2022 (kt CO2e) .....	73
Figure 36 – Agricultural Land Classification in Fenland District .....	79
Figure 37 – SSSI Condition in Fenland 2022/23.....	83
Figure 38 – SDL 160 Score in Fenland 2008-2023 .....	84
Figure 39: Broad habitats across Cambridgeshire.....	86
Figure 40: Management catchments within the Anglian river basin district.....	91
Figure 41: Environmental status of the Anglian river basin district 2019 .....	92
Figure 42: Map showing air pollution monitoring sites in Cambridgeshire .....	99
4 Figure 43: Light pollution and dark skies in Fenland .....	101
Figure 44: WRAP Average Weight of Materials Per Household (kgs) in Fenland 2022/23	102
Figure 45: Composition of kerbside residual waste in Fenland (%) .....	102
Figure 46: Map of household waste recycling rates for individual local authorities in England 2022/23.....	103
Figure 47: Installed renewable energy generation by type in Fenland 2001 - 2023.....	106
Figure 48: Total installed renewable energy generation in Fenland 2017 - 2022 .....	107
Figure 49: Distribution of Minerals in Peterborough and Cambridgeshire .....	109
Figure 50: Sustainability Appraisal Objectives Framework.....	112
Figure 51: Sustainability Appraisal Framework for the Fenland Local Plan.....	115

## Glossary of Acronyms

BAP	Biodiversity Action Plan
BREEAM	Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Methodology
CAMS	Catchment Abstraction Management Strategy
CHP	Combined Heat and Power
CIL	Community Infrastructure Levy
CO <sub>2</sub>	Carbon Dioxide
CPRE	Campaign to Protect Rural England
DCLG	Department of Communities and Local Government
DECC	Department of Energy and Climate Change
DPD	Development Plan Document
EA	Environment Agency
FDC	Fenland District Council
GCSE	General Certificate of Secondary Education
GI	Green Infrastructure
GTANA	Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessment
GVA	Gross Value Added
HMA	Housing Market Area
IMD	Indices of Multiple Deprivation
kWh	Kilowatt hour
JNCC	Joint Nature Conservation Committee
JSNA	Joint Strategic Needs Assessment
LDS	Local Development Scheme
LNR	Local Nature Reserve
LSOA	Lower Super Output Area
MHCLG	Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government
MWDF	Minerals and Waste Development Framework
MWh	Megawatt hour
NE	Natural England
NNR	National Nature Reserve
NPPF	National Planning Policy Framework
NVZ	Nitrate Vulnerable Zone
OAN	Objectively Assessed Need
ONS	Office of National Statistics
PCPA	Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act
PPG	Planning Policy Guidance
RIGS	Regionally Important Geological and Geomorphological Site
SA	Sustainability Appraisal
SAC	Special Area of Conservation
SEA	Strategic Environmental Assessment
SFRA	Strategic Flood Risk Assessment
SHMA	Strategic Housing Market Assessment
SINC	Site of Importance for Nature Conservation
SPA	Special Protection Area
SPD	Supplementary Planning Document
SSSI	Site of Special Scientific Interest
SuDS	Sustainable Drainage Systems
WCS	Water Cycle Study
WFD	Water Framework Directive
WRC	Water Recycling Centre

## Executive Summary

This is the Sustainability Appraisal (SA) Scoping Report for the emerging Local Plan for Fenland District Council, which will cover the period 2024 to 2050.

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

This Scoping Report is the first stage in the SA process. Through an assessment of the current social, environmental and economic situation in the Plan area (the baseline), the report attempts to identify which issues need to be addressed by the SA.

This Scoping Report has been published for consultation. Comments are welcome from any organisation or individual, but especially from the following statutory consultees:

- Historic England
- Natural England
- The Environment Agency

Comments can be made in writing to [PlanningPolicy@fenland.gov.uk](mailto:PlanningPolicy@fenland.gov.uk)

Comments to be received no later than **11.59 pm on Friday 21<sup>st</sup> February 2025**.



- 1.5 The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004<sup>3</sup> requires all Local Planning Authorities to carry out a Sustainability Appraisal (SA) for their Local Plans. This SA incorporates the requirements of the SEA Regulations and fully considers the social, environmental and economic effects of the emerging Local Plan. Where reference is made within this document to Sustainability Appraisal, it also implies where appropriate, the Strategic Environmental Assessment regulations.
- 1.6 Sustainability Appraisal is an iterative process to assist in the formulation of policy options for a Local Plan. It appraises emerging options against the three elements of sustainability: namely social, environmental and economic. In doing so it assists in selecting preferred options deemed to be the most sustainable when assessed against all reasonable alternatives (including not producing a Plan).

### **Background to Fenland**

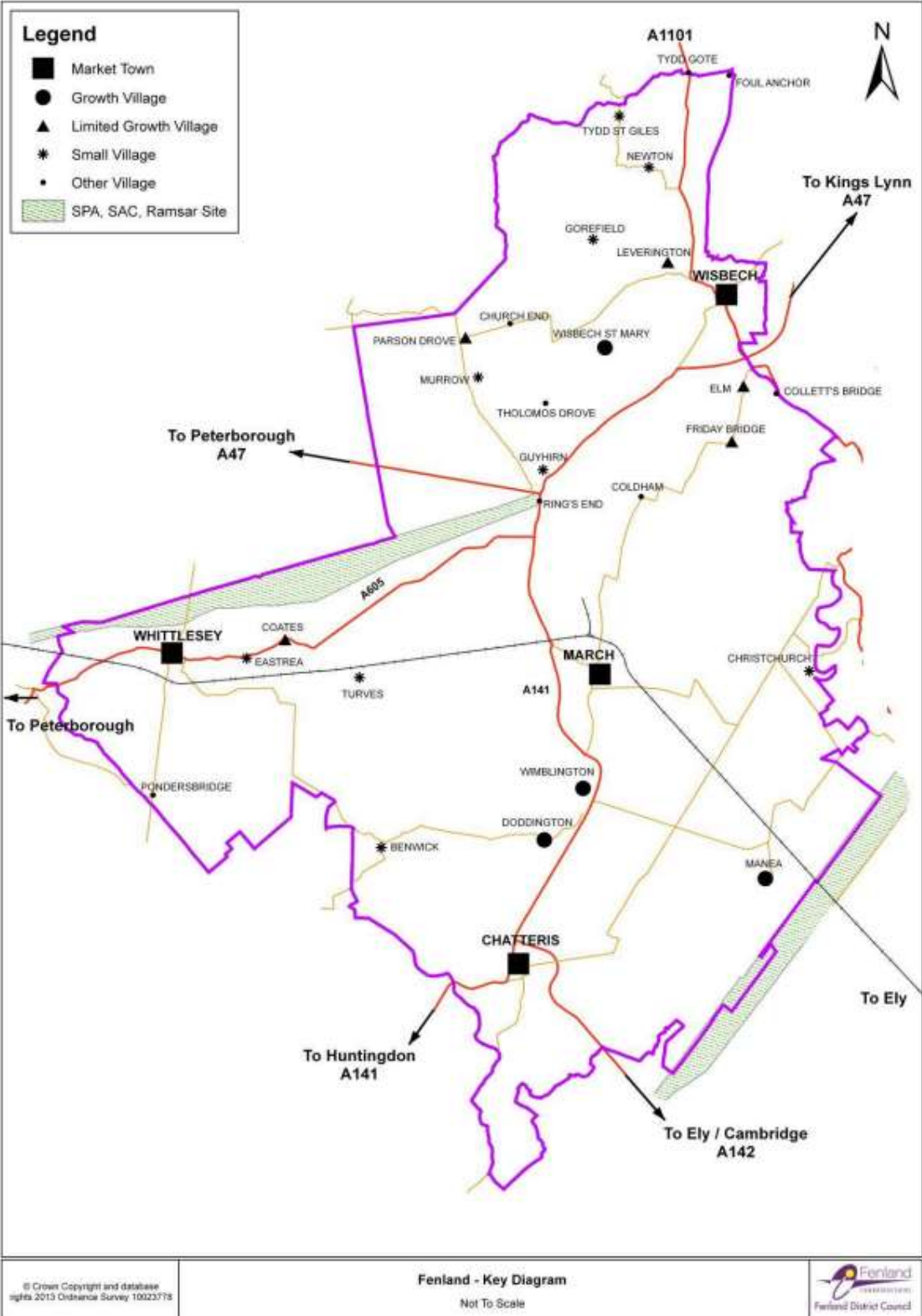
- 1.7 Fenland is a district council authority located within the northern part of Cambridgeshire. It covers an area of about 200 square kilometres and includes the four market towns of March, Wisbech, Chatteris and Whittlesey as well as around 30 villages. To the north is the district of South Holland (part of Lincolnshire), to the north-east the Borough Council of King's Lynn and West Norfolk (part of Norfolk) and to the east and south the district of East Cambridgeshire. Huntingdonshire district (also part of Cambridgeshire) is to the south-west and the unitary authority of Peterborough City Council is to the west.
- 1.8 The population of the Fenland District Local Authority Area is approximately 102,500 and is set to increase to approximately 119,800 by the year 2041.<sup>4</sup> This forecast in growth represents an increase of almost 17% and is due not only to people living longer, but also to inward migration. This increasing population and changing population composition will require appropriate planning, to ensure that Fenland grows in the right way for the benefit of all its residents.

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<sup>3</sup> Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. Available at: [Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://www.legislation.gov.uk)

<sup>4</sup> Cambridgeshire Insight<sup>4</sup> <https://cambridgeshireinsight.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/2022-based-population-forecasts-for-CI.xlsx>

Figure 1: Map of Fenland



## Fenland Local Plan

- 1.9 To date, Fenland has undertaken the following consultations to help shape the new Local Plan:
- Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report consultation October/ November 2019
  - Issues and Options consultation October/ November 2019
  - Draft Local Plan consultation August to October 2022
- 1.10 Given the time that has passed since the original SA Scoping Report, this document has been produced to update the baseline data, which includes existing environmental, social and economic characteristics of the area.

## National Policy Background

- 1.11 Paragraphs 7 and 8 in Chapter 2 – ‘Achieving Sustainable Development’ of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) – December 2024<sup>5</sup> sets out the national sustainability objectives:

“The purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development, including the provision of homes, commercial development, and supporting infrastructure in a sustainable manner. At a very high level, the objective of sustainable development can be summarised as meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. At a similarly high level, members of the United Nations – including the United Kingdom – have agreed to pursue the 17 Global Goals for Sustainable Development in the period to 2030. These address social progress, economic well-being and environmental protection.

Achieving sustainable development means that the planning system has three overarching objectives, which are interdependent and need to be pursued in mutually supportive ways (so that opportunities can be taken to secure net gains across each of the different objectives):

**a) an economic objective** – 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, innovation and improved productivity; and by identifying and coordinating the provision of infrastructure;

**b) a social objective** – to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by ensuring that a sufficient number and range of homes can be provided to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by fostering well-designed, beautiful and safe places, with accessible services and open spaces that reflect current and future needs and support communities’ health, social and cultural well-being; and

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<sup>5</sup> National Planning Policy Framework [National Planning Policy Framework \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/101383/nppf-2024.pdf)

**c) an environmental objective** – to protect and enhance our natural, built and historic environment, including making effective use of land, improving biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy.

## **Council's Strategic Priorities**

1.12 The Council has set out several corporate priorities in its Business Plan for 2024/25.<sup>6</sup> These are focused around three consistently recurring themes of:

- Communities
- Environment
- Economy

1.13 Within each theme a number of issues are highlighted with explanation provided within the Business Plan as to how these matters will be addressed.

### ***Communities***

- Support vulnerable members of our community
- Promote Health and Wellbeing for all
- Work with partners to promote Fenland through Culture and Heritage

### ***Environment***

- Deliver a high performing refuse, recycling and street cleansing service
- Work with partners and the community on projects that improve the environment and street scene
- Work with partners to keep people safe in their neighbourhoods by reducing crime and anti-social behaviour and promoting social cohesion

### ***Economy***

- 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 Fenland

1.14 Through these priorities the Council aims to improve the quality of life for all residents and communities and to create a truly sustainable Fenland.








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<sup>6</sup> Fenland District Council Business Plan 2024/25 [Business Plan 2024-25.pdf \(fenland.gov.uk\)](https://fenland.gov.uk/business-plan-2024-25.pdf)

## Sustainability Appraisal Themes

- 1.15 The Council's priorities together with the objectives of the NPPF and requirements of the SEA regulations provide the basis for the sustainability issues that this Scoping Report will consider.
- 1.16 As a result, the following nine themes have been identified as the main issues that the new Local Plan will seek to address and once adopted will be key to helping deliver the priorities of the Council's Business Plan.
- 1.17 The nine themes are:
1. Healthy Communities
  2. Jobs, Education and Housing
  3. Transport
  4. Heritage, Place Making and Landscape
  5. Resilience to Climate Change and Flood Risk
  6. Land Use and Wildlife
  7. Water Resources
  8. Pollution and Waste
  9. Sustainable Resources
- 1.18 This approach will ensure that the district continues to grow in a truly sustainable way, in a way which meets the needs of the area today, whilst ensuring that the needs of future generations will not be compromised.
- 1.19 All of the topic areas which are covered by this sustainability appraisal scoping report, and which are required to be covered under the SEA regulations are based on the Council's corporate objectives outlined in its Business Plan and the sustainability objectives in the NPPF. As such they provide a coherent and logical structure to the report. It should be noted that some of the themes contain more topics than others and that some topics are cross cutting and could fit readily into other theme areas as there is considerable overlap in the issues being assessed. The full list of themes and topic areas is shown in Figure 2.

**Figure 2: Key Fenland Sustainability Themes and Associated Sustainability Topics**

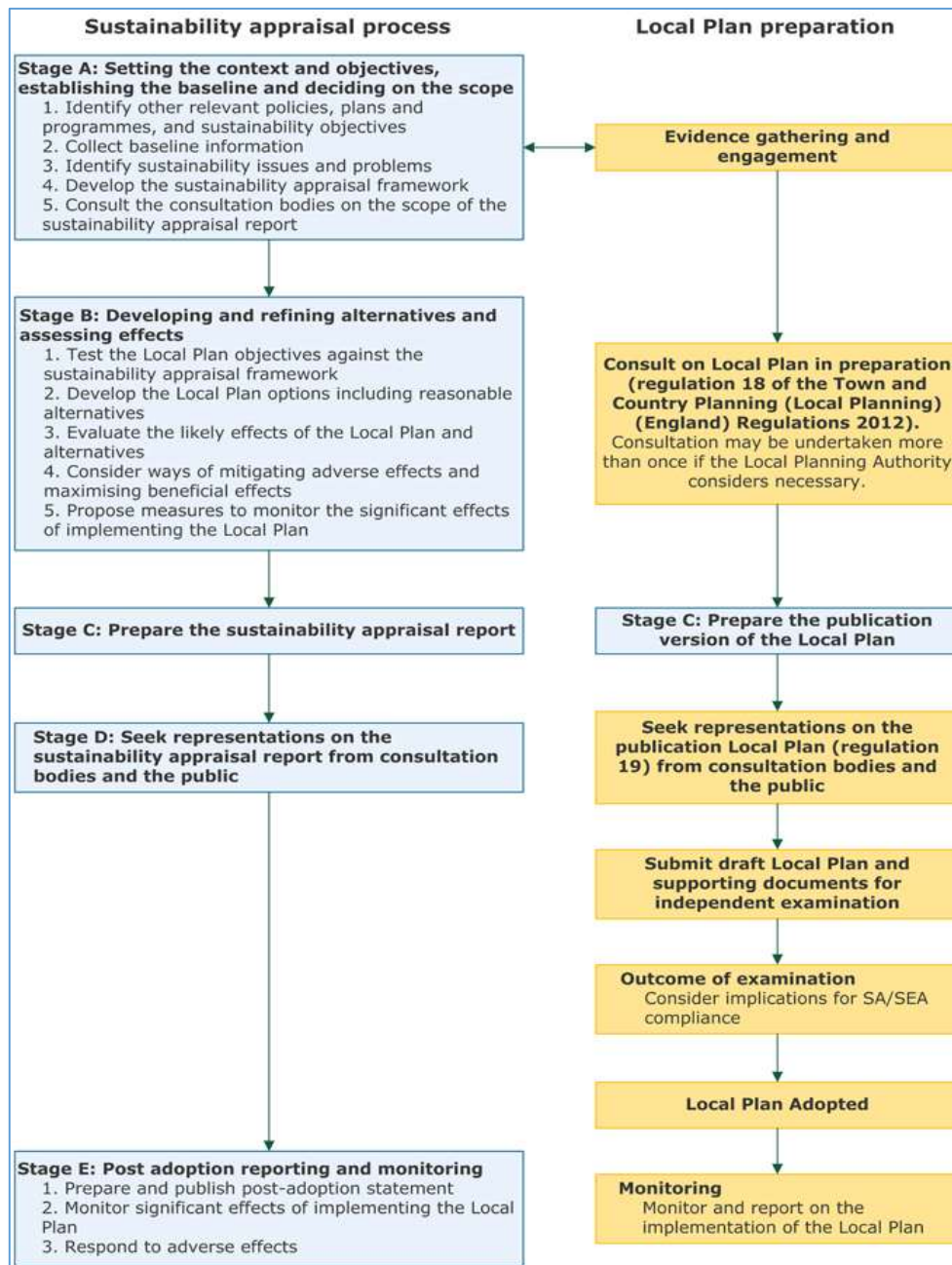
	Fenland Themes	Relevant Sustainability Topics
	<b>1. Healthy Communities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Population</li> <li>• Health and Well-being</li> <li>• Deprivation</li> <li>• Crime</li> <li>• Open space</li> <li>• Leisure</li> <li>• Local food</li> </ul>
	<b>2. Jobs, Education and Housing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Economy (including employment)</li> <li>• Retail and town centres</li> <li>• Education</li> <li>• Housing</li> </ul>
	<b>3. Transport</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Roads</li> <li>• Car use and commuting</li> <li>• Rail</li> <li>• Bus</li> <li>• Cycling and walking</li> </ul>
	<b>4. Heritage, Placemaking and Landscape</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Archaeology</li> <li>• Heritage assets</li> <li>• Conservation areas</li> <li>• Townscape character</li> <li>• Culture</li> <li>• Landscape character</li> </ul>
	<b>5. Resilience to Climate Change and Flood Risk</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Climate change</li> <li>• Flood Risk</li> </ul>
	<b>6. Land Use and Wildlife</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agriculture</li> <li>• Biodiversity</li> <li>• Geodiversity</li> <li>• Designated nature sites</li> </ul>
	<b>7. Water Resources</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Water supply</li> <li>• Water quality</li> <li>• Water waste management</li> </ul>
	<b>8. Pollution and Waste</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pollution</li> <li>• Waste</li> <li>• Recycling</li> </ul>
	<b>9. Sustainable Resources</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Renewable Energy</li> <li>• Minerals</li> <li>• Materials</li> </ul>

## 2. Sustainability Appraisal Process

### Appraisal Process

2.1 National Planning Practice Guidance shows the five different stages of the sustainability appraisal process. We are currently at Stage A. Section 5 of this report sets out the next steps covering Stages B to E.

Figure 3: Sustainability Appraisal Process



## Sustainability Appraisal Stage A

### Scoping Report

2.2 The first stage of the appraisal process (Stage A) is the scoping stage. The primary purpose of the scoping report is to set out the framework within which to carry out the sustainability appraisal. It aims to set the context and objectives of the sustainability appraisal and **establishes a baseline**, a snapshot of the existing environmental, social and economic characteristics of the area (including any trends). The scoping report consists of following stages:

1. Identify other relevant policies, plans, programmes and sustainability objectives
2. Collect baseline information
3. Identify sustainability issues and problems
4. Develop the sustainability appraisal framework
5. Consult the consultation bodies on the scope of the sustainability appraisal report

#### **1. Identify other relevant policies, plans and programmes, and sustainability objectives**

2.3 A review was undertaken of international, national, regional and local plans and programmes which are relevant to the preparation of the Fenland Local Plan and those which incorporate social, environmental and economic objectives which should be considered in preparation of the Fenland Local Plan, including through the SA process.

2.4 Appendix A lists all relevant policies, plans and programs. Section 3 of this report includes a summary of plans and programs relevant to the different sustainability themes.

2.5 Information obtained through this process of review has assisted in ensuring that, in preparation of the Local Plan, proper account is taken of these plans and programmes such that their synergies can be exploited and any tensions, inconsistencies or constraints addressed.

#### **2. Collect baseline information**

2.6 Baseline information about the current state of the social, economic and the environmental characteristics of Fenland, as well as information on existing trends, has been gathered through an extensive review of currently available information on the different topics associated with this SA.

2.7 The information collected is set out within Section 3 of this Scoping Report according to the relevant topic. This information will be used in the appraisal as the baseline against which the effects of the Local Plan will be assessed to identify any significant effects.

#### **3. Identify sustainability issues and problems**

2.8 The collection of baseline information and review of existing plans, policies and programs has helped to identify issues and opportunities facing Fenland. These sustainability issues

are identified in Section 3 of this Scoping Report according to their relevance to each sustainability theme.

- 2.9 Many of the issues identified in this SA Scoping Report are cross-cutting. For example, green infrastructure provides benefits in terms of human health and welfare as well as biodiversity and flood management. Similarly, climate change has implications across the full spectrum of environmental, social and economic circumstances. As such, there are recurring themes throughout the various chapters in this Scoping Report to address the intertwined nature of these issues.

#### **4. Develop the sustainability appraisal framework**

- 2.10 The Sustainability Appraisal Framework is structured around nine themes. Each theme is accompanied by a number of positive and negative effects (or decision-making criteria) – see Figure 2. These positive and negative effects will act as a guide to assist in demonstrating whether proposed policies in the new Local Plan help to achieve the identified objective for each theme. The general approach is to be able to identify the change that would result from the Local Plan being appraised, such as whether a particular observed characteristic will change or, where it is not possible to predict the change with any certainty, to identify an approach that can be taken to address the issue.

#### **5. Consult the consultation bodies on the scope of the sustainability appraisal report**

- 2.11 Regulation 4 of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 specifies the relevant consultation bodies which need to be consulted on the scope of the sustainability appraisal report, they are as follows:

- Historic England
- Natural England
- The Environment Agency

- 2.12 This SA Scoping Report is available for public consultation.

It is not necessary at this stage to consult further than the prescribed statutory bodies listed above, however comments from any organisation or individual are welcome and will be considered alongside those of the statutory bodies.

#### **Structure of this Report**

- 2.13 Section 3 of this report provides a review of all the sustainability issues based on the nine key themes for Fenland, in order to help establish the Sustainability Appraisal Framework. The full Sustainability Appraisal Framework is set out in Section 4.
- 2.14 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) clearly states that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. Therefore the objectives identified in the Sustainability Appraisal Framework set out in this Scoping Report, will also form the objectives of the Local Plan.

2.15 Section 3 of this report is based around the nine key themes for Fenland. Each of these are appraised under the following headings:

- **Introduction** - a brief overview of the theme, how the different sustainability topics fit with it and a brief overview of the topics
- **Policy Context** - a summary of the relevant policies, plans and programmes which are applicable to that theme. A full list is at Appendix A. This includes a summary of the relevant sustainability objective(s) from the NPPF and a summary of the relevant planning practice guidance.<sup>7</sup>
- **The Current Situation** - the social, environmental and economic characteristics of Fenland with respect to that particular theme which is to provide a baseline. It also draws on trends observed since the last baseline of 2011.
- **Evidence Gaps** - are there any sources of information missing which the appraisal could benefit from.
- **Specific Issues and Opportunities** - this is a list of the various issues facing Fenland with regard to each theme, along with any opportunities.
- **The Likely Situation without the Plan** - how would the environmental, social and economic characteristics change if no Plan were to be produced. This assumes a full and complete implementation of the current Local Plan, unless where current evidence suggests a departure.
- **Key Sustainability Objectives** - taking into account all of the issues and opportunities identified for the theme, as well as an assessment of the relevant plans, policies and programmes, these are the relevant sustainability objectives which will be carried through as Plan objectives in the new Local Plan.

2.16 Each emerging draft policy will be appraised against the relevant sustainability objectives and scored as follows:

**Figure 4: Sustainability Appraisal Scoring System**

++	Significant positive
+	Positive
~	Neutral
-	Negative
--	Significant negative
?	Uncertain (insufficient information available)
/	Mixed effects

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<sup>7</sup> Planning Practice Guidance <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/planning-practice-guidance>



### 3. Review of Sustainability Issues

#### 3.1 Healthy Communities

3.1.1 This section of the report relates to the theme of Healthy Communities. The sustainability topics covered under this section are population characteristics, health and well-being (including access to health services), deprivation, open space, leisure and crime. Many sustainability topics have cross cutting implications on the health and wellbeing of populations, hence some references are made to other themes within this report.

- Population
- Health and Well-being
- Deprivation
- Crime
- Open space
- Leisure
- Local food

#### Policy Context

##### National Planning Policy Framework:

3.1.2 The NPPF's overarching social sustainability objective seeks:

“to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities... by fostering well-designed, beautiful and safe places, with accessible services and open spaces that reflect current and future needs and support communities' health, social and cultural well-being”.

Paragraph 96 of the NPPF in Section 8 – ‘Promoting healthy and safe communities’ explains that planning policies and decisions should aim to achieve healthy, inclusive and safe places and beautiful buildings which:

- promote social interaction for example through mixed-use developments, strong neighbourhood centres, street layouts that allow for easy pedestrian and cycle connections within and between neighbourhoods, and active street frontages;
- are safe and accessible, so that crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine the quality of life or community cohesion; and
- enable and support healthy lives, through both promoting good health and preventing ill-health, especially where this would address identified local health and well-being needs and reduce health inequalities between the most and least deprived communities – for example through the provision of safe and accessible green infrastructure, sports facilities, local shops, access to healthier food, allotments and layouts that encourage walking and cycling.

## Planning Practice Guidance

3.1.3 Planning practice guidance sets out a range of issues relating to healthy communities. This includes how:

The design and use of the built and natural environments, including green infrastructure are major determinants of health and wellbeing. Planning and health need to be considered together in two ways: in terms of creating environments that support and encourage healthy lifestyles, and in terms of identifying and securing the facilities needed for primary, secondary and tertiary care, and the wider health and care system, taking into account the changing needs of the population.<sup>8</sup> The PPG describes a healthy place as one which supports and promotes healthy behaviours and environments and reduces health inequalities for people of all ages. It provides communities with opportunities to improve their physical and mental health, and supports community engagement and wellbeing.<sup>9</sup>

Open space: the PPG contains some guidance on open space, sport and recreation facilities, including needs assessments, public rights of way and local green space designations.<sup>10</sup>

Leisure: Much of the guidance relating to leisure facilities is covered under issues relating to open space, such as sports pitches and other recreation facilities.<sup>11</sup>

Crime: No specific section exists in the PPG regarding crime. However, issues relating to crime and the fear of crime are covered in other areas, such as design, public safety and town centre vitality.

### Other plans and policies:

- Public Health England (PHE) Strategy 2020-25 (2019)
- Public Health England – Fenland Health Profile 2018
- Public Health England Healthy Places Guidance (2021)
- Joint Strategic Needs Assessment 2023 JSNA for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough: Fenland Summary
- Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Strategic Spatial Framework – Part1 (2018)
- Cambridgeshire Health & Wellbeing and Integrated Care Strategy (2022)
- Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Health Inequalities Strategy (2020)
- Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Director of Public Health Annual Report 2022/23
- Fenland District Council - Business Plan (2024-25)

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<sup>8</sup> Planning Practice Guidance Paragraph: 001 Reference ID:53-001-20190722

<sup>9</sup> Ibid. Paragraph: 003 Reference ID:53-003-20190722

<sup>10</sup> Ibid. Paragraph: 001 Reference ID: 37-001-20140306

<sup>11</sup> Ibid. Paragraph: 001 Reference ID: 37-001-20140306

## The Current Situation

### Population and demographics

- 3.1.4 The 2021 census recorded a total population of 102,462 people in Fenland<sup>12</sup>. This is made up of 49% males and 51% females. This accounts for about 15% of Cambridgeshire's population.
- 3.1.5 The population has grown in Fenland by 7.6% since the last census in 2011, which recorded a population of 95,262 people. The population growth in Fenland was lower than the East of England (8.3%), but greater than the rate of population growth for England (6.6%)<sup>13</sup>. By 2043, Fenland's population is projected to be 118,826 people - an increase of almost 16% in 23 years.
- 3.1.6 Fenland has a very low density of 187.5 residents per square kilometre, compared to 331.4 in the east of England and 433.5 in England.

### Age structure

- 3.1.7 The number of young people (0-14years) in Fenland accounts for 16.2% of the population which is slightly less than the average for Cambridgeshire (16.5%) and less than the average for England (17.4%).<sup>14</sup> Those in the 15-64 age bracket account for 60.9% which is again less than both Cambridgeshire (64.9%) and England (64.2%).
- 3.1.8 However, the population in the 64+ age bracket is higher at 22.8% than that for Cambridgeshire (18.6%) and England (18.4%). For all age cohorts over 50, Fenland has a higher percentage population than Cambridgeshire or England. This is in line with a nationally increasing elderly population but in Fenland it is that much higher.
- 3.1.9 This trend is likely to continue into the foreseeable future. By 2041 the over-64s are forecast to comprise almost a third of the population of Fenland (28.1%). This continues to be significantly higher than Cambridgeshire (22.6%) as a whole.<sup>15</sup>

**Figure 5: Population by age group 2021**

Age Category	Fenland	Cambridgeshire	England
Total aged 0-14	16,600	112,000	9,838,700
Total aged 0-14 (%)	16.2	16.5	17.4
Total aged 15-64	62,400	440,200	36,249,800
Total aged 15-64 (%)	60.9	64.9	64.2
Total aged 65 and over	23,400	126,500	10,401,200
Total aged 65 and over (%)	22.8	18.6	18.4

Source: Cambridgeshire Insight, Population Report for Fenland 2021

<sup>12</sup> Cambridgeshire Insight: [Population - LTLA | Fenland | Report Builder for ArcGIS \(cambridgeshireinsight.org.uk\)](https://cambridgeshireinsight.org.uk/population-ltla-fenland-report-builder-for-arcgis)

<sup>13</sup> Office for National Statistics: [How life has changed in Fenland: Census 2021 \(ons.gov.uk\)](https://ons.gov.uk/how-life-has-changed-in-fenland-census-2021)

<sup>14</sup> Cambridgeshire Insight: [Population - LTLA | Fenland | Report Builder for ArcGIS \(cambridgeshireinsight.org.uk\)](https://cambridgeshireinsight.org.uk/population-ltla-fenland-report-builder-for-arcgis)

<sup>15</sup> Ibid: [2022-based-population-forecasts-for-Cl.xlsx \(live.com\)](https://live.com/2022-based-population-forecasts-for-cl.xlsx)

## Nationality and Ethnicity

- 3.1.10 In 2021, 9.5% of Fenland residents did not identify with any national identity associated with the UK. This figure increased from 6.8% in 2011. In 2021, the proportion of residents that identified with a UK identity and non-UK identity was 0.9%, which also increased from 0.3% in 2011.
- 3.1.11 The percentage of people in Fenland who did not identify with any national identity associated with the UK, increased more than in the East of England and England. There was a 2.7% increase in Fenland compared to 2.1% increase in the East of England and 1.7% increase across England.
- 3.1.12 The 2021 Census data shows that Fenland was less ethnically diverse than other parts of England, with a greater than average proportion of the population being white (95.9%). This compares with 88.6% for Cambridgeshire and 81% for England. The remaining 4.1% of Fenland's population comprised a wide mix of ethnic groups.

**Figure 6: Population by broad ethnic groups 2021**

Broad Ethnic Groups	Fenland	Cambridgeshire	England
Asian, Asian British or Asian Welsh	1,232	39,689	5,426,392
Asian, Asian British or Asian Welsh (%)	1.2	5.8	9.6
Black, Black British, Black Welsh, Caribbean or African	814	9,745	2,381,724
Black, Black British, Black Welsh, Caribbean or African (%)	0.8	1.4	4.2
Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups	1,412	19,354	1,669,378
Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups (%)	1.4	2.9	3
White	98,280	601,166	45,783,401
White (%)	95.9	88.6	81
Other ethnic group	723	8,895	1,229,153
Other ethnic group (%)	0.7	1.3	2.2

Source: Cambridgeshire Insight, Population Report for Fenland 2021

- 3.1.13 From the 2021 census, 0.6% of the population identified as Gypsies and Irish Travellers which compares with 0.3% for Cambridgeshire and 0.1% for England.

## Religion

- 3.1.14 The proportion of Fenland's residents stating they are Christian is 52.1%, which is higher than Cambridgeshire (45.1%) and England (46.3%). For all other religions, Fenland has a lower proportion of residents than Cambridgeshire and England. There is a notable lower

proportion of residents stating they are Muslim (0.7%) compared to across Cambridgeshire (2.1%) and England (6.7%). 40% of residents stated no religion.

**Figure 7: Population by religion 2021**

Religion	Fenland	Cambridgeshire	England
Christian	53,354	306,302	26,167,899
Christian (%)	52.1	45.1	46.3
Buddhist	239	3,698	262,433
Buddhist (%)	0.2	0.5	0.5
Hindu	213	7,245	1,020,533
Hindu (%)	0.2	1.1	1.8
Jewish	110	1,978	269,283
Jewish (%)	0.1	0.3	0.5
Muslim	682	13,953	3,801,186
Muslim (%)	0.7	2.1	6.7
Sikh	111	1,165	520,092
Sikh (%)	0.1	0.2	0.9
Other religion	513	3,853	332,410
Other religion (%)	0.5	0.6	0.6

Source: Cambridgeshire Insight, Population Report for Fenland 2021

## Migration

- 3.1.15 The 2021 census found that 90.7% of Fenland's residents lived at the same address as one year previously. This is a higher proportion than Cambridgeshire (87.1%) and England (88.9%). The percentage of residents whose address one year ago was in the UK was 8.7% and 0.4% stated their address was outside the UK.
- 3.1.16 In Fenland, 85.7% of the population said they were born in England, which is a reduction from 89.4% in 2011. This latest percentage is higher than Cambridgeshire as a whole (79%) and England (80.3%).
- 3.1.17 Lithuania was the second most represented country, with 3.4% of Fenland's population having been born there. This has doubled from 1.7% in 2011. Similarly, the percentage of residents born in countries that joined the EU between April 2001 and March 2011 has risen from 1.1% in 2011 to 2.2% in 2021.
- 3.1.18 In 2016 the East of England continued to experience relatively high levels of migration in comparison to other areas of the United Kingdom. The percentage increase in migration has been high in Fenland and Peterborough, with rises in non-UK born population in these areas between 2001 and 2011 of 210.8% and 148.2% respectively (see Figure 8).

**Figure 8: East of England Migration Patterns – Non-UK Born Population, 2001-2011**

Area	2001 Non-UK Born Population	2011 Non-UK Born Population	Numerical Increase	% Increase 2001-2011
Fenland	2,641	8,209	5,568	210.8%
Peterborough	15,268	37,892	22,624	148.2%

South Cambs	9,333	16,564	7,231	77.5%
Cambridge City	20,851	36,381	15,530	74.5%
East Cambs	4,973	8,242	3,269	65.7%
Huntingdonshire	10,822	16,302	5,480	50.6%

Source: Oxford Migration Observatory, 2013, [East of England: Census Profile - Migration Observatory - The Migration Observatory \(ox.ac.uk\)](https://www.migrationobservatory.ox.ac.uk/)

3.1.19 From school census data it is clear that Wisbech is a location that attracts Eastern Europeans, particularly people from Lithuania, Poland and Latvia. Of the ten wards with the highest proportion of Eastern European residents, five are in the Wisbech area.<sup>16</sup>

## Household Composition

3.1.20 In Fenland, the composition of single family households (64.8%) is in line with the rest of Cambridgeshire (65.1%) but above that of England (63%). For single person households there were more people living on their own (all ages) in Fenland (29%) than in Cambridgeshire as a whole (28.4%), but this was less than the average for England (30.1%).

## Health and Wellbeing - Overview

3.1.21 Good health, 'expected healthy years of life,' is fundamental to achieving a good quality of life, and is one of the Government's 12 key headline measures of sustainability. The Council recognises the World Health Organisation's definition of health, which is:

**“Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.”**

3.1.22 Wellbeing is often referred to as being healthy, happy, contented, comfortable and satisfied with one's quality of life. These definitions are reflected in the 'Wider Determinants of Health' model shown in Figure 9 which places an emphasis on the prevention of illness rather than the treatment of disease. The model shows there are many different factors that combine together to affect health and wellbeing. Health is determined by a complex interaction between individual characteristics including age, sex and genetics, lifestyle and the physical, social and economic environment.

3.1.23 Research (McGiniss et al 2002) suggests that our health behaviours and social-environmental factors may contribute to 85% (40% behaviour/45% socio-environmental factors) of our health outcomes with only 15% being healthcare itself.

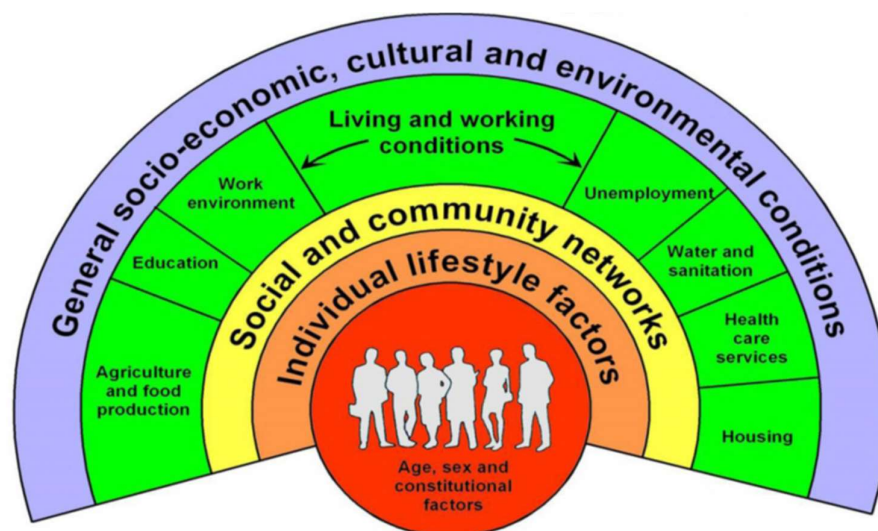
3.1.24 The Council recognises the wider determinants of health model as a key concept in how it can contribute to the health and wellbeing of Fenland's communities. This model is widely used and sets out how the environment, culture and the economy impact on health including issues such as worklessness, housing standards and educational attainment.

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<sup>16</sup> Migrant and Refugee Joint Strategic Needs Assessment for Cambridgeshire, 2016 Page 8  
[https://cambridgeshireinsight.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/Cambs-Migrant-JSNA-full-v12\\_0-FINAL.pdf](https://cambridgeshireinsight.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/Cambs-Migrant-JSNA-full-v12_0-FINAL.pdf)

Often these issues link to community problems such as anti-social behaviour and a lack of community spirit.<sup>17</sup>

**Figure 9: Wider Determinants of Health**



Source: Dahlgren and Whitehead, 1991

### Fenland Health in Context

3.1.25 The 2021 census asked Fenland residents for their opinion on the state of their health. The proportion of residents stating they were in 'very good health' (40.3%) was lower than the average for the East of England (48.3%) and England (48.5%). The proportion of people stating they were in 'good health', 'fair health', 'bad health' and 'very bad health' were higher than the East of England and England.<sup>18</sup>

**Figure 10: Population health status for Fenland, East of England and England**

All usual residents	Fenland	East of England	England
All usual residents	102,462 (100%)	6,335,072 (100%)	56,490,046 (100%)
Very good health	41,264 (40.3%)	3,058,673 (48.3%)	27,390,829 (48.5%)
Good health	38,407 (37.5%)	2,194,562 (34.6)	19,040,735 (33.7%)
Fair health	16,256 (15.9%)	791,639 (12.5%)	7,147,346 (12.7%)

<sup>17</sup> Fenland District Council Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2018-2021 [https://www.fenland.gov.uk/media/12208/Health-and-Wellbeing-Strategy/pdf/Health\\_\\_\\_Wellbeing\\_Strategy\\_v2.pdf](https://www.fenland.gov.uk/media/12208/Health-and-Wellbeing-Strategy/pdf/Health___Wellbeing_Strategy_v2.pdf)

<sup>18</sup> ONS Census 2021: Available at [2021 Census Profile for areas in England and Wales - Nomis \(nomisweb.co.uk\)](https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/census/2021)

Bad health	5,064 (4.9%)	226,719 (3.6%)	2,248,255 (4.0%)
Very bad health	1,471 (1.4%)	63,479 (1.0%)	662,881 (1.2%)

Source: ONS 2021 Census

3.1.26 The current Health Profile for Fenland compiled by Public Health England<sup>19</sup> shows that the health of people in Fenland is varied when compared to the England average. A number of key health indicators have been selected and summarised in Figure 11.

**Figure 11: Comparison of key health indicators for Fenland, East of England and England 2019 onwards**

Indicator	Fenland	East of England	England
Male life expectancy at birth, 3 year range (2020-22)	77.5	79.8	78.9
Female life expectancy at birth, 3 year range (2020-22)	82.0	83.5	82.8
Under 75 mortality rate from all causes (2023)	434.8	310.9	341.6
Under 75 mortality rate from cardiovascular disease (2023)	97.1	68.6	77.4
Under 75 mortality rate from cancer (2023)	148.4	113.4	120.8
Suicide rate (Persons 10+ years) (2021-23)	13.3	9.5	10.7
Admission episodes for alcohol specific conditions – Under 18s (2020/21 – 22/23)	33.6	21.5	26.0
Smoking prevalence in adults (18+) – current smokers (2022)	14.0%	13.2%	12.7%
Percentage of physically active adults (19+ years) (2022/23)	58.2%	67.7%	67.1%
Overweight (including obesity) prevalence in adults (18+ years)	70.6%	64.8%	64.0%

<sup>19</sup> <https://fingertips.phe.org.uk/profile/health-profiles>

(2022/23)			
Deprivation score (2019)	25.4	17.4	21.7
Year 6 prevalence of obesity (including severe obesity) 10-11 years (2022/23)	26.5%	20.6%	22.7%
Children in relative low income families (under 16s) (2022/23)	21.0%	13.8%	19.8%
Children in absolute low income families (under 16s) (2022/23)	16.4%	11.0%	15.6%
Average attainment 8 score (2022/23)	39.5%	46.4%	46.2%
Winter mortality index (2021-2022)	12.3%	6.8%	8.1%

Source: Department of Health and Social Care

3.1.27 The majority of health outcomes are worse or similar to the England average. Health outcomes in Fenland are generally worse than the East of England average. Some of the health outcomes that are significantly worse or similar to the England average are:

- Both male and female life expectancy is lower in Fenland compared to the average for England. Male life expectancy in Fenland is 77.5 years compared to 78.9 years in England. Female life expectancy in Fenland is 82 years compared to 82.8 years for England.
- The mortality rate for under 75s from all sources is significantly higher in Fenland than the average for England. The mortality rate for under 75s from circulatory disease and cancer is similar to the average for England.
- About 21% of children live in relative low income families and 16.4% live in absolute low income families.
- Prevalence of obese children (Year 6) is 26.5% (285 children) which is significantly worse than the average for England of 22.7%.
- Hospital stays for alcohol specific conditions in under 18's is 33.6 per 100,000 population, similar to the England average.
- The rate of self-harm related hospital stays is 154.9 per 100,000 population which is worse than the England average.
- Adult excess weight, smoking prevalence and physical activity levels are worse than the England average.

### Long Term Health and Disability

3.1.28 The 2021 census asked Fenland residents about physical and mental health conditions<sup>20</sup>. The percentage of residents that stated they were disabled under the Equality Act was 20.3%, and of these, 8.8% stated that their day-to-day activities were limited a lot. The proportion of disabled residents was higher in Fenland than in the East of England and in England overall.

<sup>20</sup> [2021 Census Profile for areas in England and Wales - Nomis \(nomisweb.co.uk\)](https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/)

3.1.29 In addition, 7% of residents stated that whilst they were not disabled under the Equality Act, they had a long term physical or mental health condition but day-to-day activities were not limited. This figure was very similar to the East of England and England.

**Figure 12: Long term health problem or disability**

All usual residents	Fenland	East of England	England
All usual residents	102,462 (100%)	6,335,073 (100%)	56,490,048 (100%)
Disabled under the Equality Act: Day-to-day activities limited a lot	9,046 (8.8%)	420,499 (6.6%)	4,140,357 (7.3%)
Disabled under the Equality Act: Day-to-day activities limited a little	11,790 (11.5%)	633,333 (10.0%)	5,634,153 (10.0%)
Not disabled under the Equality Act: Has long term physical or mental health condition but day-to-day activities are not limited	7,186 (7.0%)	457,748 (7.2%)	3,856,029 (6.8%)
Not disabled under the Equality Act: No long term physical or mental health conditions	74,440 (72.7%)	4,823,493 (76.1%)	42,859,509 (75.9%)

Source: ONS 2021 Census

### Hospitals and GP Surgeries

3.1.30 There are no major hospitals in Fenland although Doddington Hospital and the North Cambridgeshire in Wisbech deal with minor injuries and run outpatients' clinics. Depending on treatment, Fenland residents can access Addenbroke's Hospital in Cambridge, Peterborough City Hospital, Queen Elizabeth Hospital in Kings Lynn or Hinchingbrooke Hospital in Huntingdon.

3.1.31 There are also a number of other health facilities, such as GPs, opticians and dental surgeries in the district. These are generally in the market towns although a number of villages also have GP surgeries. Lack of a GP or dentist or increased waiting times are often cited by the public when responding to consultations for new proposal for housing.

**Figure 13: Settlements in Fenland District with GP surgery facilities**

Settlement	Number
Chatteris	1
Doddington	1
Manea	1
March	3
Parson Drove	1
Whittlesey	2
Wimblington	1
Wisbech	3

## Deprivation and Social Exclusion

- 3.1.32 The Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) 2019 is the official measure of relative deprivation for small area geographies called Lower-layer Super Output Areas (LSOAs), in England.<sup>21</sup> This index has been calculated since the 1970s, and is updated every 3 – 5 years.
- 3.1.33 Each LSOA contains an average of 1,500 residents or 650 households; in the IMD 2019 there is a total of 32,844 LSOAs in England. Deprivation does not just cover finances but a complex range need and a lack of access to resources.
- 3.1.34 Seven domains of deprivation are included in the index. These are income, employment, education, health, crime, barriers to housing services and living environment.
- 3.1.35 Fenland is ranked 51 out of 317 Local Authorities across the country, where 1 is most deprived. In 2015 Fenland was ranked 55 out of 317 Local Authorities, it has therefore become more deprived between 2015-19.

## Comparison with Cambridgeshire

- 3.1.36 The IMD 2019 reconfirmed that Fenland remains the most deprived district in Cambridgeshire. The next most deprived is Cambridge City, Huntingdonshire, East Cambridgeshire and South Cambridgeshire.
- 3.1.37 Cambridgeshire has 16 LSOAs in the 20% most deprived nationally – the same amount as in 2015, but not all LSOAs are the same. Three are in Cambridge City, two are in Huntingdonshire and eleven are in Fenland (one less than in 2015). Four of the LSOAs in Fenland are in the 10% most deprived nationally (in March North, Wisbech East and Wisbech West). March North was not in the top 10% most deprived in 2015.<sup>22</sup>
- 3.1.38 Eight of the top 10 most deprived LSOAs in Cambridgeshire are in Fenland as shown in Figure 14.

**Figure 14: Top 10 most deprived LSOAS in Cambridgeshire and their change since 2015**

LSOA name	Ward	Local Rank 2019	Local Rank 2015	Change in Rank
Fenland 003F	Staithe	1	2	-1
Fenland 002C	Waterlees Village	2	3	-1
Fenland 002D	Waterlees Village	3	1	2
Fenland 007B	March East	4	6	-2
Fenland 003I	Medworth	5	4	1
Cambridge 006F	Abbey	6	9	-3
Fenland 003H	Medworth	7	7	0
Fenland 001D	Roman Bank	8	18	-10

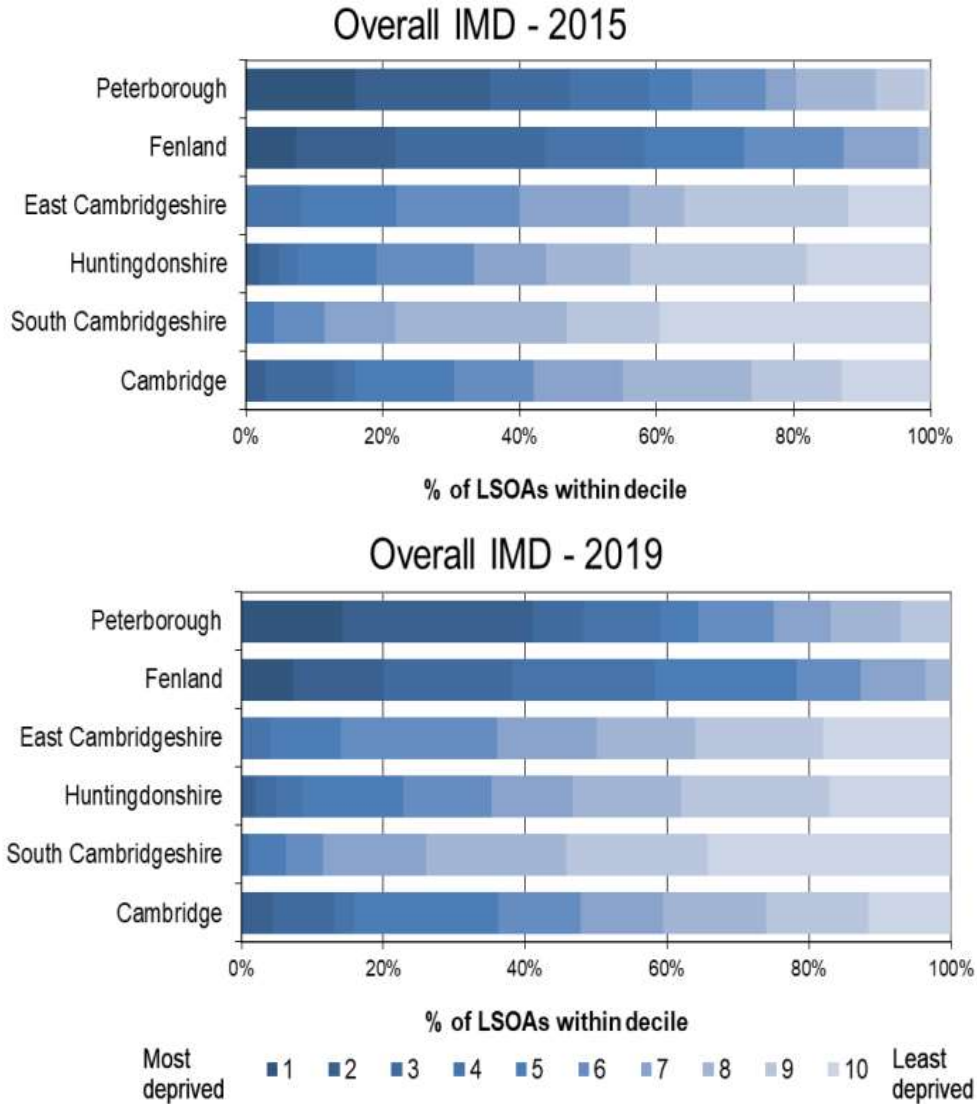
<sup>21</sup> [Microsoft Power BI](#)

<sup>22</sup> Cambridgeshire Insight: [Cambridgeshire-Summary-Report-for-IMD-2019-1.0.pdf \(cambridgeshireinsight.org.uk\)](#)

Cambridge 006D	Abbey	9	10	-1
Fenland 004C	Elm & Christchurch	10	12	-2

Source: Cambridgeshire Insight

**Figure 15: Comparison of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough districts for 2015 and 2019**



Source: Cambridgeshire Insight: English IMD 2019 Summary Report

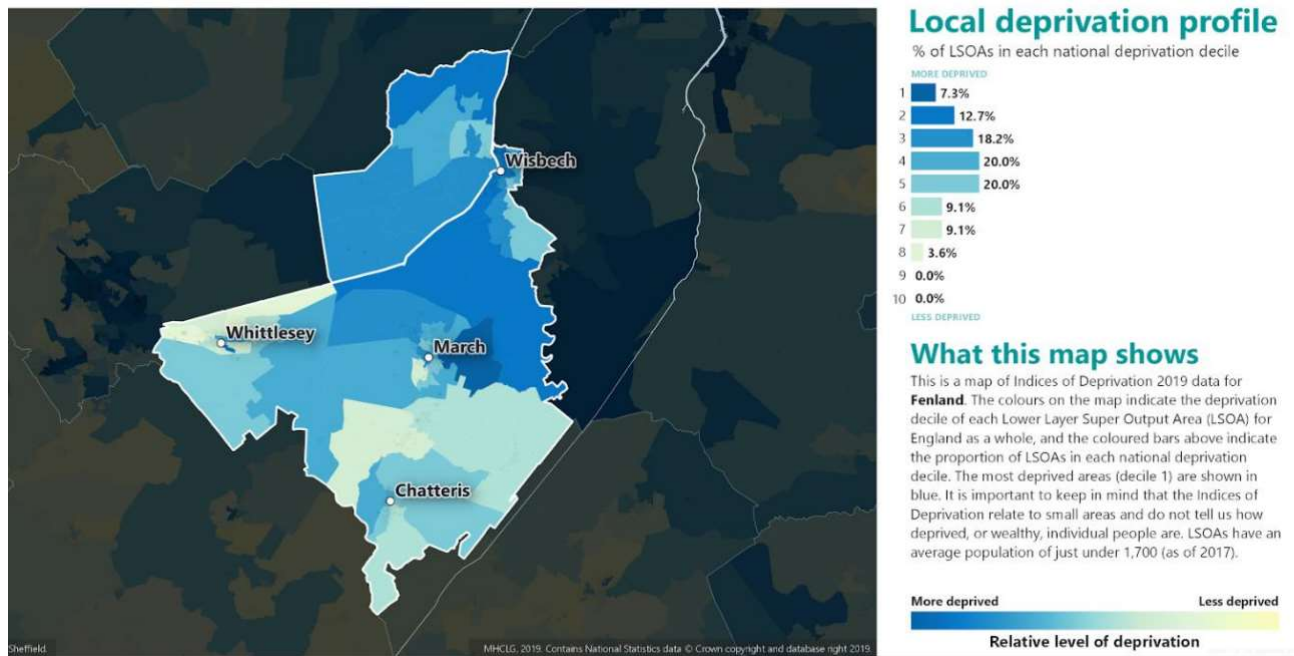
3.1.39 Cambridgeshire as a whole has less LSOAs in the less deprived deciles (6-10) than in 2015.

### Comparison within Fenland

3.1.40 Fenland has a total of 55 LSOAs. In general, the LSOA's in the north east of Fenland are the most deprived in the district. There are 21 LSOAs ranked in the lowest 3 deciles (1-3, where 1 is the most deprived) and 2 LSOAs in the highest 3 deciles (least deprived, 8-10)

nationally. Therefore, Fenland has substantially more LSOA's in the lower deciles, than the higher deciles.<sup>23</sup>

**Figure 16: English Indices of Deprivation 2019 for Fenland**



Source: Cambridgeshire Insight

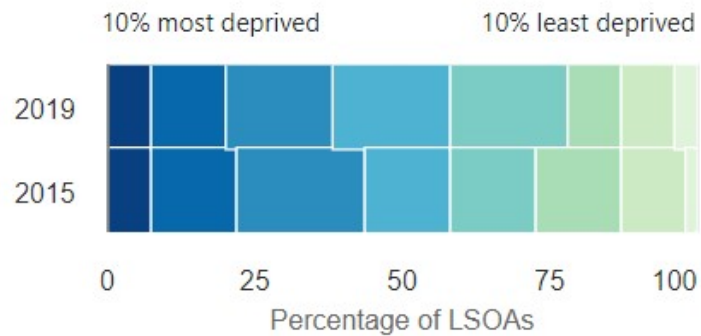
3.1.41 LSOAs Fenland 007B (March East), 003F (Straithe), and 002C and 002D (Waterlees Village) have the highest levels of deprivation in the district (Local IMD decile 1). By comparison, the least deprived LSOAs (Local IMD decile 8) are Fenland 008A (Bassenhally) and Fenland 006F (St Andrews).

3.1.42 In Fenland, 3 more LSOAs were in the more deprived deciles than in 2015, with 7% of all LSOAs falling into these deciles. The majority of LSOAs in Fenland do not fall into the 50% less deprived LSOAs nationally, apart from the Crime and Living Environment domains, where there are a minority of LSOAs. Fenland's most deprived scoring domains are Education, with 98% of its LSOAs in the more deprived half of the rankings, followed by Health with 93% in the lower half.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>23</sup> Cambridgeshire Insight: [Fenland\\_1.1.pdf \(cambridgeshireinsight.org.uk\)](#)

<sup>24</sup> Cambridgeshire Insight: [Cambridgeshire-Summary-Report-for-IMD-2019-1.0.pdf \(cambridgeshireinsight.org.uk\)](#)

**Figure 17: Percentage distribution in 2019 and 2015 of LSOAs in Fenland in each decile of the Index of Multiple Deprivation**



Source: MHCLG: [Indices of Deprivation 2015 and 2019 \(communities.gov.uk\)](https://communities.gov.uk)

### Children in low income families

3.1.43 There are two categories of low income families. The first is absolute low income, defined as a family whose equivalised income is below 60% of the 2010/11 median income adjusted for inflation. The second category is relative low income, where a low income family has claimed at least one or more of Universal Credit, Tax Credits or Housing Benefit at any point in the year.

3.1.44 In 2021/22 in Fenland there were 3,197 children living in absolute low income families and 4,387 children living in relative low income families.<sup>25</sup>

### Fuel Poverty

3.1.45 Fenland households that are considered to be in fuel poverty account for some 11.2% of the population which is slightly below the national average of 13.1%. However, this is above the Cambridgeshire average of 9.2%<sup>26</sup>.

### Crime

3.1.46 The absence of a safe and secure place in which to live can have an extremely negative impact on physical and emotional health and wellbeing.

3.1.47 Single crime case data has been provided by Cambridgeshire Constabulary and aggregated with rates calculated per 1,000 population. 12-month rolling figures use an average of the population monthly figures over the same period.

3.1.48 In the period May 2023 to April 2024 there were a total of 8,022 crimes recorded in Fenland. The overall crime rate for Fenland was 6.6 per 1,000 people. This is higher than the overall crime rate for Cambridgeshire (5.8) and the East of England (6.0).

<sup>25</sup> Cambridgeshire Insight: [Children and Young People - LTLA | Fenland | Report Builder for ArcGIS \(cambridgeshireinsight.org.uk\)](https://cambridgeshireinsight.org.uk)

<sup>26</sup> Cambridgeshire Insight: [Deprivation - LTLA | Fenland | Report Builder for ArcGIS \(cambridgeshireinsight.org.uk\)](https://cambridgeshireinsight.org.uk)

- 3.1.49 The main type of crime in this period in Fenland was violence and sexual offences (3,636). The rate of violence and sexual offences was 35.7 per 1,000 people, which is above the average for Cambridgeshire (26.5) and England (33.3). Fenland was below the average crime rate for Cambridgeshire for vehicle crime, theft from the person, shoplifting, public order, robbery and bicycle theft. Fenland was above the average crime rate for Cambridgeshire for burglary, criminal damage and arson, drugs, possession of weapons.

27

## Open Space

- 3.1.50 Provision of good quality and publicly accessible open space is a key determinant of health and well-being.
- 3.1.51 Most settlements in Fenland have an area of open space for public use and recreation. However, the amount of open space available per head of population is below the national standard. The Council's Open Space Study 2006 highlighted a deficit of various types of open space for most settlements. Since then, with the exception of the provision of football pitches in Whittlesey there have been no significant additions of open space other than that provided with new developments.
- 3.1.52 The Council's current Open Space Standards for new developments are contained in Appendix B of the Fenland Local Plan 2014.<sup>28</sup> These are to be reviewed as part of the update of the Local Plan with the aim of ensuring that sufficient open space is provided to cater for the forecasted growth in population. The Council will however still be faced with the challenge of bringing open space standards for the district up to those for the rest of England.

## Leisure

- 3.1.53 There are four leisure centres in Fenland, in each of the market towns. These are run by Freedom Leisure, a not for profit leisure trust. Provision of facilities varies and future provision to cater for existing population and new growth has been highlighted in the Council's Leisure and Indoor Sports Facilities<sup>29</sup> and Playing Pitch Strategy<sup>30</sup> (both 2016).
- 3.1.54 There is also a library in each of the market towns that are run by Cambridgeshire County Council which provide a range of facilities and are an important hub for the local communities. The County Council also operate a mobile library which provides services to many of Fenland's villages.<sup>31</sup>
- 3.1.55 There are a wide number and variety of sports clubs in the district with varying standards of facilities. The most popular participatory sport in the areas is football with around 170

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<sup>27</sup> Cambridgeshire Insight: [Crime - LTLA | Fenland | Report Builder for ArcGIS \(cambridgeshireinsight.org.uk\)](https://cambridgeshireinsight.org.uk)

<sup>28</sup> [Fenland Local Plan - Adopted Web](#)

<sup>29</sup> [Fenland DC - Indoor Facility Strategy](#)

<sup>30</sup> [Fenland Playing Pitch Strategy 2016.pdf](#)

<sup>31</sup> [Libraries | Cambridgeshire County Council](#)

teams. Sport England and partners including the Council have produced a Fenland Local Football Facility Plan (August 2019)<sup>32</sup> to improve playing pitches and club facilities.

- 3.1.56 Fishing and boating are also popular leisure pursuits in the area due to the prevalence of the extensive drainage network and man-made lakes. There are a variety of pubs, clubs and restaurants throughout the district with concentrations in the market towns. Wisbech also has a cinema, 'The Light,' and both March and Wisbech have night clubs.

### **Local Food**

- 3.1.57 Whilst the district has a higher than average proportion of unhealthy and obese residents, a significant part of Fenland's area is high grade agricultural land which is an important resource and discussed in more detail in Section 3.6. Much of the food produced is exported to other areas in the country and abroad which has implications for transport and CO2 emissions. There are a few farmers markets and other facilities within the district which provide outlets for local food to be consumed locally but these are not widespread. Being a mainly arable crop producing area based on a highly mechanised farming system means that the scope for the sales of local produce is relatively limited.

### **Allotments**

- 3.1.58 Current provision of allotments in Fenland reveals an incomplete picture. All market towns have at least one site of allotments. However, the numbers appear to have dwindled over time partly because keeping an allotment went out of fashion in the recent past and the land has been used for other purposes. The number of allotments in villages and elsewhere is not unknown. The national standard requires 20 standard allotment plots of 250m.sq per 1,000 households. The Local Plan standard currently seeks off-site allotments for development sites of less than 10ha and more than 0.5ha and on-site for housing schemes over 10ha. The standards are to be reviewed as part of the update of the Local Plan.

### **Community Orchards**

- 3.1.59 There is a community orchard in Wisbech Park and one has been established in Manea as part of a wider conservation community project for the former Manea Pit area. Fruit trees and bushes have been planted in areas accessible to the public and are available for anyone to harvest. One aim is to improve community cohesion and the projects have been well supported by local people. Community orchards provide a very positive example of how food grown locally can have wider community benefits.

### **Evidence Gaps**

- Open space assessment is dated 2006 and requires updating to inform the new Local Plan.
- Playing Pitch Strategy is dated 2016 and requires updating to inform the new Local Plan.

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<sup>32</sup> [Fenland Local Football Facility Plan](#)

- Indoor Sports Facility Strategy is dated 2016 and requires updating to inform the new Local Plan.
- Details of allotment provision
- Information on farmers markets sales
- Unknown plans of health providers for current and future provision

## **Specific Issues and Opportunities**

### **Key Issues:**

- 28% of Fenland's population will be over 65 by 2041 which is higher than the national average.
- Life expectancy is lower than the national average.
- Fenland people generally have less healthy lives than the national average.
- There are relatively high levels of deprivation and social exclusion in a number of areas in the district.
- There is great health inequality between some wards within the district.
- Inequalities have worsened in the past few years.
- Relatively poor open space offer.

### **Key Opportunities:**


- Open space provision, including for allotments, can be improved throughout the authority area.
- Land exists close to or within existing settlements for new areas of open space.
- Able to plan for an elderly population.
- New housing and employment development can provide scope to improve the deprivation.
- Better place making and targeted infrastructure can improve the environment for all including the most deprived.
- The Fens Reservoir has potential to provide a large area of open space with leisure and recreation facilities to encourage exercise and social interaction.
- The Fens Reservoir has the potential to attract visitors from all over the country which could subsequently provide a boost for the local economy.

## **The Likely Situation without the Plan**

3.1.60 The likely levels of development identified in the new emerging Local Plan should help to alleviate some of the issues relating to age, health and well-being, crime, leisure and open space. Policies built around the sustainability objectives identified in this report should help to achieve some of the objectives identified in the Council's Business Plan: Communities, Environment and Economy.

## **Key Sustainability Objectives**

3.1.61 Following a review of the relevant policies relating to the topics in this section, along with an assessment of the current situation, the following key sustainability objectives have been identified:

<p><b>1. Healthy Communities</b></p>		<p>1.1 Provide for an ageing population; and redress inequalities related to health, well-being, age, gender, disability, race, faith, location and income.</p> <p>1.2 Improve the quality, range and accessibility of services and facilities (e.g. health, transport, education, training, leisure opportunities and community activities); and ensure all groups thrive in safe environments.</p> <p>1.3 Create and enhance multifunctional open space that is accessible, links with a high quality green infrastructure network and improves opportunities for people to access and appreciate wildlife and wild places.</p> <p>1.4 Encourage healthy choices and opportunities for the consumption of locally produced food by maintaining and enhancing the provision of allotments, community orchards and farmers' shops and markets.</p>
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## 3.2 Jobs, Education and Housing

### Introduction

3.2.1 This section is concerned with the local economy, education and housing. It starts by looking at the economy, employment, education housing including affordable housing. As with other sections there are numerous cross cutting topics of which reference will be made in other themes. The sustainability topics covered are as follows:

- Economy
- Employment
- Retail and town centres
- Education
- Housing

### Policy Context

#### National Planning Policy Framework

3.2.2 The economic sustainability objective in the NPPF seeks 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, innovation and improved productivity; and by identifying and coordinating the provision of infrastructure.

The social sustainability objective of the NPPF seeks to ensure that a sufficient number and range of homes can be provided to meet the needs of present and future generations.

Paragraph 85 of the NPPF explains that planning policies and decisions should help create the conditions in which businesses can invest, expand and adapt. Significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth and productivity, taking into account both local business needs and wider opportunities for development.

Paragraph 90 sets out how the planning system should support the role that town centres play at the heart of local communities, by taking a positive approach to their growth, management and adaptation.

Paragraph 100 explains the importance of a sufficient choice of early years, school and post-16 places being available and that local planning authorities should work collaboratively with partners and place great weight on the need to provide for new school facilities.

Section 5 – ‘Delivering a sufficient supply of homes’ provides extensive guidance about the need to provide homes for all members of the community.

## Planning Practice Guidance

3.2.3 Much information is contained within planning practice guidance on most of the topics covered under this section of the report, with specific attention given to some key areas.

Housing: PPG also covers guidance on housing needs assessment, including the methodologies for assessing housing need, the scope of such assessments, and how the needs of all types of housing should be assessed, including self-build and for elderly people.

Rural communities: The section titled 'how can planning policies support sustainable rural communities' stresses the importance of recognising the particular issues which are faced by rural areas, such as housing affordability.<sup>33</sup>

Town centres: There is a section relating to ensuring the vitality of town centres and explains about the importance of having a strategic vision for town centres and what this strategy should contain, such as determinants of town centre health, tourism and sequential and impact testing.<sup>34</sup>

### Other plans and policies<sup>35</sup>:

- Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Independent Economic Review (CPIER) (2018)
- Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority Local Industrial Strategy (2019)
- Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority Local Economic Recovery Strategy (March 2021)
- Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority Economic Growth Strategy (June 2022)
- Fenland Employment Needs Report (November 2021)
- Housing Needs of Specific Groups in Cambridgeshire & West Suffolk Study (October 2021)
- Growing Fenland Town Reports (2019-20)
- Fenland Town Centres Hierarchy Study (May 2022)
- Fenland Survey of Existing Services and Facilities Study (May 2022)

## The Current Situation

### Economy

3.2.4 Many factors play a part in the success of a local economy, including natural resources, a workforce with skills, quality of infrastructure, strong linkages with wider economies and successful distribution of wealth. This section of the report highlights information about the labour market in Fenland and includes measures of overall economic activity and levels of worklessness.

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<sup>33</sup> Paragraph: 009 Reference ID: 67-009-20190722

<sup>34</sup> Paragraph: 002 Reference ID: 2b-002-20190722

<sup>35</sup> For a full list of relevant plans, policies, programmes, strategies and initiatives, see Appendix A

3.2.5 Much of the information is derived from the Annual Population Survey (APS)<sup>36</sup> via the Cambridgeshire Insight website which is a combined survey of households in Great Britain. Its purpose is to provide information on key social and socio-economic variables between the 10-yearly national censuses, with particular emphasis on providing information relating to local authority areas.

### **Employment rate**

3.2.6 The employment rate for 16-64 year olds in Fenland (67.8%) is below that for Cambridgeshire (79.2%) and England as a whole (76%). This is the case for both men and women.

### **Employees / self employed**

3.2.7 46.5% of people are in employed work with 7.6% self-employed. The average number of employed workers is below the average for Cambridgeshire (58.5%) and the whole of England (52.8%). The number of self-employed people in the district is higher than the average for Cambridgeshire (7.2%) but below that for England (8.3%).

### **Public / Private Sector**

3.2.8 Of those in work, 92.1% are employed in the private sector with 7.9% in the public sector. Private sector employment is significantly higher than in both Cambridgeshire (80.2%) and England (77.2%). Similarly public sector employment is less than in Cambridgeshire (19.8%) and England (22.8%).

### **Occupation Type**

3.2.9 Professional occupations in Fenland (7.9%) are significantly less than the average for England (23.4%). Managers, directors, senior officials and other professional occupations account for some 6.6%. This compares to 11.7% in England as a whole.

3.2.10 Fenland's two highest employer groups are skilled trades (23.3%) and elementary occupations (17.6%). Fenland is significantly above the average for England in both of these categories.

### **Number of weekly hours worked**

3.2.11 Persons in employment who work 35-44 hours in Fenland (52%) is similar to the average for Cambridgeshire (54%). However for people in employment who work 45 hours or more, Fenland at 26% is higher than Cambridgeshire (20%).

### **Annual resident salaries**

3.2.12 The Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE)<sup>37</sup> is conducted in April each year to obtain information about the levels, distribution and make-up of earnings and hours worked for employees. ASHE is based on a 1% sample of employee jobs taken from HM

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<sup>36</sup> [Economy - LTLA | Fenland | Report Builder for ArcGIS \(cambridgeshireinsight.org.uk\)](https://www.cambridgeshireinsight.org.uk/)

<sup>37</sup> [Employee earnings in the UK - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](https://www.ons.gov.uk/)

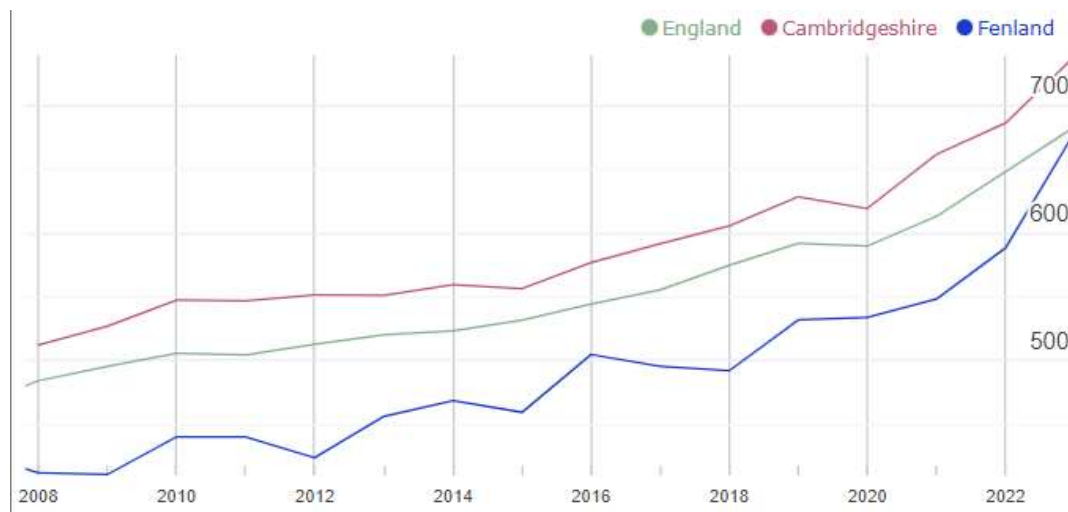
Revenue & Customs PAYE records. Information on earnings and hours is obtained in confidence from employers. ASHE does not cover the self-employed nor does it cover employees not paid during the reference period.

3.2.13 Both male and female full time workers in Fenland earn less than their counterparts in Cambridgeshire and England. The median annual resident salary for a full time worker in Fenland (both men and women) in 2022 was £28,673. This compares with £32,679 for England and £34,974 in Cambridgeshire.

3.2.14 The median annual resident salary for Fenland remained consistently below that for England and Cambridgeshire in the period 2011 to 2018.<sup>38</sup>

3.2.15 Figure 18 shows the variation in incomes between Fenland, Cambridgeshire and England. The average gross weekly pay in Fenland has been consistently lower than the average for Cambridgeshire and England. In 2023, the average weekly pay in Cambridgeshire (£738.70) was £59.70 more than Fenland (£679).<sup>39</sup>

**Figure 18: Gross weekly pay (£) for all full time workers in Fenland, Cambridgeshire and England 2002 - 2023**



Source: Nomis, Office for National Statistics

### Economically Inactive

3.2.16 28.1% of the working age population 16-64 years in Fenland is economically inactive. This includes those who are unemployed and seeking employment, students, those looking after family, temporarily sick, long-term sick and retired people.

3.2.17 The main reason for economic inactivity in Fenland is being a student (35.5%), followed by long term sick (30.2%) and those looking after family (21%). The long term sick are higher than the average for Cambridgeshire (24.5%).

<sup>38</sup> [Economy - LTLA | Fenland | Report Builder for ArcGIS \(cambridgeshireinsight.org.uk\)](#)

<sup>39</sup> [Labour Market Profile - Nomis - Official Census and Labour Market Statistics \(nomisweb.co.uk\)](#)

3.2.18 In terms of the employment rate for those recognized as disabled, in the two categories of ‘Equality Act core or work-limiting disabled’, and ‘Not EA core or work-limiting disabled’, Fenland was below the averages for both Cambridgeshire and England.<sup>40</sup>

### Unemployment rate

3.2.19 The unemployment rate in Fenland between April 2023 and March 2024 was 4.7% which was above that for England (3.9%) but similar to that for Cambridgeshire as a whole (4.6%).

**Figure 19: Unemployment in Fenland, Cambridgeshire and England between 2005-2024**



Source: Nomis, Office for National Statistics

### Universal Credit and Job Seekers Allowance claimants

3.2.20 As of June 2024, the number of people claiming Universal Credit in Fenland was 2,310, comprising 1,230 males and 1,080 females. This consists of 750 men and 620 women. This is the equivalent to 3.8% which is lower than the average for England (4.1%) but higher than the average for Cambridgeshire as a whole (2.3%).

### Business numbers

3.2.21 The Inter-Departmental Business Register (IDBR)<sup>41</sup> collates information about businesses where the term “business” is used to represent an enterprise. An enterprise can be defined as the smallest combination of legal units (generally based on VAT and/or PAYE records) that is an organisational unit producing goods or services, which benefits from a certain degree of autonomy in decision-making, especially for the allocation of its current resources.

3.2.22 In 2021 there were 3,905 businesses in Fenland. The vast majority of these (89.8%) were so-called micro-businesses which is a business with up to 9 employees. This was followed

<sup>40</sup> [Economy - LTLA | Fenland | Report Builder for ArcGIS \(cambridgeshireinsight.org.uk\)](#)

<sup>41</sup> <https://www.ons.gov.uk/aboutus/whatwedo/paidservices/interdepartmentalbusinessregisteridbr>

by small businesses (8.5%) with between 10 and 49 employees and medium sized businesses (1.5%) with between 50 to 249 employees. Large businesses with over 250 employees accounted for 0.2% of the total business number in Fenland. These figures are very similar in all categories to those in both England and Cambridgeshire.<sup>42</sup>

## Businesses by industry

3.2.23 In 2023, the three main types of business in Fenland are construction (19.3%), professional, scientific & technical (9.8%) and agriculture, forestry and fishing (9.3%). These are followed by transport & storage (8.1%), business administration & support services (7.1%), retail (6.9%), manufacturing (6.4%), accommodation & food services (6%), arts, entertainment, recreation & other services (5.6%), motor trades (5.2%) and wholesale (4.5%).

## Business survival

3.2.24 In 2021, 540 new business were started in Fenland and 515 ceased to exist. In terms of business survival rates for Fenland, in 2020, 97% survived one year, 70% two years, 63% three years, 54% four years and 43% survived five years.

## Gross Value Added (GVA)

3.2.25 GVA is a measure of the increase in the value of the economy due to the production of goods and services. In 2019 the total GVA for Fenland was £1,813 million. The highest GVA came from manufacturing (£391m), wholesale and retail trade (£247m) and real estate (£217m).<sup>43</sup>

**Figure 20: Gross Value Added (Balanced) for Fenland (2019)**

Sector	£m
Agriculture, mining, electricity, gas, water and waste	125
Manufacturing	391
Construction	117
Wholesale and Retail Trade	247
Transportation and Storage	106
Accommodation and Food Service	29
Information and Communication	19
Financial and Insurance	20
Real Estate	217
Professional, Scientific, Technical	46
Administrative and Support Services	111
Public Administration and Defence	88
Education	136
Health and Social Work	116
Arts, Entertainment, Other Recreation	12

Source: Cambridgeshire Insight

<sup>42</sup> [Economy - LTLA | Fenland | Report Builder for ArcGIS \(cambridgeshireinsight.org.uk\)](https://cambridgeshireinsight.org.uk/economy/reports/)

<sup>43</sup> [Economy - LTLA | Fenland | Report Builder for ArcGIS \(cambridgeshireinsight.org.uk\)https://cambridgeshireinsight.org.uk/economy/reports/](https://cambridgeshireinsight.org.uk/economy/reports/)

## Retail

- 3.2.26 For retail and services offer March and Wisbech are classed as town centres in the Fenland Local Plan 2014 whilst Chatteris and Whittlesey are considered to be district centres. In addition there are a number of small retail units in villages. There is also a large out of town-centre retail area in Wisbech (Cromwell Road) and permission for an out-of-town retail centre has been approved in March but not yet implemented. There are vacant units in all town centres although footfall appears to be steady. However, none of the centres has had a recent 'health check' which means that it is not clear how they are currently fairing.
- 3.2.27 The Council is keen for all of the town centres to be vibrant places to shop and visit. March has been awarded funding from various streams to improve its High Street. Works are currently underway to help the town centre become more resilient and fit for the future, ensuring it can evolve and adapt to changes in consumer demands and meet the needs of future generations as the town continues to grow. In 2015 Wisbech was awarded £2 million from the Heritage Lottery Townscape Heritage Fund for its High Street Project which is now underway and will provide important benefits.

## Education

- 3.2.28 A large number of villages in Fenland have primary schools. There are also a number of primary schools in each of the four market towns as well as five secondary schools: Neale Wade Academy in March, Thomas Clarkson Academy and Wisbech Grammar School in Wisbech, Sir Harry Smith Community College in Whittlesey and Cromwell Community College in Chatteris. Demographics require a new secondary school to be built in Wisbech by 2021 and a site to the west of the town is currently being considered.
- 3.2.29 All of the secondary schools offer post-GCSE education and within the district pupils can also attend the College of West Anglia campus in Wisbech although many do choose to go elsewhere such as Peterborough, Cambridge and Huntingdon.

## Qualifications

- 3.2.30 For monitoring purposes qualifications are categorized into a number of areas:<sup>44</sup>
- Level 1 and entry level qualifications: 1-4 GCSEs grade A\*-C , Any GCSEs at other grades, O levels or CSEs (any grades), 1 AS level, NVQ level 1, Foundation GNVQ, Basic or Essential Skills
  - Level 2: 5+ GCSEs (A\*-C or 9-4), O levels (passes), CSEs (grade 1), School Certification, 1 A level, 2-3 AS levels, VCEs, Intermediate or Higher Diploma, Welsh Baccalaureate Intermediate Diploma, NVQ level 2, Intermediate GNVQ, City and Guilds Craft, BTEC First or General Diploma, RSA Diploma
  - Apprenticeships

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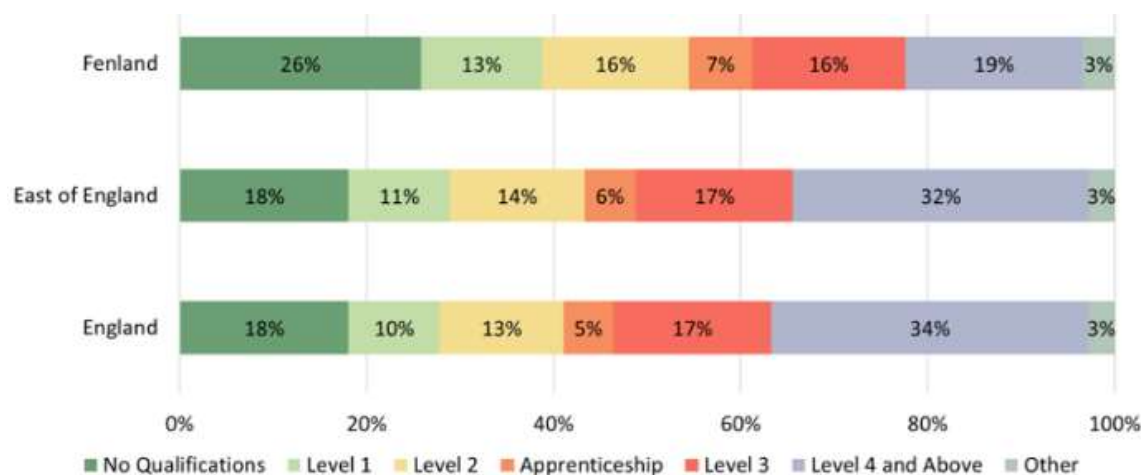
<sup>44</sup> [2021 Census Profile for areas in England and Wales - Nomis \(nomisweb.co.uk\)](https://nomisweb.co.uk)<https://cambridgeshireinsight.org.uk/economy/reports/>

- Level 3: 2+ A levels or VCEs, 4+ AS levels, Higher School Certificate, Progression or Advanced Diploma, Welsh Baccalaureate Advance Diploma, NVQ level 3; Advanced GNVQ, City and Guilds Advanced Craft, ONC, OND, BTEC National, RSA Advanced Diploma
- Level 4 and above: degree (BA, BSc), higher degree (MA, PhD, PGCE), NVQ level 4-5, HNC, HND, RSA Higher Diploma, BTEC Higher level, professional qualifications (e.g. teaching, nursing, accountancy)
- Other qualifications: vocational or work-related qualifications, other qualifications achieved in England or Wales, qualifications achieved outside England or Wales (equivalent not stated or unknown)

3.2.31 According to the 2021 census, the number of residents in Fenland aged 16 years and over who had achieved Levels 1, 2 or an apprenticeship was above the regional and national averages. The percentage of people with level 3 qualifications (16.3%) was very similar to the regional (16.8%) and national (16.9%) averages. However, the number of people in Fenland with level 4 qualifications or above (19%) was markedly lower than the averages for the east region (31.6%) and England (33.9%).

3.2.32 25.8% of people in Fenland have no qualifications which is significantly higher than the regional and national averages which are both 18.1%.

**Figure 21: Level of highest qualification for Fenland, East of England and England residents aged 16+ (2021)**



Source: Cambridgeshire Insight<sup>45</sup>

3.2.33 The 2021 census also reported the number of residents aged 5 years and over that are students. The proportion of Fenland residents that are students (16.2%) was lower than the regional average (19.4%) and the national average (20.4%).

<sup>45</sup> [Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Insight – Population – Census 2021 – Topic Summaries – Education](https://cambridgeshireinsight.org.uk) ([cambridgeshireinsight.org.uk](https://cambridgeshireinsight.org.uk))<https://cambridgeshireinsight.org.uk/economy/reports/>

- 3.2.34 Moreover in recent years Fenland has been statistically significantly lower (worse) when compared to national rates for GCSE achievement (5A\*-C including English & Maths), even though Cambridgeshire rates are statistically significantly better than England.
- 3.2.35 In the reformed national GCSE scoring system in 2017 Fenland secondary schools continued to fair poorly when compared to other Cambridgeshire schools in achieving Grade 5 for English and Maths. Within Fenland, Sir Harry Smith Community College in Whittlesey (41%) achieved the highest percentage compared to Cromwell Community College in Chatteris (35%), Thomas Clarkson Academy in Wisbech (30%) and Neale Wade Academy in March (24%).<sup>46</sup>

## Housing

### Housing types in Fenland

- 3.2.36 In 2023 there were a total of 47,080 household properties in Fenland.
- 3.2.37 Fenland has an equal proportion of bungalows (25%) and detached houses (25%). The percentage of bungalows is significantly more than in Cambridgeshire as a whole (13%) and England (9%). Conversely the number of flats and maisonettes (9%) is significantly below the number for Cambridgeshire (15%) and the rest of England (24%). There are also fewer terrace houses in Fenland (16%) compared to Cambridgeshire (21%) and for England (26%) as a whole. There are slightly fewer semi-detached properties (22%) than the rest of the Cambridgeshire (23%) and England (24%). For detached houses there are significantly more in Fenland (25%) compared to England (16%) but still fewer than the 26% for Cambridgeshire as a whole.<sup>47</sup>

### Persons per household

- 3.2.38 In projected average size household in 2023 was 2.3 which is slightly below the England average of 2.4. By 2043 household sizes in Fenland are forecast to decrease to 2.2 which is in line with the prediction for England of 2.2.<sup>48</sup>

### Tenure

- 3.2.39 66.8% of dwellings in Fenland are either owned outright or owned with a mortgage. This compares to 63.7% for Cambridgeshire and 61.3% for England. 20% are privately rented, slightly more than in Cambridgeshire (19.4%) but less than in England (20.4%). Socially rented housing in Fenland including from ex-local authority and housing associations is 12.7% which compares to 15.3% for Cambridgeshire and 17.1% for England. The remaining 0.5% of Fenland residents have shared ownership, which is lower than Cambridgeshire (1.6%) and England (1%).<sup>49</sup>

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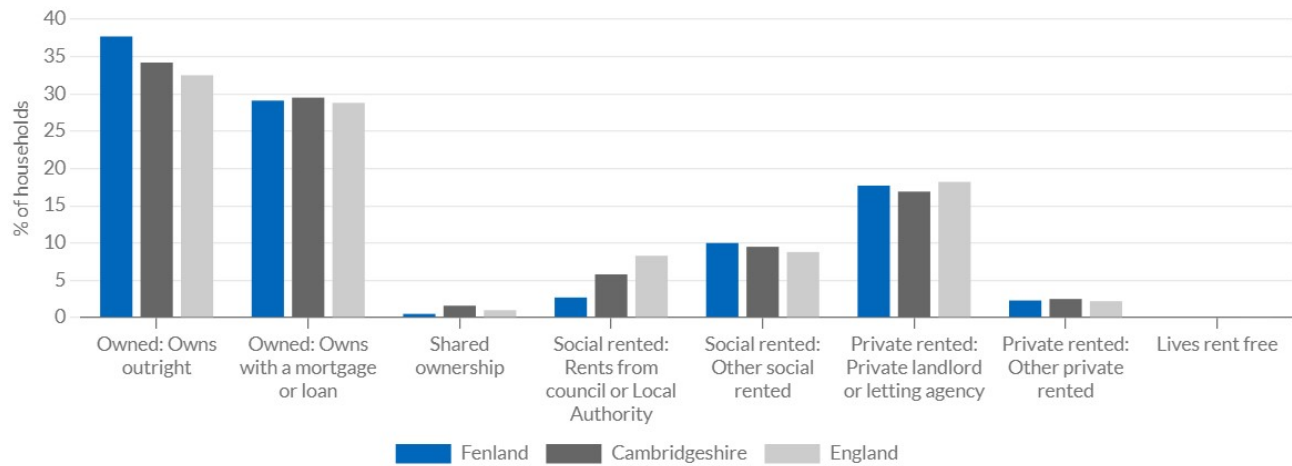
<sup>46</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/school-performance-tables>

<sup>47</sup> [Housing - LTLA | Fenland | Report Builder for ArcGIS \(cambridgeshireinsight.org.uk\)](#)

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

**Figure 22 – Ownership and tenancy by type (2021)**



Source: Cambridgeshire Insight

### House Prices

3.2.40 The median house price of a property in Fenland (2022) was £230,000. This compares to £333,500 for Cambridgeshire and £286,000 for England. Average prices for all types of housing in the district are consistently below those for Cambridgeshire and England. For instance the price of a semi-detached house in Fenland was £210,000 compared to £312,000 for Cambridgeshire and £270,000 for England, whereas the average price of a flat was £111,250 compared to £215,000 in Cambridgeshire and £230,000 for England.<sup>50</sup>

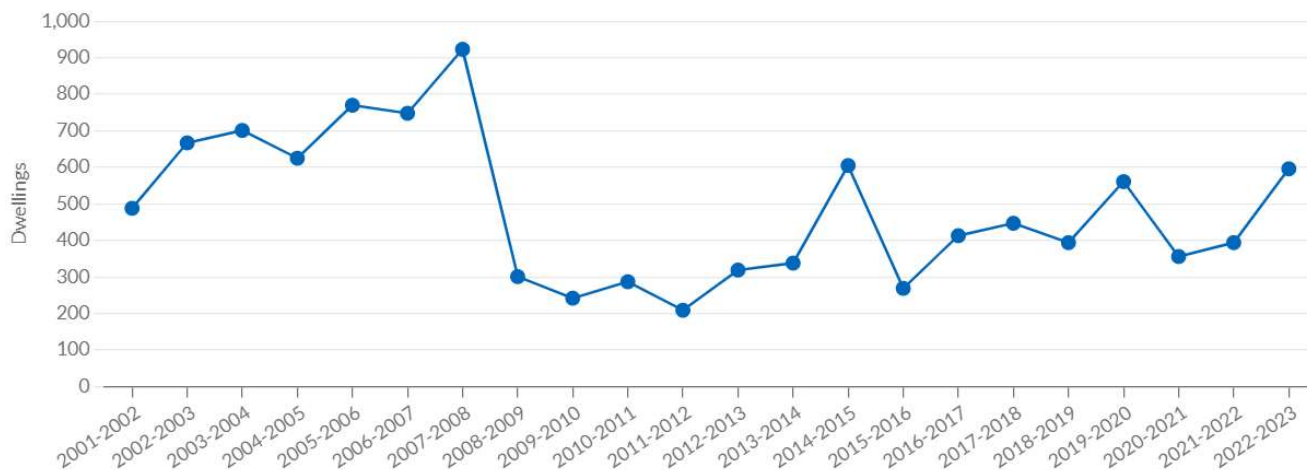
3.2.41 For Council Tax bands (A to H) with Band A being the lowest, 93% of domestic properties in Fenland fall within bands A to D. This compares with 77% for Cambridgeshire and 82% for England.<sup>51</sup>

3.2.42 When considering the delivery of new dwellings in Fenland since 2002, there has been an overall decrease in recent years compared to the early/mid-2000's which can be traced back to the financial crises of 2008. Since 2011, Fenland's Local Plan target of 550 per annum has only been achieved once in 2014-15 when 605 dwellings were built.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

**Figure 23 – Net additions for Fenland 2002 to 2023**



Source: Cambridgeshire Insight

### Affordability

3.2.43 The affordability ratio is calculated by dividing house prices by gross annual workplace-based earnings. It is based on the median and lower quartiles of both house prices and earnings in England and Wales.

3.2.44 The latest (2023) ratio of median house price to the median gross annual workplace - based earnings is 7.4 for Fenland.<sup>52</sup> This ratio has steadily increased since 1997 when it was 2.75. With a current industry standard loan-to-income ratio at 4.5, buying a home is therefore out of reach for many people in the district.<sup>53</sup> However, property is more affordable in Fenland compared to Cambridgeshire as a whole (9.23) and England (8.26).

### Affordable Housing

3.2.45 The Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) 2021<sup>54</sup> set out an annual affordable housing need of 289 homes. In May 2022 there were 1,482 people on the housing register. This though tends to fluctuate depending on the times when individuals are required to re-register. The main need is for 1 and 2 bedroom homes as is shown in Figure 24. There are a number of Registered Providers in Fenland with the significantly largest being the Clarion Housing Group who are responsible for over 4,000 homes.

**Figure 24: Estimated size of social/affordable rent housing needed, based on housing register information (2019)**

Size	Cambridge	East Cambs	Fenland	Hunts.	South Cambs	West Suffolk
1 bedroom	66%	46%	43%	52%	50%	53%
2 bedrooms	24%	33%	35%	31%	34%	32%

<sup>52</sup> [House price to workplace-based earnings ratio - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](https://www.ons.gov.uk)

<sup>53</sup> <https://www.moneyadvice.service.org.uk/en/articles/how-much-can-you-afford-to-borrow>

<sup>54</sup> [Housing Needs of Specific Groups \(cambridgeshireinsight.org.uk\)](https://www.cambridgeshireinsight.org.uk)

3 bedrooms	8%	16%	17%	13%	13%	12%
4+ bedrooms	2%	5%	4%	4%	4%	4%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Source: Cambridgeshire & West Suffolk: Housing Needs of Specific Groups (2021)

3.2.45 Provision of affordable housing by the private sector has been problematic in recent years. Viability issues relating to many developments in Fenland mean that applicants can often successfully argue that the Local Plan target of providing 25% of affordable housing in developments over 10 units is not achievable. In addition, if the total number of units proposed on a scheme is too low, it is not viable for Registered Providers to take over their management as there are only a few units in one area. Registered Providers prefer to manage affordable homes grouped together in a particular area in order to employ a housing/maintenance officer for that area.

### Homelessness (Housing)

3.2.46 The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 places a duty on local authorities to both prevent and relieve homelessness. The rate of statutory homeless in Fenland is 11.5 per 1,000 people. This is above the rate for Cambridgeshire (10.7) but below the national rate for England (11.7).<sup>55</sup>

### Fuel Poverty

3.2.47 Fuel poverty is measured using the Low Income Low Energy Efficiency (LILEE) indicator, which considers a household to be fuel poor if: 1) it is living in a property with an energy efficiency rating of band D, E, F or G, and; 2) its disposable income (income after housing costs (AHC) and energy costs) would be below the poverty line.

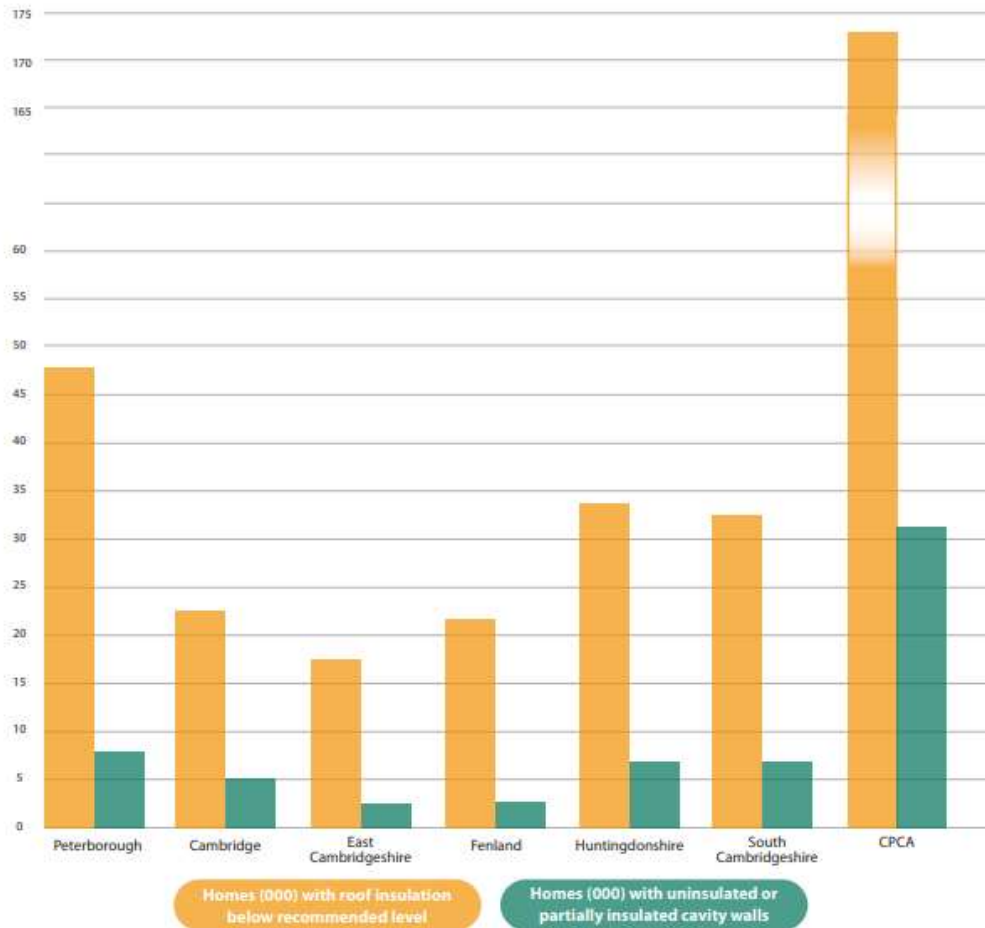
3.2.48 In 2022, 11.2% of Fenland residents were in fuel poverty. This is below the national average for England of 13.1%, but above the average for Cambridgeshire of 9.2%.

3.2.49 Analysis by Carbon Neutral Cambridge found that a significant number of homes across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough would benefit from basic energy efficient measures. In Fenland, approximately 22,000 homes have roof insulation 20% below recommended levels and 2,500 homes have uninsulated or partially insulated cavity walls.<sup>56</sup> It should be noted that not many properties in Fenland (when compared to usual housing stock) are cavity wall by design and therefore these statistics don't always reflect the actual situation in the district

### Figure 25: Homes with inadequate levels of insulation across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough (2020)

<sup>55</sup> [Housing - LTLA | Fenland | Report Builder for ArcGIS \(cambridgeshireinsight.org.uk\)](https://cambridgeshireinsight.org.uk/Housing-LTLA-Fenland-Report-Builder-for-ArcGIS)

<sup>56</sup> [FINAL CLIMATE REPORT LOW \(002\).pdf \(hubspotusercontent40.net\)](#)



Source: CPCA: Fairness, nature and communities: addressing climate change in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough (2021)

## Gypsies and Travellers

3.2.50 The Cambridge sub-Regional Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessment (GTANA) Update 2013 identified a need for 18 new Gypsy and Traveller pitches in Fenland for the period 2011 to 2031, broken down as follows:<sup>57</sup>

- 2013 – 2016: 3
- 2016 – 2021: 10
- 2021 – 2026: 5
- 2026 – 2031: 0

3.2.51 At June 2019 12 new pitches had been provided. The Council is currently in the process of commissioning a new GTANA with other districts in Cambridgeshire to support the new Local Plan.

## Evidence Gaps

- Information on current retail in town centres and impacts

<sup>57</sup> [Cambridge Area Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessment \(GTANA\) 2011 \(fenland.gov.uk\)](https://www.fenland.gov.uk/gtana-2011)

- Impact of Brexit decision on economy and housing
- Gypsy and Traveller accommodation needs assessment to be updated to inform the new Local Plan.

## Specific Issues and Opportunities

### Key Issues:

- Low pay and relatively low skilled workforce
- Long hours worked
- Higher than average unemployment
- Low levels of educational attainment
- High affordability gap
- Housing delivery is below current targets
- Insufficient affordable housing to meet high need

### Key Opportunities:


- The housing affordability ratio in Fenland is 7.4, which although not affordable, is one of the lowest in the county and the East of England.
- Increase in housing delivery numbers to be more generally affordable.
- Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority investment in infrastructure.
- Funding secured and improvement projects underway in the market towns of March and Wisbech.

## The Likely Situation without the Plan

3.2.52 Development would be likely to occur in unsustainable locations resulting in knock on effects on local infrastructure. The town centres could see a potential decline through inappropriate changes of use and out of town developments. Developer contributions may not occur resulting in poorer provision.

## Key Sustainability Objectives

3.2.53 Following a review of the relevant policies relating to the topics in this section, along with an assessment of the current situation, the following key sustainability objectives have been identified:

<p><b>2. Jobs, Education and Housing</b></p>		<p>2.1 Help people gain access to a range of employment, education and training opportunities</p> <p>2.2 Support investment in people, places, communications and other infrastructure to improve the efficiency, competitiveness, vitality and adaptability of the local economy</p> <p>2.3 Help provide decent and affordable homes that meet the various needs of all in appropriate locations</p>
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## 3.3 Transport

### Introduction

3.3.1 Transport is a major sustainability challenge; balancing the needs and desires of people to travel, to access services and for recreation, with the environmental consequences of relying on carbon-based modes of transport, particularly cars. Car ownership continues to rise, putting a strain on road networks, potentially causing congestion and localised air and noise pollution. The sustainability topics covered in this section are:

- Roads
- Car use and commuting
- Rail
- Bus
- Cycling and walking

### Policy Context

#### National Planning Policy Framework:

3.3.2 The environmental sustainability objective in the NPPF seeks to mitigate and adapt to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy.

3.3.3 Paragraph 109 in Section 9 – ‘Promoting sustainable transport’ sets out the objectives for sustainable transport including:

- Identifying and pursuing opportunities to promote walking, cycling and public transport use;
- patterns of movement, streets, parking and other transport considerations are integral to the design of schemes, and contribute to making high quality places.

3.3.4 Paragraph 110 explains how these objectives should be met:

“The planning system should actively manage patterns of growth in support of these objectives. Significant development should be focused on locations which are or can be made sustainable, through limiting the need to travel and offering a genuine choice of transport modes. This can help to reduce congestion and emissions, and improve air quality and public health...”

### Planning Practice Guidance

3.3.5 The PPG advises it is important for local planning authorities to undertake an assessment of the transport implications in developing or reviewing their Local Plan so that a robust transport evidence base may be developed to support the preparation of that Plan. The

transport evidence base should identify the opportunities for encouraging a shift to more sustainable transport usage, where reasonable to do so; and highlight the infrastructure requirements for inclusion in infrastructure spending plans linked to the Community Infrastructure Levy, section 106 provisions and other funding sources.<sup>58</sup>

### **Other plans and policies<sup>59</sup>:**

- Transport Act 2020
- Department for Transport Outcome Delivery Plan 2021 to 2022
- Active Travel England - The Second Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy (2022)
- HM Government Transitioning to zero emission cars and vans - 2035 delivery plan
- DfT Gear Change - A bold vision for Cycling and Walking (2020)
- De-carbonising Transport: A Better, Greener Britain (2021)
- Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority Local Transport & Connectivity Plan (November 2023)
- Cambridgeshire's Active Travel Strategy (2023)
- Cambridgeshire County Council Rights of Way Improvement Plan (2006) & update (2016)
- Fenland Transport Strategy (2023)
- Fenland Cycling, Walking and Mobility Aid Improvement Strategy (2022)
- Fenland District Council Local Plan Transport Assessment – Interim Report (July 2022)
- Wisbech Access Strategy
- March to Wisbech Rail Reopening GRIP 2 Report (July 2015)
- Fenland Rail Development Strategy 2011 - 2031
- March Area Transport Study (Various reports and assessments 2018-2021)
- Wisbech Rail Strategic Option Assessment Report (November 2024)
- Whittlesey Relief Road Strategic Outline Business Case (expected Spring 2025)
- Whittlesea Station Outline Business Case (expected completion Autumn 2025)

## **The Current Situation**

### **Roads**

3.3.6 The A47 is an important trunk road through the district allowing access to Leicester, Peterborough and the A1(M) to the west and Kings Lynn, north Norfolk and Norwich to the east. Within the district it is an important link between March and Wisbech. The A141 and A142 provide north/south access to Huntingdon and the A1, and Ely, Cambridge and the A14/M11 respectively. The A605 is also an important east/west route to Whittlesey and Peterborough. However, all of these roads are single carriageway with capacity issues at a number of key junctions.

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<sup>58</sup> Paragraph: 001 Reference ID: 54-001-20141010

<sup>59</sup> For a full list of relevant plans, policies, programmes, strategies and initiatives, see Appendix A

- 3.3.7 The Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority's Local Transport and Connectivity Plan highlights the importance of improving the A47 between Peterborough, Wisbech and Kings Lynn and sets out a package of junction improvements to ease congestion and cater for anticipated housing and employment growth.<sup>60</sup>
- 3.3.8 Other roads are rural in nature and serve villages and isolated farms and businesses. The underlying geology for many of these is peat-based resulting in significant expansion and shrinkage within short periods of time and on a seasonal basis. This has resulted in roads which both undulate and warp. Under-investment and lack of resources to maintain the road network over many years has resulted in an ad hoc solution to repairs rather than a fundamental re-engineering of the roads with financial and safety implications. In some cases, it has resulted in a network which would be considered sub-standard if compared to the norm for the rest of the country.
- 3.3.9 The diversification of farm businesses over time to such things as manufacturing and haulage has also resulted in new developments in the open countryside which rely on the rural road network for access. Excessive use by large HGVs on small rural roads means that damage invariably increases thereby creating the need for more frequent repairs and public investment.
- 3.3.10 Housing growth in rural villages with associated vehicle movements also has an impact on road quality and has contributed to a deterioration of some local roads which otherwise might not have been the case.

### **Car ownership**

- 3.3.11 In the 2021 census, the number of households in Fenland (41.5%) with one car or van is similar to the national average for England (41.3%), but less than the average for Cambridgeshire (46.6%). For households with more than one car or van (and up to four), Fenland households have on average more cars and vans than households in England. A large reason for this is the rural nature of the district, the distance to key services and the lack of a good quality public transport system. Not surprisingly there are fewer households in Fenland with no car (15.9%) than in England (23.5%).<sup>61</sup>

### **Electric Charging**

- 3.3.12 Government is planning on banning the sale of diesel and petrol cars from 2035. To support this transition to Electric Vehicles, the Building Regulations were updated in December 2021 with a new 'Part S' which addresses infrastructure for charging electric vehicles. These Building Regulations came into effect in June 2022 and require the provision of charging points in both residential and non-residential developments.

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<sup>60</sup> [Local Transport and Connectivity Plan - Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Combined Authority \(cambridgeshirepeterborough-ca.gov.uk\)](https://www.cambridgeshirepeterborough-ca.gov.uk)

<sup>61</sup> [2021 Census Profile for areas in England and Wales - Nomis \(nomisweb.co.uk\)](https://www.nomisweb.co.uk)

3.3.13 As of April 2024, there were 15 public electric vehicle charging devices in Fenland. This is equivalent to 14.6 devices per 100,000 people. This is significantly below the UK average of 55 charging devices per 100,000 people.<sup>62</sup>

### Travel to Work

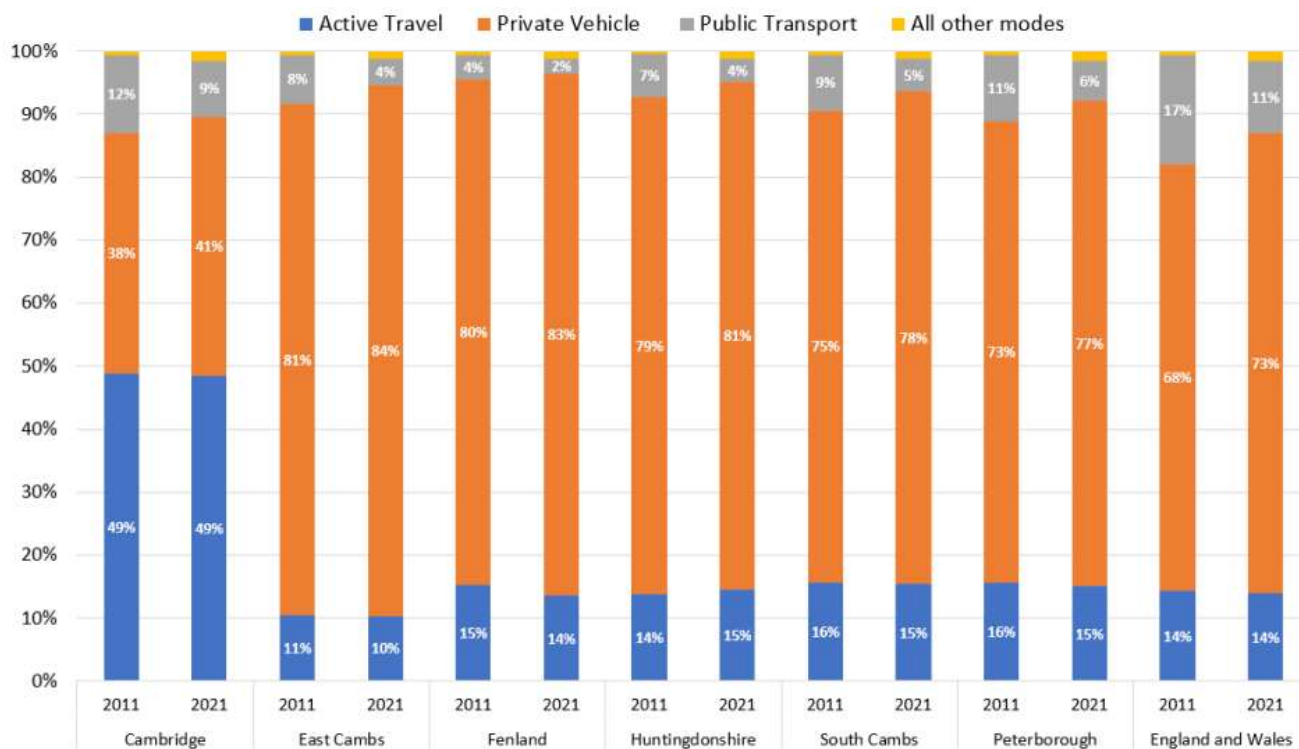
3.3.14 According to the 2021 census, significantly more people in Fenland travel to work by car or van (60%) than the regional average in Cambridgeshire (42%).<sup>63</sup>

3.3.15 Figure 26 shows the mode of commuting proportion split for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, comparing the 2011 and 2021 census data. The private vehicle figure is higher in the graph because it includes taxis, cars, vans, motorcycles, scooters, mopeds for drivers and passengers.

3.3.16 The percentage of people in Fenland using active travel as their mode of commuting (15% in 2011 and 14% in 2021) is similar to the rest of Cambridgeshire, Peterborough and England. This excludes Cambridge, where almost half the population travel by active travel modes at 49%.

3.3.17 In 2021, at 2%, Fenland has the smallest percentage of people using public transport as a mode of commuting.

**Figure 26: Mode of commuting proportion split, 2011 vs 2021 census**



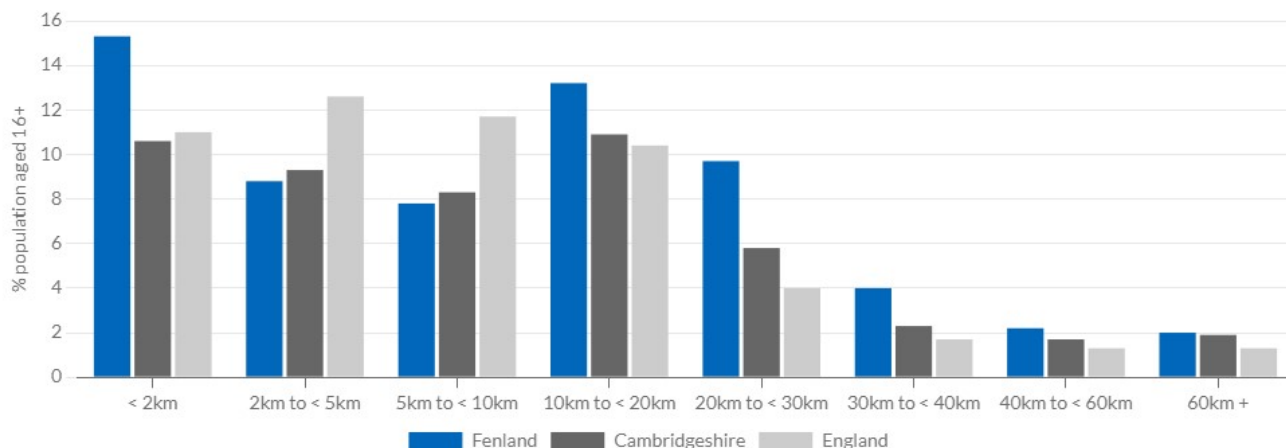
Source: Cambridgeshire Insight

<sup>62</sup> [Electric vehicle charging device statistics: January 2023 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/electric-vehicle-charging-device-statistics-january-2023)

<sup>63</sup> [Economy - LTLA | Fenland | Report Builder for ArcGIS \(cambridgeshireinsight.org.uk\)](https://cambridgeshireinsight.org.uk/economy-ltla-fenland-report-builder)

3.3.18 In terms of distance travelled to work, the percentage of Fenland residents that travelled less than 2km (15.3%) was significantly higher than the average for Cambridgeshire (10.6%) and England (11%). However, the number of people who travelled between 2-10km (16.6%) was lower than the regional (17.6%) and national (23.6%) averages. Fenland residents that travelled longer distances between 10-60km (29.1%) was significantly higher than Cambridgeshire (20.7%) and England (17.4%).

**Figure 27: Distance travelled to work (2021)**

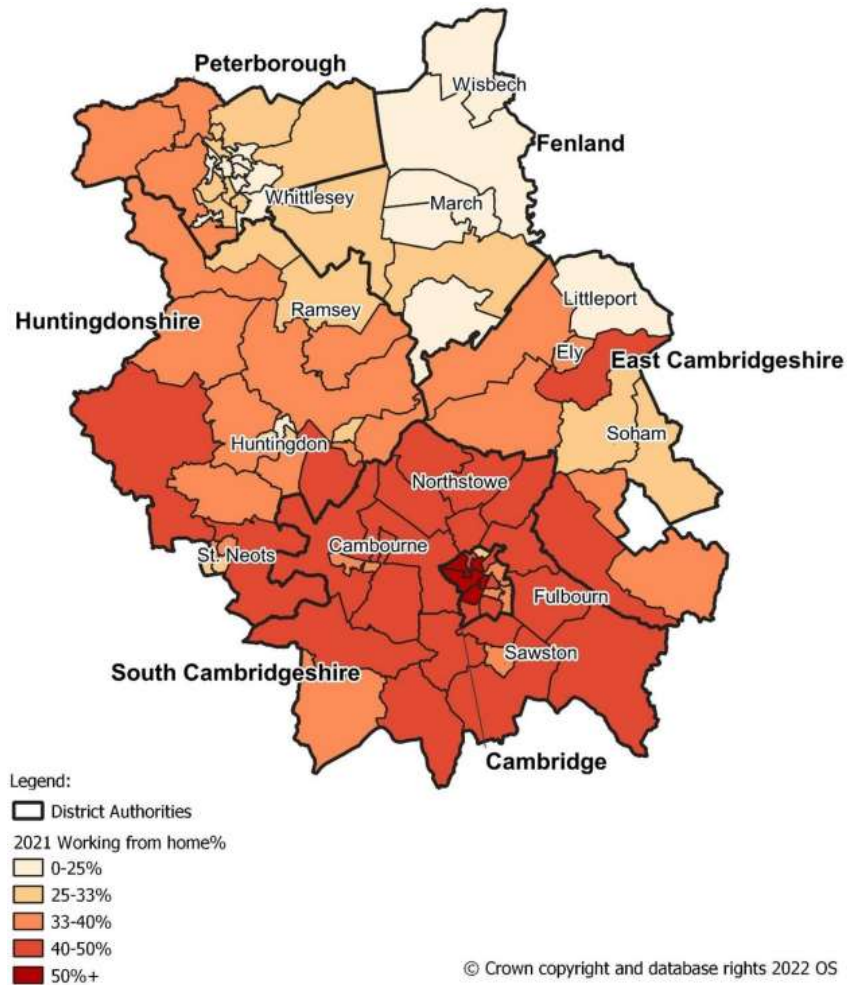


Source: Cambridgeshire Insight

3.3.19 In 2021, the percentage of people working mainly from home in Fenland (20.1%) was significantly lower than Cambridgeshire (37.2%) and England (31.5%). However, 20.1% is a significant increase from 4.9% in the 2011 census. This increase is, at least partially, due to the effects of COVID-19.<sup>64</sup>

<sup>64</sup> [Census-2021-Travel-to-Work-Summary.pdf \(cambridgeshireinsight.org.uk\)](https://www.cambridgeshireinsight.org.uk/Census-2021-Travel-to-Work-Summary.pdf)

**Figure 28: Cambridgeshire and Peterborough proportion workforce working from home (2021)**



Source: Cambridgeshire Insight<sup>65</sup>

3.3.20 Between the 2011 and 2021 census there was a reduction of 92,598 (-24%) commuters across Peterborough and Cambridgeshire. This included a reduction in walking and cycling (-27%) and private motorised vehicle drivers (-21%). The reduction varied across the region, with the largest reduction in South Cambridgeshire of -33.8% and the lowest reduction in Peterborough of -5%. The reduction in Fenland of -8.1% was the second lowest in the region.

### Connectivity

3.3.21 The Department for Transport have produced data about the journey times to key services for each Local Authority area.<sup>66</sup> The latest data was published in 2019, but still gives an idea of how accessible an area is. Figure 29 compares the percentage of residents in Fenland and Cambridgeshire within 15 minutes walking or public transport of a range of facilities and services.

<sup>65</sup> [Ibid](#)

<sup>66</sup> [Journey time statistics: data tables \(JTS\) - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/journey-time-statistics-data-tables-jts)

**Figure 29: Percentage of residents in Fenland and Cambridgeshire within 15 minutes walking or public transport of a range of facilities and services**

Service	Fenland	Cambridgeshire
GP	48%	52%
Hospital	0%	1%
Food store	84%	81%
Town centre	32%	19%
Primary school	83%	84%
Secondary school	18%	23%

Source: Department for Transport

3.3.22 In terms of employment, 73% of Fenland residents are within 15 minutes walking or public transport travel of an employment centre offering between 100 and 499 jobs, compared to 68% for Cambridgeshire. Access to larger employment centres offering between 500 and 4,999 jobs can be obtained within 15 minutes walking or public transport travel for 56% of Fenland residents, compared to 70% for Cambridgeshire.

### Public transport

3.3.23 Levels of public transport accessibility vary greatly across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, with key amenities significantly more accessible in Cambridge and Peterborough cities than more rural districts such as Fenland. Public transport provision in Fenland is currently poor, with a limited network of bus and rail services which are not joined up.<sup>67</sup>

### Rail

3.3.24 The mainline East-West rail route connecting the towns and cities in the East of England with the Midlands and all destinations to the North and South, runs through the district with stations at March, Whittlesey and Manea. This is an important asset for Fenland and programmes of improvement are currently ongoing at all stations to improve service provision which should help increase patronage. So far, all three stations have new waiting shelters, ticket machines and seating. In 2022, a new car park opened at Manea station and the station car park at March was redesigned and extended and the platform 1 building fully redesigned. At Whittlesea station work is ongoing to develop a larger proposal for more car parking, a new station entrance, a pedestrian bridge, longer platforms and improved signage and information.

3.3.25 These proposals have been driven by the council and supported by the Hereward Community Rail Partnership which was launched in 2012. This has helped improve patronage at all three stations. Between 2012/13 and 2017/18 the number of rail passengers increased by 15% at March, 39% at Whittlesey and 448% at Manea.<sup>68</sup>

3.3.26 Most journeys from Fenland to more urban areas are quicker by train than by car or any other mode of transport. From March, Peterborough can be reached within 15 minutes

<sup>67</sup> [Fenland Transport Strategy Adopted March 2023 \(cambridgeshire.gov.uk\)](https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk)

<sup>68</sup> Hereward CRP Highlights and Progress 2019 [www.fenland.gov.uk/herewardcrp](http://www.fenland.gov.uk/herewardcrp)

and Cambridge in about 35 minutes. Peterborough City Centre can be reached within 8 minutes from Whittlesey. The railway is therefore an important mode of sustainable travel for many of Fenland's residents.

- 3.3.27 The marshalling yards in March were at one time the largest in Europe, parts of which are currently used by Network Rail as a rail materials recycling depot. Consideration has been given to the re-opening of the disused railway line between March and Wisbech. If it was to re-open it is likely to significantly boost Wisbech's economy and allow improved travel choices for local residents.

## **Bus**

- 3.3.28 Fenland has recently seen one of the largest reductions in bus services nationally. In November 2023, Friends of the Earth in partnership with the University of Leeds published their latest independent research titled *How Britain's Bus Services Have Drastically Declined*<sup>69</sup>. When comparing local authority trip reductions per hour for weekdays between 2003- 2006 against 2023, Fenland has seen a reduction in services of 83.8%. This is the second worst figure in the Country.
- 3.3.29 There are half hourly or hourly services from Wisbech to either Peterborough or Kings Lynn and Norwich. There are hourly services at certain times between Whittlesey and Peterborough and between Wisbech and March. There are no direct bus services to Ely or to the centre of Cambridge. All other services between the towns and to and from the villages are more sporadic.
- 3.3.30 Bus services nationally have been in decline, alongside falling patronage. There are many reasons for this, primarily the high cost of operating bus services, especially in rural areas, and low usage renders them commercially unviable. The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the situation further. Therefore, over a number of years bus services in Fenland have been withdrawn or timetables reduced, and previous hubs for bus services, such as Chatteris, have been left with a much lower level of provision, and some villages with no service at all.<sup>70</sup>
- 3.3.31 Community transport, strongly supported by the Council, has expanded in recent years due to public transport cutbacks, reduced commitments by the Health Service to provide non-emergency transport, an increased recognition of the benefits of community transport as well as changing demographics. FACT Community Transport provides an important service which would otherwise leave many Fenland residents without any public transport. This includes a service for medical appointments and a dial a ride service available 5 days a week into or around each of the market towns. The Community Car Scheme, which operates similar to a taxi service, also offers organised door-to-door lifts for people who have no other way of making essential medical or social journeys. These schemes, which rely on volunteer drivers, are an important part of the Fenland community transport approach. This is increasingly so given the 83.8% reduction in bus services across Fenland.

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<sup>69</sup> [How Britain's bus services have drastically declined | Policy and insight](#)

<sup>70</sup> [Fenland Transport Strategy Adopted March 2023 \(cambridgeshire.gov.uk\)](#)

3.3.32 The general picture is that whilst bus use in Cambridge has increased significantly in recent years, figures elsewhere in the county, including Fenland have gone down.

### **Walking and Cycling**

3.3.33 Due to the relatively flat landscape and multiple regional and national cycle routes, cycling is potentially an attractive way to travel both for work and leisure across the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough area.

3.3.34 Around 25% of all car trips across Fenland and Cambridgeshire are under 2km in length and yet walking and cycling accounts for only 1% of journeys in Chatteris, Whittlesey and Wisbech and around 2% of all journeys in March.<sup>71</sup>

3.3.35 According to government statistics on walking and cycling in 2022, 64.4% of residents in Fenland walk or cycle for any purpose (e.g. leisure, work etc) at least once per week. This is lower than the average of 75.4% for Cambridgeshire and 70.6% for England.<sup>72</sup>

3.3.36 Barriers to walking and cycling in Fenland, even for short distances, are due to a variety of factors including socio-economic, lack of safety, poor infrastructure, lack of direct routes and cultural reasons.

3.3.37 As part of the Fenland Walking, Cycling and Mobility Improvement Strategy (2022), local residents and visitors were asked key questions relating to walking, cycling and mobility scooter use. When asked what would encourage you to travel more on foot, the top answers were, good quality surfaces, direct routes or shortcuts, quiet/low traffic routes and wider footpaths. When asked what would encourage you to travel more by bicycle, the top answers were good quality surfaces and off road cycle routes. When asked what would improve your ability to travel by mobility aid, the top answers were quality surfaces, dropped kerbs and wider paths.<sup>73</sup>

3.3.38 There is no walking and cycling network in Fenland and with poor road infrastructure and a poor safety record for walking and cycling accidents it isn't very safe. The Walking, Cycling and Mobility Improvement Strategy's main focus is to encourage more people to regularly choose walking and cycling as their first choice of travel for short journeys. It aims to improve core walking and cycling networks within each town and strategic cycle route across Fenland, linking its market towns and connecting Whittlesey to Peterborough.

### **Public Rights of Way (PRoW)**

3.3.39 There is a network of public rights of way in Fenland, but it is less developed than in other parts of the county. Only 10% of the total length of public rights of way in the county is in the district. In addition, many of the public footpaths tend to 'peter-out' leaving the user without any legal backing to continue the journey and consequently these tend not to be well used.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> [Fenland Cycling Walking Mobility Improvement Strategy - Adopted 2022.pdf](#)

<sup>72</sup> [Participation in walking and cycling \(local authority rates\) - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

<sup>73</sup> [Fenland Cycling Walking Mobility Improvement Strategy - Adopted 2022.pdf](#)

<sup>74</sup> [My Cambridgeshire](#)

3.3.40 There is therefore scope to improve the rights of way network within the district. Despite a lack of useable riding routes Cambridgeshire County Council is also keen to promote the importance of horse riding as both a leisure and business activity within the district.

### **Evidence Gaps**

- Details of known opportunities to expand the PRow network
- Details of bus user figures

### **Specific Issues and Opportunities**

#### **Key Issues:**

- High reliance on cars and vans
- Poor quality of Fenland's roads
- Poor, declining bus services
- Limited public transport network which does not join up
- Relatively poor cycling and walking culture
- Lack of safe, dedicated cycle routes and paths
- Poor public rights of way network

#### **Key Opportunities:**


- Improved public transport to encourage modal shift away from the private car
- Good rail links to rest of the country can be developed
- Opportunities to reduce the need to travel (especially by private car) through technology
- Opportunities for sustainable travel modes and infrastructure provision exist in all market towns
- Improving stations at Whittlesey and Manea
- Potential re-opening of the March – Wisbech rail line
- Potential extension of the CAM into Fenland
- New developments can provide greater walking and cycling permeability to adjacent developments and facilities
- Permissive path guidance could help improve situation

### **The Likely Situation without the Plan**

- Without the plan sustainable transport modes are less likely to be considered as an integral part of new developments which will continue to place high reliance on private motor vehicles.
- There is a risk that new development would not be proposed in the most sustainable locations, close to existing services, jobs and infrastructure, increasing reliance on private vehicles.

### **Key Sustainability Objectives**

3.3.41 Following a review of the relevant policies relating to the topics in this section, along with an assessment of the current situation, the following key sustainability objectives have been identified:

<b>3. Transport</b>		<p>3.1 Reduce the reliance on private motor vehicles and encourage more sustainable transport modes such as walking, cycling and public transport and contribute to the safety of all highway users.</p> <p>3.2 Seek to ensure that all new developments can be accessed by a variety of transport modes and provide permeability.</p>
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## 3.4 Heritage, Place Making and Landscape

### Introduction

3.4.1 Fenland has a rich heritage with known settlements dating back to the Bronze Age. The historic wet ground conditions mean that the district has a rich source of archaeology. The draining of the fens over many years has resulted in a unique landscape and townscape with historic settlements located on islands of higher ground. All of these contribute to the culture in the area. The sustainability topics relating to this theme are therefore as follows:

- Archaeology
- Heritage Assets
- Conservation Areas
- Townscape Character
- Culture
- Landscape

### Policy Context

#### National Planning Policy Framework

3.4.2 The overarching environmental objective in the NPPF explains that the planning system should contribute to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment.

Paragraph 202 explains that: “Heritage assets ... are an irreplaceable resource, and should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance, so that they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the quality of life of existing and future generations.

The NPPF’s social objective seeks to support communities’ health, social and cultural well-being. Paragraph 98 highlights the need to take into account and support the delivery of local strategies to improve health, social and cultural well-being for all sections of the community;

#### Planning Practice Guidance

3.4.3 Information on designated and non-designated heritage assets is contained within planning practice guidance, along with advice on promoting local character and townscape.

The PPG and National Design Guide also provides advice about the importance of achieving good design and explains that this 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.<sup>75</sup>

### **Other plans and policies<sup>76</sup>:**

- UNESCO Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and National Heritage (1972)
- Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990
- The Historic England 'The Historic Environment in Local Plans, Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning: 1
- The Heritage Statement 2017
- The Government's Statement on the Historic Environment for England 2010
- Conservation Area Appraisals and Management Plans

## **The Current Situation**

### **Archaeology**

- 3.4.4 There is a considerable archaeological resource in Fenland due in the main to the way the land has been subject to changes in water levels over time resulting in a complex geology. Higher ground and fen edges provided opportunities for settlement by ancient people and early human activity has been well preserved due to the build-up of peat and high water levels. Must Farm, west of Whittlesey excavated over the last twenty years dates from the Late Bronze Age period (1000 – 800BC) and is one of the best preserved settlements of its kind in Europe. This is in close proximity to the Flag Fen Bronze Age settlement museum east of Peterborough which is home to eight excellent examples of Bronze Age log boats. Both sites are of international significance.
- 3.4.5 Rising water levels resulted in a shift in settlement patterns to the fen 'islands' of higher ground which became the focus of historic settlements. The first attempts at draining the land occurred in the Roman period, but it was not until the 17th Century that drainage began in earnest, bringing more land into cultivation and eventually resulting in the modern fen landscape familiar today. Continuing peat shrinkage and development opportunities are exposing further archaeological sites but this, combined with intensive agriculture, threatens their survival.
- 3.4.6 There are currently over 1600 archaeological entries for the district. The Historic Environment Record, maintained by the County Council Archaeology Service, is the principal source of information for the archaeological resource of the district.

### **Designated Heritage Assets**

- 3.4.7 In Fenland there are:
- 20 Scheduled Ancient Monuments. (SAMs)
  - 783 Listed buildings, with the majority Grade II
  - One Grade II registered park and garden (Peckover House and Garden, North Brink, Wisbech)

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<sup>75</sup> [National design guide \(accessible version\) - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

<sup>76</sup> For a full list of relevant plans, policies, programmes, strategies and initiatives, see Appendix A

- 10 Conservation Areas

**Figure 30: Designated Heritage Assets in Fenland**

East of England, 2009	LISTED BUILDINGS							
District, Unitary Authority	Grade I	Grade II*	Grade II	A	B	C	Grade Not Classified	Total Listed buildings
Fenland	9	42	732	0	0	0	0	783

Listed buildings are buildings of special architectural or historic interest and are legally protected. There are three broad levels of protection:	
Grade I	those of particular great importance to the nation's built heritage
Grade II*	particularly important buildings of more than special interest
Grade II	those of special interest
A, B, C	Refer to an older listing system which relate mainly to places of worship. Broadly equivalent to Grade I, Grade II* and Grade II

- 3.4.8 The conservation areas in Wisbech, Chatteris, and Whittlesey have distinctive densely developed layouts reflecting their historic and organic development. Conversely, March Conservation Area covers the more loosely developed riverside areas and High Street and Broad Street. Other conservation areas are found in the villages of Coates, Doddington, Elm, Leverington and Parson Drove.
- 3.4.9 These conservation areas continue to be in need of protection from inappropriate development and be enhanced. The sustainable retention and reuse of decaying historic buildings remains an issue especially in Wisbech where there are a large number of absentee land owners.
- 3.4.10 Conservation Area Appraisals exist for all areas but a number are in need of updating to accord with current guidelines and best practice.

### **Non-designated Heritage Assets**

- 3.4.11 Fenland retains many historic buildings which are not listed but nonetheless would be considered worthy of protection as non-designated heritage assets as described in the NPPF. The Council will be producing a record of the most valuable in the form of a register of Buildings of Local Importance as part of the new local plan. Additionally, a number of areas containing buildings of heritage value may also be worthy of conservation area status which will need to be explored.

### **Townscape Character**

- 3.4.12 The market towns and many of the villages are located predominantly on raised 'islands' in the fen and all have an attractive historic core, while many of the smaller villages are

linear in form, stretching out along the network of minor roads. This means that in many cases homes are a considerable distance from local services such as the village shop or primary school in that they are not easily reachable by walking or cycling.

- 3.4.13 Villages in Fenland tend to be relatively large in comparison with other parts of Cambridgeshire. Most buildings are of the local yellow or 'Gault' brick and date from the 19th or 20th Centuries although there are some that are much earlier.

### **Heritage at Risk Register**

- 3.4.14 According to the Heritage at Risk Register, 2024,<sup>77</sup> Fenland currently has one listed building, five scheduled monuments and five conservation areas "at risk" as listed below. The five conservation areas are all those in the market towns. The Heritage at Risk register only considers Scheduled Ancient Monuments, conservation areas, Battlefields, Wrecks and Registered Parks and Gardens and higher grade Listed Buildings (Grade 1 and Grade 2\*). There are numerous Grade 2 Listed Buildings in the district which are also at risk but there is no recent assessment to ascertain precise numbers. The following are currently listed as being at risk:

#### Conservation Areas

- Chatteris Conservation Area
- March Conservation Area
- Whittlesey Conservation Area
- Wisbech Conservation Area
- Bowthorpe Wisbech Conservation Area

#### Listed Buildings

- Church of St James, Church Lane, Newton-in-the-Isle (Grade II\*)

#### Scheduled Monuments

- Neolithic enclosures at Grey's Farm, Horseley Fen, Manea
- Bowl barrow 250m south of Honey Farm, Manea
- Bowl barrow 580m east of Mount Pleasant Bridge, Manea
- Bowl barrow 600m west of Honey Hill Farm, Manea
- Bowl barrow 500m south of Bunting's Farm, Whittlesey

### **Landscape Character**

- 3.4.15 Fenland's landscape is unique not only in its physical appearance but in its origins. Draining the Fens was one of the largest engineering projects undertaken anywhere in the world and today's man-made landscape provides some of the richest agricultural soil in the country (as shown in Figure 36).

- 3.4.16 The Fen landscape is, for the most part, uniformly flat and is criss-crossed by a series of drainage channels, both natural and man-made. The remains of ancient rivers and streams known as roddens are visible raised ground features which provide a variety of undulations in the generally flat landscape. However, agricultural practices have removed many traditional landscape features and large open arable fields are characteristic of much of the area.

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<sup>77</sup> Heritage at Risk Register [Heritage at Risk search results | Historic England](#)

3.4.17 The district falls within 'National Landscape Character Area 46 – The Fens' and is characterised by:

- Large-scale flat, open landscape with extensive vistas to level horizons and enormous skies.
- The level, open topography shapes the impression of huge skies which convey a strong sense of place, tranquillity and inspiration and changing weather patterns have a strong influence on the observer.
- A hierarchy of rivers, drains and ditches provide a strong influence throughout the area. Embanked rivers and roddons create local enclosure and elevation. Banks provide good grazing and grassland habitats.
- Modestly elevated 'islands' within fens provide isolated higher ground for most settlement. A higher proportion of grassland, tree cover and hedgerows are associated with these areas.
- Settled Fens or 'Townlands', in arc set back from the Wash, exhibit an ancient medieval and irregular field pattern. Typically smaller-scale with scattered farmsteads and dispersed ribbon settlements along the main arterial routes.
- Peaty Fens drained in 17th century comprise large rectilinear fields of black soil. A geometric road and drainage pattern with major high-level drains, washes and associated pumping stations. Roads and rail links often on elevated banks.
- Area south of Lincolnshire Wolds most recently drained with Wolds providing marked 'Upland' horizon to north.
- Woodland cover is sparse. Occasional avenues to roads, elsewhere isolated field trees have marked significance. Shelter belts including poplar, willow and leylandii hedges around farmsteads. Numerous orchards in Wisbech area.
- Fragments of relic wet fen areas at Wicken, Woodwalton and Holme.
- Built forms exhibit strong influence ranging from historic cathedrals and churches, like Ely and Boston to large agricultural and industrial structures. Domestic architecture displays combination of elegant Georgian brick houses and bland 20th century bungalows.
- Marshes directly adjacent to the Wash exhibit an exceptionally open aspect, broken only by a series of sea walls. Associated river outfall structures, tidal saltmarshes and mudflats.
- Rich and varied intensive agricultural land use including wide range of arable, root crops, bulbs, vegetables and livestock. Field labourers prevalent at harvesting.

Horticultural glasshouses and general agricultural clutter a significant feature.

- Bronze Age, Iron Age and Roman landscapes emerging from below the falling peat. Very rich archaeology especially on fen margins.

## Landscape Character of the District

3.4.18 Landscape Character assessment was undertaken as part of the Fenland District Council – Wind Turbine Development Policy Guidance work in 2009. Five distinct landscape character types and areas were identified as follows:

Landscape Character Type	Landscape Character Area
Drained Fenland	The Fens
Settled Fen	Wisbech Settled Fen
Clay Fen Island	Chatteris Clay Island
Clay Fen Island	March Clay Island
Extracted Clay Fen Island	Whittlesey Island

3.4.19 The table below provides a summary of the key characteristics for each of the landscape character areas.

**Figure 31: Landscape character types and areas**

Landscape Character Area	Location	Key Characteristics	Distinctive Features
<b>Chatteris Clay Island</b>	This area is located to the south of Fenland District. The market town of Chatteris is located in the western portion of the island, which extends out into the Fens for up to 4km east of Chatteris. The A142 and A141 both run through the island.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Slightly elevated clay island set within the surrounding peaty Fens, rising to a maximum height of 11m AOD</li> <li>• Highly visible settlement edge with several dominant storage and agricultural packing plants</li> <li>• Historic core of buildings along the main roads through Chatteris, using locally traditional buff brick</li> <li>• Most other housing typically 20th century with</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A142 Chatteris Bypass</li> <li>• Vegetable crops</li> </ul>

Landscape Character Area	Location	Key Characteristics	Distinctive Features
		<p>minimal vernacular style</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Poplar and other tree belts create strong linear features around some fields and isolated properties</li> <li>• Field units smaller than in surrounding Fens and more organic in shape, with remnant hedgerows</li> <li>• Road levels less pronounced than in surrounding Fens</li> </ul>	
<b>March Clay Island</b>	<p>This area is located towards the centre of Fenland District. The villages of Wimblington and Doddington are located within the area with part of the market town of March located in the northern portion of the island. The A141 runs through the middle of the island.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Slightly elevated clay island set within the surrounding peaty Fens, rising to a maximum height of 6m AOD</li> <li>• Built edge of settlements include some unsympathetic industrial structures</li> <li>• Very little woodland but some large individual oak trees</li> <li>• Vegetation and built form creates good visual enclosure in places, particularly in the villages</li> <li>• Paddocks and smaller fields related to settlements</li> <li>• Hedgerows and poplar belts present, particularly along the sides of roads</li> <li>• Older roads are much more winding than the straight roads of the Fens</li> <li>• Open panoramic views</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Large pylons visible close to the island</li> <li>• A141 bypassing March, Wimblington and Doddington</li> <li>• Clay soil is lighter in colour than surrounding peaty Fens</li> <li>• Views to wind farm at Ranson Moor</li> </ul>

Landscape Character Area	Location	Key Characteristics	Distinctive Features
		across Fens	
<b>Wisbech Settled Fen</b>	This area is located in the north east of Fenland District. The market town of Wisbech and villages of Tydd St Giles, Newton, Leverington, Wisbech St Mary, Friday Bridge and Elm are located within the area. The A47 and A1101 both run through the area.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A relatively flat landscape that is heavily settled compared to the surrounding peaty Fens</li> <li>• Settlement pattern includes a number of nucleated villages with 20th century ribbon development along the local roads</li> <li>• Market towns and villages have an historic core with traditional buildings, village green and church</li> <li>• A mix of straighter main roads and more organic winding secondary roads</li> <li>• Linear waterways, river and ditches</li> <li>• Fruit orchards and other plant nurseries form a sub area west of Wisbech</li> <li>• Orchards enclosed by shelter belts of pollarded poplars and alders to create a small to medium scale landscape</li> <li>• Traditional buildings are red brick as opposed to the buff brick used in surrounding areas</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pylons, particularly north of Wisbech</li> <li>• A47</li> <li>• Navigable River Nene with associated ships, port and lifting equipment</li> <li>• Large drains such as North Level Main Drain</li> <li>• Wisbech with its elegant Georgian merchant houses fronting onto the river</li> <li>• Large number of bungalows</li> <li>• Glasshouses associated with orchards and nurseries</li> </ul>
	This area is located to the north west of Fenland District. The market town of Whittlesey and the villages of Coates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Slightly elevated clay island within the surrounding Fens, rising to a maximum height of 8m AOD</li> <li>• Island appears relatively</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Brickworks west of Whittlesey, particularly the chimneys</li> <li>• 3 large wind</li> </ul>

Landscape Character Area	Location	Key Characteristics	Distinctive Features
	<p>and Eastrea are located within the area, which abuts the boundary with Peterborough City Council to the west. The River Nene is located to the north of the area, the A605 runs through the middle of the island, as does the Peterborough to Cambridge railway line.</p>	<p>wooded in distant views, particularly to the east of the area</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Highly visible settlement edge, particularly to the north and east of Whittlesey</li> <li>• Degraded landscape in association with Hanson brickworks west of Whittlesey</li> <li>• Brick pits at different stages of extraction – active, restored and unrestored</li> <li>• Large industrial buildings and associated infrastructure to the east of Whittlesey</li> <li>• Whittlesey contains considerable areas of mid to late 20th century housing</li> <li>• Historic core to centre of market town including some grand historic buildings, particularly along the main road and the market square</li> <li>• Older buildings buff brick and thatched roofs</li> </ul>	<p>turbines near McCain's factory</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• King's Dyke</li> <li>• King's Dyke Nature Reserve</li> <li>• Duck decoy</li> <li>• Whittlesey church</li> </ul>
<b>The Fens</b>	<p>This area forms the majority of Fenland District. A large proportion of the market town of March is located towards the centre of the area. The villages of Benwick,</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Large scale, flat and open landscape with extensive views and large skies</li> <li>• Largely unsettled, arable landscape with isolated villages and scattered individual properties</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wind turbines at Coldham, Glass Moor, Ransom Moor and on the northern edge of March</li> <li>• Coldham</li> </ul>

Landscape Character Area	Location	Key Characteristics	Distinctive Features
	<p>Christchurch, Guyhirn, Manea, Murrow, Parson Drove, Thorney Toll and Turves are also located within the area. The River Nene forms the northern boundary of Fenland District and the River Ouse forms the southern boundary.</p> <p>The A47, A605 and A141 run through the middle of the area, as does the Peterborough to Cambridge railway line and its offshoot to Wisbech.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Individual properties often surrounded by wind breaks including numerous conifers</li> <li>• Rectilinear field structure divided by the pattern of artificial drainage ditches</li> <li>• Very few hedgerows in landscape</li> <li>• Productive and functional landscape with few recreational uses</li> <li>• Long straight roads, elevated above surrounding fields but locally uneven</li> </ul>	<p>Estate which has a more structured pattern of trees, hedges and woodland</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• North Level Main Drain</li> <li>• March with its historic core</li> <li>• Old Course of the River Nene</li> <li>• Pylons and overhead wires</li> </ul>

3.4.20 Each of these character areas fits within Natural England's 'Countryside Character 46: The Fens' at the national scale; and within 'Area 8: Fenlands in the Cambridgeshire Landscape Guidelines'. Whilst they share many similarities, they have a number of distinct differences in character and condition at a local level to distinguish them as separate landscape character areas at the district scale.

## Culture

3.4.21 There are a variety of cultural events through the year including the Straw Bear Festival in Whittlesey and Rose Fair festival in Wisbech. March hosts a St George's Day fair, Summer Festival, 1940's festival, and Christmas Fair. All market towns and some villages have Christmas light switch-on evenings. The Fens Cycle Race is an annual event based around Whittlesey and the surrounding countryside.

3.4.22 There are a number of amateur dramatic societies, dance and arts groups as well as many local hobby and interest groups. March, Wisbech and Chatteris all have museums of varying sizes.

3.4.23 However, connections between the towns, particularly transport, mean the towns and villages cultural endeavours can be isolated from each other. As a result, it is difficult for creative and heritage organisations to connect with each other and grow partnerships

across the District. Furthermore, there is a lack of capacity and funding which means groups are often run by volunteers with little or no financial backing.<sup>78</sup>

3.4.24 Fenland's Creativity and Culture Strategy 2021-2030 includes a ten year action plan to strengthen cultural opportunities, creative activity and heritage within Fenland. To support the strategy, the Fenland Culture Fund has been set up to provide small grants to fund arts, culture and heritage projects and activities in Fenland.

### **Evidence Gaps**

- Townscape character assessments are not currently available.
- Landscape Character Assessment is out of date and needs updating to inform the new Local Plan.
- Conservation Area Appraisals and Management Plans need updating to inform the new Local Plan.
- Information on all listed buildings at risk needs updating.
- An assessment of heritage assets outside of the district which may be affected by development in Fenland.

### **Specific Issues and Opportunities**

#### **Key Issues:**

- Some of the heritage assets in the district have unsympathetic development within their setting, which can have a detrimental effect on townscape character.
- New development has the potential to impact heritage assets and their setting.
- A total of 11 heritage assets in the area are on Historic England's Heritage at Risk Register.
- A number of lower category listed buildings (Grade II) are known to be at risk but are not included on the at Risk Register.
- Some historic assets do not benefit from proper and timely management.
- Grant funding which the council used to manage was cut some years ago.
- There is also no longer VAT relief for additional works to listed buildings.
- Climate change and air pollution both pose additional risks to the historic environment.

#### **Key Opportunities:**

- The Council should update the Conservation Area appraisals and Management Plans for some existing Conservation Areas.
- The Council should undertake further Conservation Area Appraisals for new areas.
- Assessment required of all listed buildings at risk.
- There is scope to identify heritage assets of key significance and formulate strategies to protect and enhance them.
- New development could indirectly enhance the setting of heritage assets.

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<sup>78</sup> [Creativity and Culture Strategy.pdf \(fenland.gov.uk\)](#)


- Potential for new development to assist in reducing the number of heritage assets on the at Risk Register.
- Fenland Culture Fund to provide financial assistance to arts, culture and heritage projects and activities in Fenland.

### The Likely Situation without the Plan

3.4.25 Without the plan there would be a risk to both designated and non-designated assets which could affect the fabric of assets as well as the setting. Unsympathetic additions and changes of use would be of detriment to all heritage assets. There is also a risk that significant archaeology would go undiscovered or not be investigated, which is key to understand the history of the local area.

### Key Sustainability Objectives

3.4.26 Following a review of the relevant policies relating to the topics in this section, along with an assessment of the current situation, the following key sustainability objectives have been identified:

<p><b>4. Heritage, Place Making and Landscape</b></p>		<p>4.1 Conserve and where appropriate, enhance heritage assets, their setting and the wider historic environment.</p> <p>4.2 Create places, spaces and buildings that are attractive and well designed, contribute to a high quality public realm and maintain and enhance diversity and local distinctiveness of townscape character.</p> <p>4.3 Retain the distinctive character of Fenland’s landscape.</p>
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## 3.5 Resilience to Climate Change and Flood Risk

### Introduction

3.5.1 This section of the scoping report is concerned with climate change and its impacts including increased flood risk which is a relevant issue for the district. These relevant sustainability issues therefore are outlined under the following topic headings:

- Climate change
- Flood risk

### Policy Context

#### National Planning Policy Framework

3.5.2 The overarching environmental objective in the NPPF stresses the importance of mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy. The NPPF also emphasises that responding to climate change is central to the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development.

Paragraph 161 explains: “The planning system should support the transition to net zero by 2050 and take full account of all climate impacts including overheating, water scarcity, storm and flood risks and coastal change. It should help to: 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.”

#### Planning Practice Guidance:

3.5.3 Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) contains advice on planning considerations for climate change, including mitigation and adaptation. It explains that effective spatial planning is an important part of a successful response to climate change as it can influence the emission of greenhouse gases. It is important that protection of the local environment is properly considered alongside the broader issue of protecting the global environment. Planning can also help increase resilience to climate change impact through the location, mix and design of development.<sup>79</sup> It also contains a significant amount of advice and guidance on flood risk.<sup>80</sup>

#### Other plans and policies<sup>81</sup>:

- Overarching National Policy Statement for Energy (EN-1) (2023)

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<sup>79</sup> Paragraph: 001 Reference ID: 6-001-20140306 [Climate change - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/policies/low-carbon-economy)

<sup>80</sup> [Flood risk and coastal change - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/policies/low-carbon-economy)

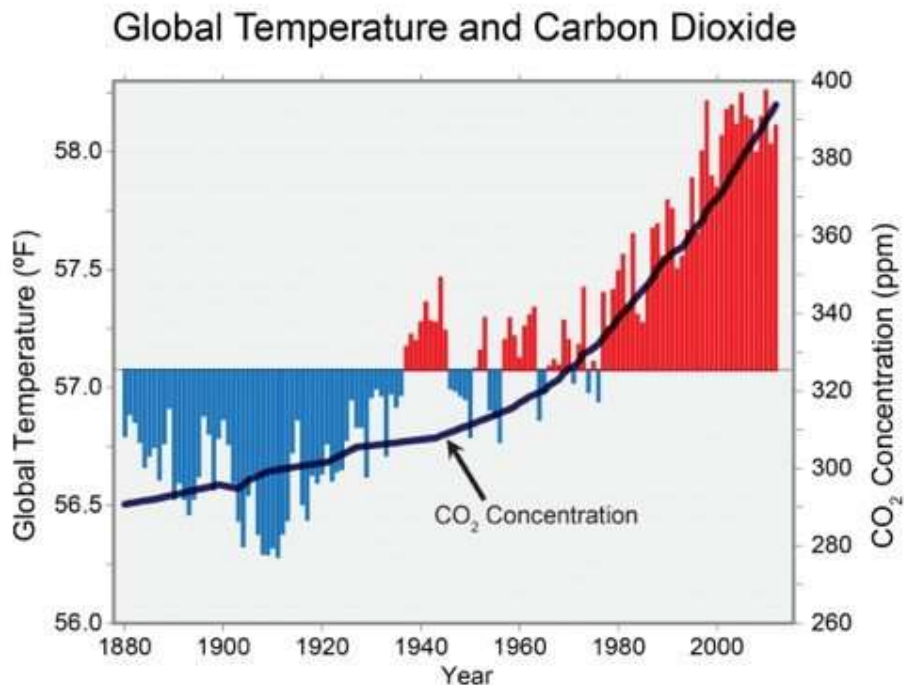
<sup>81</sup> For a full list of relevant plans, policies, programmes, strategies and initiatives, see Appendix A

- The Climate Change Act 2008 (as amended by the 2050 Target amendment Order 2019)
- Climate Change Committee Sixth Carbon Budget (2020)
- The UK Climate Change Risk Assessment (2022)
- The Climate Change Committee Progress in Adapting to Climate Change (2023 Report to Parliament)
- The UK Government Net Zero Strategy (2021)
- Building Regulations Update 2022 (uplift in standards for Part L, Part F and new Part O)
- Future Homes and Building Standards (due to come into effect in 2025)
- Paris Agreement under the UNFCCC (2016)
- 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2015)
- National flood and coastal erosion risk management strategy for England (2020)
- UK Sustainable Development Goals (2017)
- UK Bioenergy Strategy (Apr 2012)
- Net Zero Cambridgeshire 2045: Cambridgeshire County Council's Climate Change and Environment Strategy (2022)
- Fairness, Nature & Communities: Addressing Climate Change in Cambridgeshire & Peterborough (October 2021) by the Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Independent Commission on Climate.
- Fenland Level 1 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (June 2022)
- Future Fens – Flood Risk Management Baseline Report (December 2020)
- Future Fens: Integrated Adaptation Manifesto (May 2022)
- The UK Fens Climate Change Risk Assessment: Big challenges and strategic solutions (2024)

## Climate Change

- 3.5.4 Climate change is a change in global or regional climate patterns, in particular a change apparent from the mid to late 20th century onwards, and widely attributed to the increased levels of atmospheric carbon dioxide and other greenhouses gases. These gases trap more of the sun's energy, which leads to an increase in earth's temperature. Figure 32 shows how the trend between global temperature and carbon dioxide concentrations. The red bars show temperatures above the long-term average, and blue bars indicate temperatures below the long-term average. The black line shows atmospheric carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) concentration in parts per million (ppm).

Figure 32: Global temperature and carbon dioxide



Source: US Global Change Research Program

3.5.5 Natural causes and human activities both emit greenhouse gases. However, there is a scientific consensus that human-induced greenhouse gas emissions have caused the observed temperature anomaly. The primary source of human-induced greenhouse gas emissions is the burning of fossil fuels (70-80% of total emissions), agriculture (10-15%), and change in land use patterns (5-10%).<sup>82</sup>

3.5.6 Some of the impacts resulting from climate change are:<sup>83</sup>

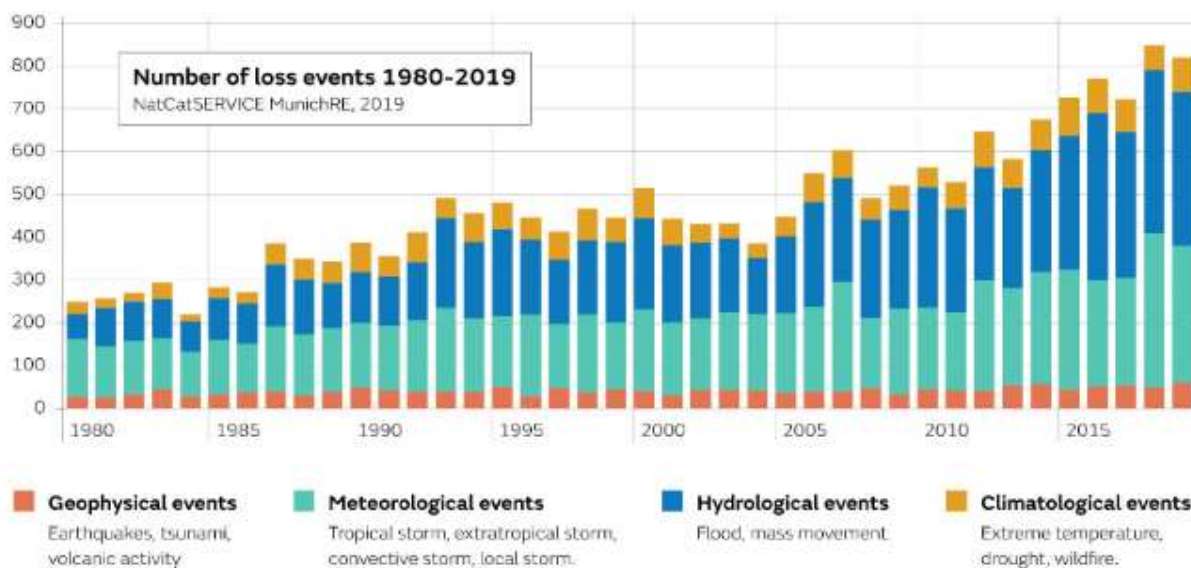
- risk to water supplies
- localised flooding and flooding in coastal regions
- damage to marine ecosystems and associated failure of fisheries
- loss of biodiversity
- heat stress, affecting human health and habitability
- increased risk of wildfires
- food insecurity as conditions for growing crops change and habitable region of pests expands

3.5.7 More frequent and severe extreme weather events are being seen around the world such as heatwaves, heavy rainfall events and droughts. These trends are expected to continue as greenhouse gases emissions and global temperature continue to rise.

<sup>82</sup> <https://www.scienceabc.com/social-science/climate-change-definition-causes-and-effects.html>

<sup>83</sup> [Climate change explained - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/long-term-views/climate-change-explained)

**Figure 33: Events causing loss 1980 to 2019<sup>84</sup>**



Source: Met Office

3.5.8 Measurements of the average temperature at the Earth’s surface show it has risen by about 1.1°C since the pre-industrial period. Each of the last 3 decades have been hotter than the previous one and the 7 warmest years on record have occurred between 2015 and 2021.

3.5.9 Observations show that the UK climate is continuing to warm. The most recent decade (2012 to 2021) has been on average 1.0°C warmer than the 1961 to 1990 average. All 10 of the warmest years in the UK have occurred since 2003. 2022 was the UK’s hottest year on record, with an average year-round temperature above 10°C seen for the first time.<sup>85</sup>

3.5.10 Global warming is therefore disturbing the natural cycles and causing long-term changes in local and global climate.

3.5.11 The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change’s (IPCC) ‘Climate Change 2023 Synthesis Report’ found that there is a more than 50% chance that global temperature rise will reach or surpass 1.5 degrees between 2021 and 2040. If temperatures go beyond 1.5 degrees, even temporarily, it will lead to much more severe, oftentimes irreversible impacts, from local species extinctions to the complete drowning of salt marshes to loss of human lives from increased heat stress. The need to restrict global warming to 1.5°C is therefore imperative.

3.5.12 If no interventions are taken, global average temperatures could rise by up to 4 degrees by 2100. Current pledges, if met, will only limit global warming to about 2.4 degrees, while at current rates of global emissions, the world is on a pathway somewhere between 2 degrees and 4 degrees.<sup>86</sup>

<sup>84</sup> Met Office: [Effects of climate change - Met Office](#)  
<sup>85</sup> [Climate change explained - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)  
<sup>86</sup> [What will climate change look like in your area? - BBC News](#)

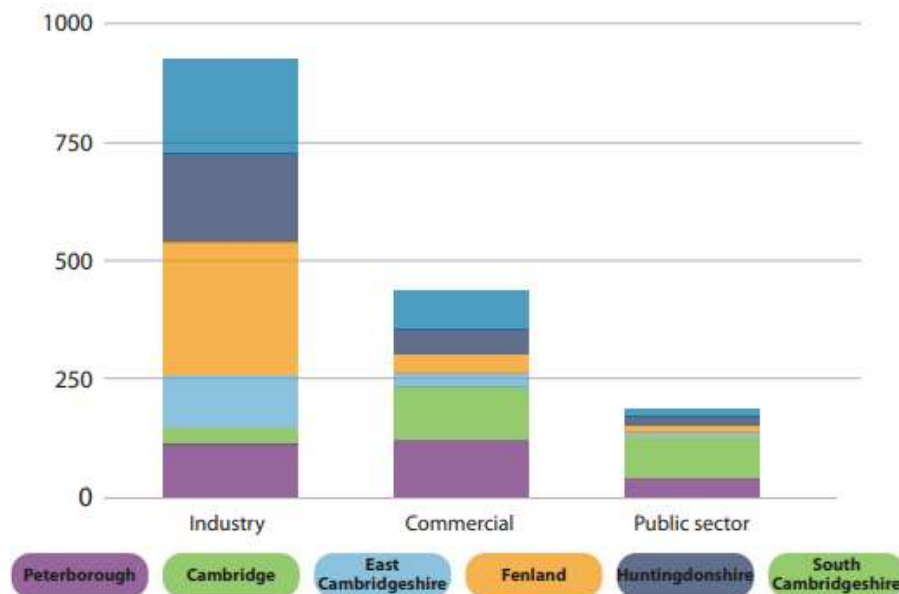
3.5.13 The IPCC are clear that there is still a narrow window to limit temperatures to 1.5 degrees, but only if immediate action is taken. The world needs to peak greenhouse gas emissions before 2025 at the very latest, nearly halve emissions by 2030 and reach net-zero CO2 emissions around mid-century.

## Fenland

3.5.14 The Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority (CPCA) reported that emissions for the CPCA area are almost 25% higher per person than the UK average (excluding emissions from peat). When emissions from peatland are included, the CPCA will exhaust all of the areas 'allowed' share of emissions to 2050 within approximately 6 years.<sup>87</sup>

3.5.15 In absolute terms, emissions from industry, commercial and public sector within the CPCA, were highest for Fenland.

**Figure 34: Industry, commercial and public sector emissions across the CPCA area, 2019 ('000 tCO2)**



Source: Cambridgeshire & Peterborough ICC, 'Fairness, nature and communities: addressing climate change in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough' (2021)

3.5.16 In Fenland, between 2005-2022 greenhouse gas emissions have fallen in all sectors except land use, land use change and forestry (LULUCF) where there has been a slight increase. Industry was the second highest contributor to emissions in 2005, however this has changed in recent years and moved to third place with agriculture now being the second highest contributor. Between 2005 and 2020, per capita greenhouse gas emissions in Fenland fell from 3.5 tonnes to 2.7 tonnes.

<sup>87</sup> [FINAL CLIMATE REPORT LOW \(002\).pdf \(hubspotusercontent40.net\)](#)

**Figure 35: Fenland greenhouse gas emissions estimates 2005-2022 (kt CO<sub>2</sub>e)**

<b>Sector</b>	<b>2005 Emissions</b>	<b>2014 Emissions</b>	<b>2022 Emissions</b>
Industry	376.8	289.6	239.8
Commercial	91.1	72.2	37.5
Public sector	22.9	17.8	10.8
Domestic	247.5	186.7	131.5
Transport	218.6	197.0	184.9
Land Use, Land Use Change & Forestry (LULUCF)	539.7	540.0	543.3
Agriculture	346.0	320.4	285.5
Waste	90.7	36.8	52.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,933.4</b>	<b>1,660.6</b>	<b>1,486.3</b>
<b>Per Capita Emissions (tCO<sub>2</sub>e)</b>	<b>21.7</b>	<b>16.9</b>	<b>14.4</b>
<b>Emissions per km<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>3.5</b>	<b>3.0</b>	<b>2.7</b>

Source: DfESNZ, UK local authority and regional greenhouse gas emissions statistics, 2005 to 2022

- 3.5.17 In the East of England it is forecast that sea level rises will have a significant impact on coastal and other areas that are subject to tidal influences.
- 3.5.18 The majority of Fenland District is at or below sea level. The predominantly man-made fen-drained landscape has resulted in water being carried in raised channels above surrounding land through an extensive network of drains and rivers. Embankments along the channels comprise important flood defence infrastructure for surrounding agricultural land and settlements.
- 3.5.19 Fenland is therefore at risk in a number of ways from climate change which is likely to have major environmental, economic, social and health consequences in the future. Among these are an increase in flood risk, changes in agricultural practices, and failing infrastructure.
- 3.5.20 The Met Office climate projections<sup>88</sup> show how the climate could change in each locality across the UK. The data is measured in 12km-square (7.5-mile-square) grids across the UK. For March, approximately in the centre of Fenland, climate projections are as follows:

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<sup>88</sup> [Ibid](#)

## Summer:

- The hottest summer day in the 30 years from 1991 to 2019 was 36.7 degrees. If global average temperatures increase 2 degrees above pre-industrial levels, the hottest summer day could be about 38.8 degrees. If global temperatures rise by 4 degrees, it could be about 42.1 degrees.
- In the 30 summers from 1991 to 2019, there were 5 days above 25 degrees per month on average. If global temperatures rise by 2 degrees, there could be 10 days. With 4 degrees rise, there could be 19 days.
- In the 30 years from 1991 to 2019, there were 9 rainy days on average per month in summer. If global average temperatures rise by 2 degrees, this could be 8 days per month. At 4 degrees rise it could be about 6 days.
- On the wettest summer day of the 30 years from 1991 to 2019, 64mm of rain fell. At 2 degrees rise, this could be about 65mm. And at 4 degrees rise, it could be about 64mm, which is roughly the same as now.

## Winter:

- The warmest winter day in the 30 years from 1991 to 2019 was 18.6 degrees. If global average temperatures increase 2 degrees above pre-industrial levels, the warmest winter day could be about 18.9 degrees. If global temperatures rise by 4 degrees, it could be about 20.3 degrees.
- In the 30 years from 1991 to 2019, there were 9 rainy days on average per month in winter. At both 2 degrees and 4 degrees rises, the number of rainy days per month could be roughly the same.
- On the wettest winter day of the 30 years from 1991 to 2019, 28mm of rain fell. At 2 degrees rise, this could be about 37mm. And 4 degrees rise, it could be about 40mm, which is 43% more than now.

## Flood Risk

3.5.21 Fenland is vulnerable to a range of different types of flooding. These include:

- Tidal flooding from main rivers
- Fluvial flooding
- Flooding from ordinary watercourses and reservoirs
- Surface water flooding
- Ground water flooding
- Flooding from combined sewers
- Flooding from a combination of different sources at the same time

3.5.22 Flooding can occur when water levels increase above the capacity of the carrying watercourse, pipe or reservoir; when breach or overtopping of flood defences occurs; or as a result of blockages or operational failure. An increase and intensity in rainfall events as a result of climate change mean that river (fluvial) flows are likely to increase thereby increasing the risk of the breach or overtopping of flood defences along the water channels.

3.5.23 The water table within the district is generally high meaning that ground water saturation can impact on the existing drainage network at times of high flows. In addition, the

generally flat terrain in towns and villages means that the type and capacity of existing surface water drainage systems can struggle to cope with the deluge of excess water from more intense rainfall events. This has the risk of resulting in more surface water flooding particularly in built up areas. In August 2014, March and other areas of Cambridgeshire experienced significant surface water flooding as a result of an intense rainfall event.

- 3.5.24 Finally tidal surges have a direct impact on major rivers within or close to the district. In particular the River Nene which flows through Wisbech, with a tidal reach as far as the Dog-in-the-Doublet Sluice near Whittlesey and Peterborough, has the potential to cause significant flooding in the district should the surge overtop or breach the defences. The eastern side of the district is at risk from a breach or overtopping of the Ouse river system.
- 3.5.25 A combination of more than one or all of these flood risk types is likely to increase the risk of flooding and its impacts.
- 3.5.26 The best known tidal surge event in the country occurred in 1953 when over 300 people died in the southeast of England. There was a major tidal surge event in 1978 in Wisbech which resulted in one fatality and led to the provision of flood defences that have subsequently been heightened. Since then, there have been three tidal surges in Wisbech, all in the last twelve years, which almost caused flooding in and around the town (2007, 2013 and 2017).
- 3.5.27 Flood risk is therefore a significant sustainability issue for Fenland particularly with a predicted rise in sea levels. The Council has prepared a district-wide Level 1 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) and a Level 2 SFRA for Wisbech and is seeking to refresh these documents as part of the new Local Plan to inform suitable locations for development. Flood feasibility work has also been carried out for the proposed Wisbech Garden Town.
- 3.5.28 Although significant, flood risk in Fenland needs to be considered in the context of a man-made environment which has developed successful drainage strategies over hundreds of years. As a result there may be a number of alternative ways to deal with flood risk that need to be explored particularly at a strategic level rather than relying on the nationally prescribed one size fits all approach as set out in the NPPF.
- 3.5.29 Infrastructure in the district is also likely to be affected by climate change. Hotter drier summers, wetter warmer winters and increased extreme climatic events will lead to increased subsidence on fen roads and impact other major infrastructure including flood defences. To anticipate these changing conditions new infrastructure and building design and location and existing building modification need to look to incorporate 'resistant' features such as ventilation, flood resilience and water efficiency. Such modifications tend to come with a higher financial cost.
- 3.5.30 Agriculture too is also likely to be forced to adapt to climate change. Potential increases in flooding, saline infiltration, prolonged drought periods and soil moisture availability means that the type of crops grown, yields, and harvest periods will be affected.

## **Evidence Gaps**

- Lack of an up-to-date district wide Level 2 SFRA
- Lack of an up-to-date Level 2 SFRA for potential development areas such as Wisbech

## Specific Issues and Opportunities

### Key Issues:

- Ongoing rise in global temperatures.
- Increased risk of flooding due to rising sea levels and change in weather patterns.
- Climate change has the potential to have significant adverse impacts on public health, infrastructure, agriculture, heritage assets and the natural environment within the district.
- Continued reliance on fossil fuels.

### Key Opportunities:


- All developments to adapt to changing global climate and weather conditions.
- Retrofitting of existing building stock.
- Potential increase in renewable energy use, e.g. CHP/district heating schemes and on-site generation of renewable or low carbon energy for individual developments.
- Opportunities to implement low or zero carbon emission development principles.
- Royal Haskoning modelling of River Nene tidal impact.

### The Likely Situation without the Plan

3.5.31 Without the plan it is likely there would be fewer controlling measures to offset the impact of climate change. There would also likely be an increase of new developments in areas at a higher risk of flooding.

### Key Sustainability Objectives

3.5.32 Following a review of the relevant policies relating to the topics in this section, along with an assessment of the current baseline data, the following sustainability objectives have been identified:

<b>5. Resilience to Climate Change and Flood Risk</b>		5.1 Limit or reduce vulnerability to the effects of climate change 5.2 Minimise and wherever possible remove the vulnerability of people, places and property to the risk of flooding from all sources
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## 3.6 Land Use and Wildlife

### Introduction

3.6.1 This section of the report looks at land use and the biological and geological diversity of Fenland, paying particular attention to designated sites and landscape character.

3.6.2 The relevant sustainability topics relating to this theme therefore are:

- Agriculture
- Geodiversity
- Biodiversity
- Designated nature sites

### Policy Context

#### National Planning Policy Framework:

3.6.3 The overarching environmental objective in the NPPF seeks to contribute to protecting and enhancing the natural and built environment including making effective use of land, helping to improve biodiversity and mitigating and adapting to climate change.

Paragraph 187 explains that the planning system should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:

- protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity or geological value and soils
- recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services – including the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land, and of trees and woodland; and
- minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures and incorporating features which support priority or threatened species such as swifts, bats and hedgehogs.

#### Planning Practice Guidance:

3.6.4 Much guidance is provided under the ‘natural environment’ section in the planning practice guidance.<sup>89</sup> The first sub-section covers agricultural land, soil and brownfield land. It reiterates the NPPF expectations that local planning authorities take account of the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land.

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<sup>89</sup> [Natural environment - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)

- 3.6.5 The second sub-section covers green infrastructure which can help in building a strong competitive economy, achieving well designed places, promoting healthy and safe communities, mitigating climate change, flooding and coastal change and conserving and enhancing the natural environment.
- 3.6.6 The third sub-section covers biodiversity, geodiversity and ecosystems. Finally, there is a section on landscape, which provide guidance on Landscape Character Assessments.

**Other plans and policies<sup>90</sup>:**

- The Environment Act 2021
- The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended)
- The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006
- The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)
- The Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act 2000
- Natural Environment White Paper 2011
- Biodiversity 2020: A Strategy for England's Wildlife and Ecosystem Services
- 'A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment' (2018)
- 25 Year Environment Plan Annual Progress Report 2023
- Natural Cambridgeshire 'Doubling Nature' Vision (2019)

**The Current Situation**

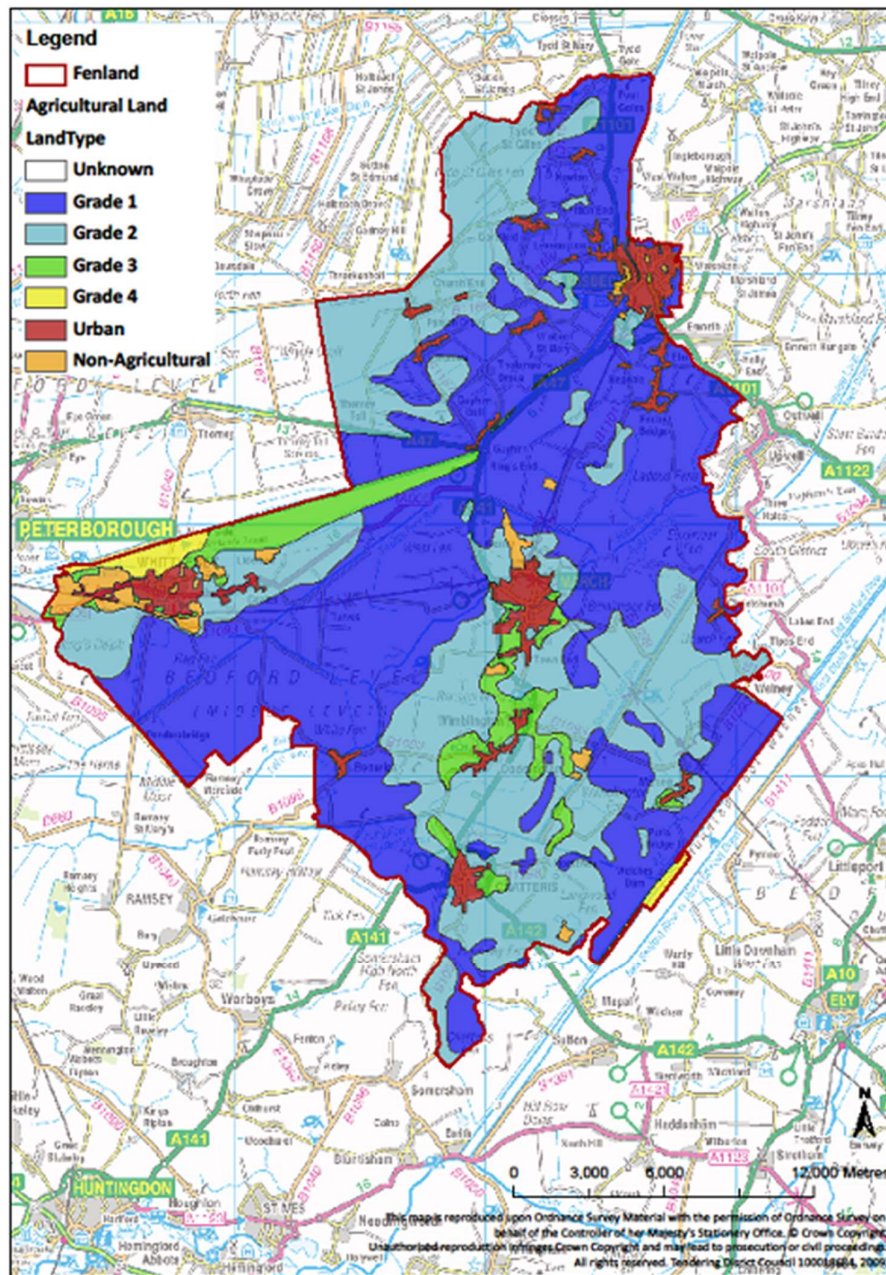
**Agriculture**

- 3.6.7 Almost the whole of the district comprises high grade agricultural land (Figure 36), and much of this is Grade 1, 2 and 3a (the best and most versatile). Agriculture accounts for the vast majority of the land use in the district and Fenland is part of one of the most productive agricultural areas in the UK. Any loss of this asset even on an incremental basis is a significant environmental issue.
- 3.6.8 The Agricultural Land Classification is a basis for assessing how development proposals affect agriculture within the planning system. Other factors though also come into play such as the need to provide land for housing, jobs, recreational facilities and renewable energy for a growing population. Fenland does not fall within a catchment sensitive farming area.

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<sup>90</sup> For a full list of relevant plans, policies, programmes, strategies and initiatives, see Appendix A

Figure 36 – Agricultural Land Classification in Fenland District



Source: Secom 2010

### Brownfield land

3.6.9 In order to accommodate the current Local Plan allocation of 11,000 new dwellings, policies support the re-use of brownfield land or previously developed land. These windfall sites are an important resource but their supply is inevitably difficult to predict. Nonetheless the approach in the new local plan should be to continue to give preference to the use of brownfield land over greenfield land, particularly in an area such as Fenland with such a wealth of high grade agricultural land.

3.6.10 The Council holds a Brownfield Register which provides details of sites which are likely to be available for development.<sup>91</sup> Brownfield sites however, can be some of the most biodiverse areas, particularly in urban areas, and this will need to be taken into account in the consideration of sites for future development.

## **Geodiversity**

3.6.11 Geological sites are valuable earth science resources which can help to educate us about the ways in which our world has formed. At a more local level, geological formations not only support often rich and varied ecosystems but help to shape the landscape character and provide a sense of place.

3.6.12 As well as providing amenity value, some geological sites do of course hold economic value. The Fenland area holds significant reserves of sand and gravel and clay deposits, and aggregate production is a significant mineral activity in the area particularly around Whittlesey and at Mepal, east of Chatteris.

3.6.13 It is important that areas of significant mineral deposits are protected from being sterilised by inappropriate forms of development. Policies in the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Minerals and Waste Local Plan (2021)<sup>92</sup> seek to manage the extraction of these minerals, including appropriate restoration and aftercare.

3.6.14 Although mineral extraction operations have a major impact on the landscape, it is accepted that some of the most valuable and ecologically rich landscapes in Fenland were once minerals workings, such as the Kings Dyke Nature Reserve near Whittlesey. In addition, legal agreements require the sand quarrying at Mepal to be subject to a full restoration program with potential significant biodiversity and water related improvements as well as public access.

## **Biodiversity**

3.6.15 Fenland's natural environment is a valuable resource, seen as a superb refuge for England's biodiversity whilst also being exceptionally important for food production and as a carbon store.

3.6.16 The Fens is rich in internationally, nationally and locally designated nature sites, as well as those without formal designation such as the extensive drainage and waterways network. Ecological networks comprising designated sites, other habitats, and wildlife corridors are necessary to maintain and enhance biodiversity and prevent fragmentation and loss of connectivity. This is essential if species are to adapt to climate change and if a net gain in biodiversity (BNG) is to be achieved.

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<sup>91</sup> [Brownfield Land Register - Fenland District Council](#)

<sup>92</sup> <https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/business/planning-and-development/planning-policy/adopted-minerals-and-waste-plan/>

- 3.6.17 In terms of natural habitats, Cambridgeshire has one of the lowest proportions of priority habitats in England (less than 10%), with one of the lowest percentages of land designated for nature and the second lowest woodland cover at 4.8%.<sup>93</sup>
- 3.6.18 The Council is part of Natural Cambridgeshire, the Local Nature Partnership (LNP), which has ambitious plans for doubling land for nature across the Greater Cambridgeshire area (from 8% to 17%) by 2050.<sup>94</sup>
- 3.6.19 The Fenland Interim Nature Recovery Network (2023) report identifies potential priority areas for improvement, interim strategic locations where off-site BNG should be provided, and will be used to inform the CPCA's emerging Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS).

## Fenland Statutory Sites

### European or International Designations

- **Ramsar Sites**

- 3.6.20 Ramsar sites are sites designated under the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands of International Importance. Fenland contains two Ramsar sites:

Ramsar Name	Total area (ha)	Area in Cambs (ha)
Nene Washes	1519.66	1342.61
Ouse Washes	2518.66	185.91

Other Ramsar site in Cambridgeshire are at Chippenham Fen, Wicken Fen and Woodwalton Fen.

- **Special Areas of Conservation (SAC)**

- 3.6.21 SACs are protected areas in the UK, designated under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended). Fenland contains two SACs:

SAC Name	Total area (ha)	Area in district (ha)
Nene Washes	88.33	79.15
Ouse Washes	337.73	98.73

- **Special Protection Areas (SPA)**

- 3.6.22 SPAs are protected areas for birds in the UK classified under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) in England and Wales. Fenland contains two SPAs:

SPA Name	Total area (ha)	Area in district (ha)
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<sup>93</sup> [Fenland Interim Nature Recovery Network Final - July 2023.pdf](#)

<sup>94</sup> [Doubling Nature A5 8pp Layout 1 \(naturalcambridgeshire.org.uk\)](#)

Nene Washes	1519.85	1342.80
Ouse Washes	2498.61	185.94

## UK Designations

- **National Nature Reserves (NNR)**

3.6.23 NNRs are designated by Natural England in England. There are no NNRs in Fenland.

- **Local Nature Reserves (LNR)**

LNRs are designated by Natural England and the relevant local authority. They all have public access. Fenland contains two LNRs:

LNR Name	Total area (ha)	Area in district (ha)
Lattersey Field	11.86	11.86
Ring's End	8.54	8.54

There are 0.2 ha per 1,000 people for LNR areas in Fenland.

	2022/23	2021/22
LNR area in Fenland (ha)	20.40	24.40
Population in Fenland*	103,000	102,700
LNR area per 1,000 people (ha)	0.20	0.20

\*Figures for population from mid-year estimates from the Office for National Statistics for 2022 and 2021 respectively rounded to the nearest 100.

- **Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)**

3.6.24 SSSIs are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. Fenland contains four SSSIs which are:

1. Adventurers' Land (a geological SSSI just north of the Nene Washes near Guyhirn)
2. Bassenhally Pit (a large pit near Whittlesey designated mainly for its rare fenland flora)
3. Nene Washes - designated for its large area of washland habitat
4. Ouse Washes - designated for its large area of washland habitat (most of the Ouse Washes is outside Fenland)

	2022/23	2021/22
No. SSSIs	4	4
Total area of the SSSIs (ha)	4059.5	4059.5
Number of SSSI units in district	15	15
Total area of SSSI land in district (ha)	1549.0	1549.0

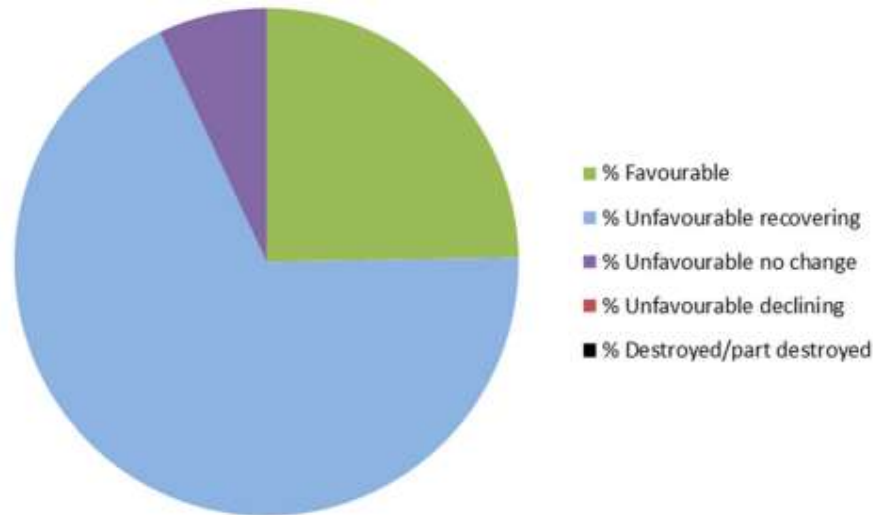
## SSSI Condition Assessment

3.6.25 SSSIs are divided up into areas known as SSSI units and these units are monitored for their condition by Natural England. The condition of a SSSI unit is deemed to fall into one

of five categories: favourable, unfavourable recovering, unfavourable no change, unfavourable declining and destroyed/part destroyed. The condition of SSSIs in Fenland is shown below by percentage area of total SSSI land in the relevant authority area.

SSSI Condition in Fenland	2022/23		2021/22	
	Area (ha)	%	Area (ha)	%
Favourable	382.7	24.7	382.7	24.7
Unfavourable recovering	1058.4	68.3	1082.1	69.9
Unfavourable no change	107.8	7.0	84.2	5.4
Unfavourable declining	0	0	0	0
Destroyed/ part destroyed	0	0	0	0

**Figure 37 – SSSI Condition in Fenland 2022/23**



Source: CPERC

## Non-Statutory Sites

- **County Wildlife Sites (CWS)**

3.6.26 County Wildlife Sites are sites selected by the CWS Group (a group of organisations and individuals affiliated to the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Biodiversity Partnership). CWS have no statutory protection but are recognised in the planning system. CWS that are major rivers are not considered to have an area but are instead considered to be linear sites and are given a length in km. The boundaries of major river CWSs in Cambridgeshire are not strictly defined and are considered to be 'the river and adjacent semi-natural habitat'

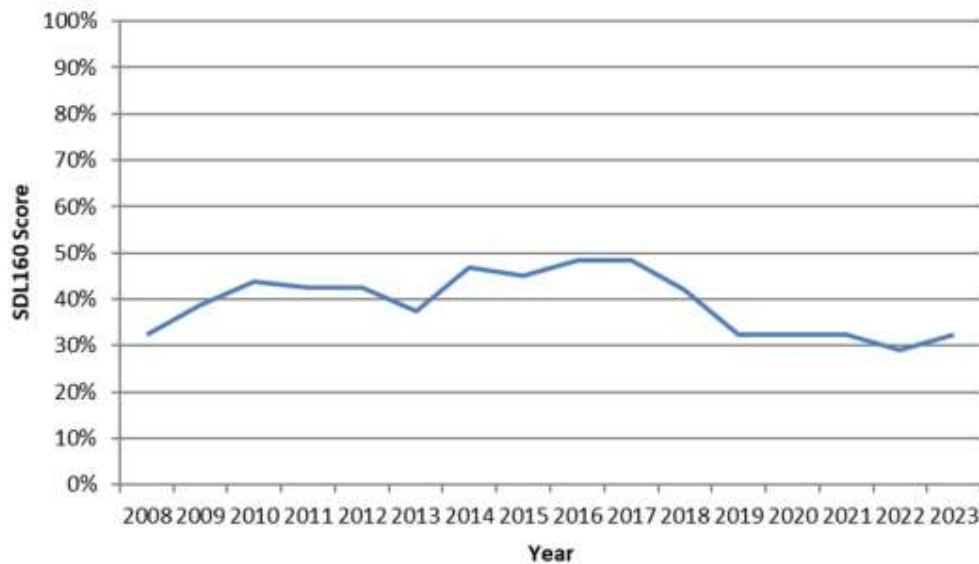
CWSs in Fenland	2022/23	Change 21/22 – 22/23
No. CWSs	30	0
Total area of the CWSs (ha)	376.14	0
Total length of linear sites (km)	44.47	0
Total area of CWS land in district (ha)	366.86	0
Total length of linear sites in district (km)	18.17	0

3.6.27 CWSs are 'Local Sites' as defined by DEFRA. Local Sites have been assessed in terms of their management for the Local nature conservation/biodiversity data requirement on the Single Data List (Ref:160-00). This is the proportion of Local Sites where positive conservation management is being or has been implemented (Local Sites also include Local Geological Sites and there is one of these in Fenland).

	<b>2022/23</b>	<b>2021/22</b>
Total number of Local Sites in Fenland used in analysis	31	0
Number of Local Sites in Fenland where positive conservation management is being or has been implemented during the last five years	10	+1
<b>% sites where positive conservation management is being or has been implemented during the last five years</b>	<b>32.3%</b>	<b>+3.2%</b>

3.6.28 There has been a small increase in the percentage of sites deemed to be in positive conservation management during 2022/23. The overall trend in SDL160 score since the indicator began to be measured in 2008 is shown in the graph below. The score peaked in 2016/17 when it almost reached 50%. In 2022/23, it is at a similar level as the beginning in 2008, just above 30%.

**Figure 38 – SDL 160 Score in Fenland 2008-2023**



Source: CPERC

3.6.29 This recent trend runs contrary to the Government's aim to have 75% of conservation sites in positive management by 2043.

3.6.30 In addition to the statutory and non-statutory sites the extensive network of Fenland drainage channels provides significant habitats for a wide range of wildlife species including Water Voles, Otters and Kingfishers. Species numbers have increased as a result of Biodiversity Action Plans produced by Internal Drainage Boards (IDB) within the

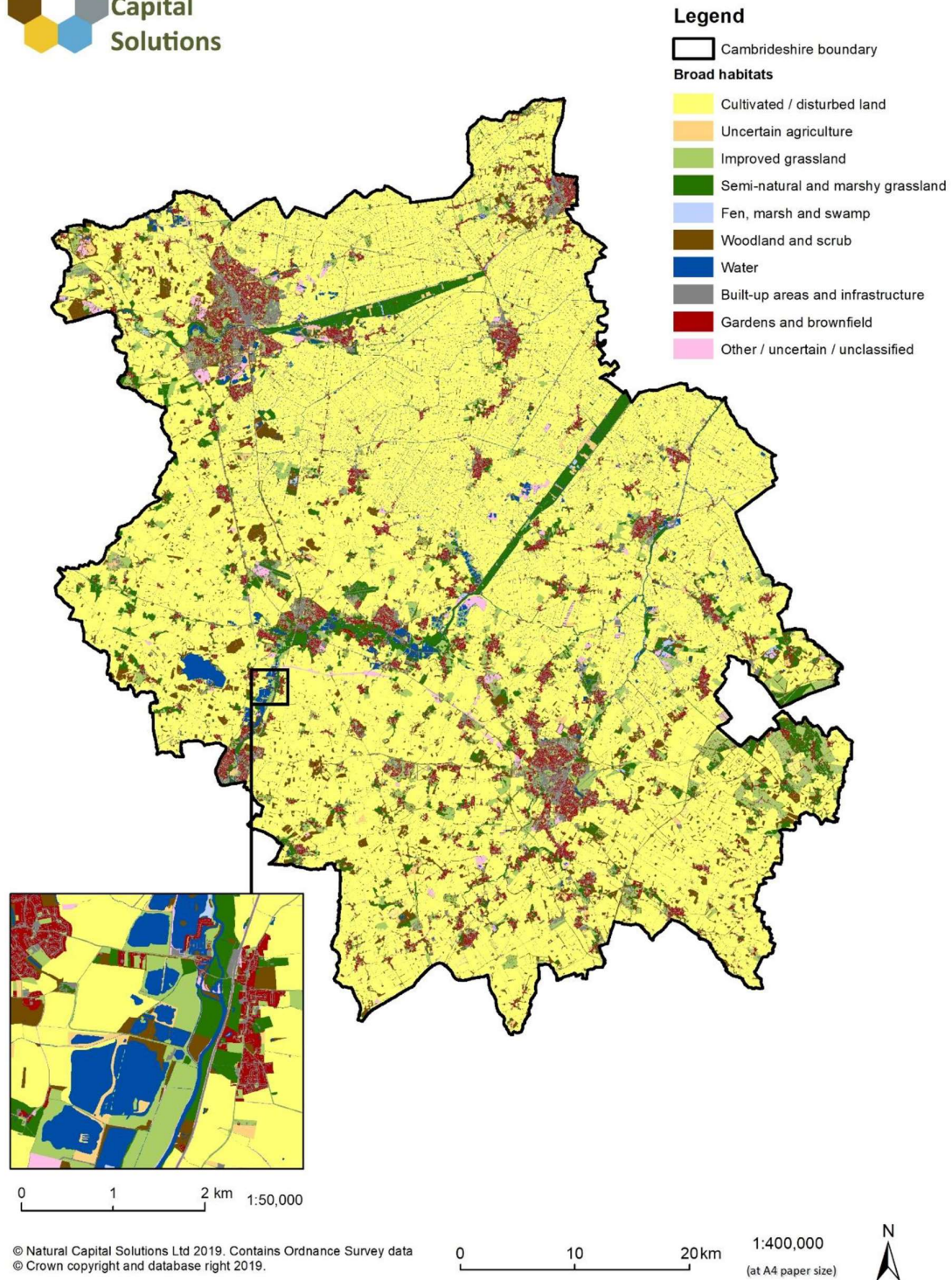
district. The Middle Level Commissioners and the North Level IDB have a statutory duty to further nature conservation in carrying out their functions and operate a specific conservation strategy, which forms a basis for all their river maintenance operations. It is important that the ecological habitats and water quality of the drainage network are maintained and enhanced despite being faced with pressures of larger growth for an increasing population.

- 3.6.31 In July 2019 Natural Cambridgeshire, the Local Nature Partnership, announced ambitious plans to double the area of rich wildlife habitats and natural green space across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough by 2050 with the aim of creating a world-class environment where nature and people thrive, and businesses prosper.
- 3.6.32 This is to be achieved through delivery of existing habitat restoration schemes, such as Great Fen, Wicken Fen, Ouse Fen and the Ouse Washes, opportunities provided by the Combined Authority's economic growth agenda, re-focusing agricultural subsidies on the delivery of public services, improving current greenspaces for nature and creating new sources of investment in natural capital.

Figure 39: Broad habitats across Cambridgeshire<sup>95</sup>



## Broad habitats



Source: Natural Capital Solutions Ltd

<sup>95</sup> <https://www.cperc.org.uk/downloads/Cambridgeshire%20habitat%20mapping%20-%20final%20report.pdf>

## Evidence Gaps

- Biodiversity value of brownfield land (including Open Mosaic habitat mapping)
- Biodiversity Action Plan reporting

## Specific Issues and Opportunities

### Key Issues:

- High grade agricultural land throughout district
- Pressure from development on greenfield sites
- High quality landscape character under pressure from development including renewable energy
- Areas of intrinsic environmental importance must be protected
- Loss of biodiversity
- Mineral extraction

### Key Opportunities:


- The district supports internationally and nationally important sites including SACs, SPAs, SSSIs and Ramsar sites. These are particularly important for great crested newts, limestone grasslands and aquatic plant communities.
- Development proposals designed to incorporate habitats and create new opportunities for wildlife (e.g. as part of SuDS systems) have the potential to promote biodiversity.
- The district supports a significant number of well-managed locally important wildlife sites which if better connected can become more resilient to localised population extinctions and climate change whilst supporting more biodiversity.
- The amount of accessible green spaces and natural places could be increased in association with new developments, and could be linked to existing and planned footpath and cycling networks.
- Exhausted mineral workings provide opportunities for biodiversity habitats.
- Natural Cambridgeshire's ambition to double rich wildlife habitats by 2050 to inform local plan preparation.

## The Likely Situation without the Plan

- Without the plan it is possible that a greater amount of high grade agricultural land would be permanently lost and that the landscape character of the area would be eroded.
- Pressure on designated and non-designated sites would be likely to increase thereby having an adverse impact on habitats, species and eco-systems.

## Key Sustainability Objectives

3.6.33 Following a review of the relevant policies relating to the topics in this section, along with an assessment of the current situation, the following key sustainability objectives have been identified:

<p><b>6. Land Use and Wildlife</b></p>		<p>6.1 Minimise the irreversible loss of undeveloped land, particularly high grade agricultural land</p> <p>6.2 Utilise brownfield sites for re-development in appropriate circumstances</p> <p>6.3 Minimise and avoid where possible impacts to biodiversity and geodiversity, both within and beyond designated sites of international, national or local significance, and on protected species</p> <p>6.4 Achieve net gains in biodiversity and create and enhance an ecological network that is resilient to the effects of climate change</p>
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## 3.7 Water Resources

### Introduction

3.7.1 Water is essential to sustain all life on earth. Protecting and managing our water resources is therefore of vital importance. This includes protecting the quality of our water supplies and ensuring water is used as efficiently as possible. Flood risk is also an important water topic and is discussed in more detail in Section 3.5. The relevant sustainability topics relating to this section are as follows:

- Water supply
- Water quality
- Water waste management

### Policy Context

#### National Planning Policy Framework

3.7.2 The overarching environmental objective in the NPPF seeks to contribute to protecting and enhancing our natural environment including using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change.

Paragraph 187 explains that development should, wherever possible, help to improve local environmental conditions such as air and water quality, taking into account relevant information such as river basin management plans.

#### Planning Practice Guidance:

3.7.3 A whole section of the PPG advises on how planning can ensure water quality and the delivery of adequate water and wastewater infrastructure.<sup>96</sup>

It describes how planning positively for water supply and quality can have multiple benefits for people and the environment. For example, flood risk can be reduced and biodiversity and amenity improved by designing developments that include permeable surfaces and other sustainable drainage systems, removes artificial physical modifications (for example, weirs and concrete channels) and recreates natural features, whilst water quality can be improved by protecting and enhancing green infrastructure.

#### Other plans and policies<sup>97</sup>:

- The Environment Act 2021

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<sup>96</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/water-supply-wastewater-and-water-quality>

<sup>97</sup> For a full list of relevant plans, policies, programmes, strategies and initiatives, see Appendix A

- The Flood and Water Management Act 2010
- Defra: Our integrated plan for delivering clean and plentiful water (2023)
- Fenland Outline Water Cycle Study (June 2022)
- Future Fens – Flood Risk Management Baseline Report (December 2020)
- Future Fens: Integrated Adaptation Manifesto (May 2022)
- Anglian Water – Our Water Resources Management Plan 2024

## The Current Situation

### Water Supply

- 3.7.4 Water resource management is an issue of paramount importance, particularly in the East of England which is the driest region in the country.
- 3.7.5 The water supply-demand balance is under significant pressure from population growth, climate change, sustainability reductions and the need to increase resilience to severe drought. These challenges are acute in the region, which is characterised by low rainfall and home to a significant proportion of wetland sites of conservation interest.
- 3.7.6 The region's water resources are fully developed and in some cases over committed. Fenland falls within the Ruthamford North and South Fenland Water Resource Zones (WRZ), which are managed by Anglian Water. The majority of the water supply to Fenland comes from Rutland Water and Grafham Water reservoirs.
- 3.7.7 Anglian Water has produced a Revised draft Anglian Water Resources Management Plan 2024 (AWRMP) which is aiming to achieve a consumption of 118.15 litres per head per day (l/h/d) by 2038 and 110l/h/d by 2050.<sup>98</sup> The national average for water demand is currently 142 l/h/d. Both the WRZs serving Fenland currently face considerable challenges to achieve this aim.
- 3.7.8 However, the AWRMP is focussed on a three-tiered strategy which includes, making the best use of existing resources through demand management, progressing the Fens and Lincolnshire reservoirs to meet 36% of new water needs, and planning for adaptive future resources which are flexible to changing circumstances.

### Water Quality

- 3.7.9 The Water Framework Directive (WFD) requires that all water bodies are restored to good ecological/chemical status through a phased programme to 2027. Fenland is located in the Anglian river basin district. Improvements are to be directed by the Environment Agency's Anglian River Basin Management Plan and carried out as part of a catchment based approach, working from locally prepared integrated catchment management plans.<sup>99</sup> The Anglian river basin district (Figure 40) covers 27,900km<sup>2</sup> and extends from Lincolnshire in the north to Essex in the south and from Northamptonshire in the west to the east Anglian coast.

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<sup>98</sup> [Water resources management plan \(anglianwater.co.uk\)](https://www.anglianwater.co.uk)

<sup>99</sup> [Anglian river basin district river basin management plan: updated 2022 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)

**Figure 40: Management catchments within the Anglian river basin district**



Source: Environment Agency

3.7.10 Poor quality of water bodies in rural areas comes from the combined effects of numerous sources, including agriculture, waste water, roads, recreational land use such as golf courses and forestry activities. It is mainly caused by nutrients, contaminants, chemicals

such as pesticide and sediment entering water bodies and groundwater as a result of land management activities.

### 3.7.11 Fenland drains to two river catchments; the Nene and Old Bedford and Middle Level.

Within the Nene Catchment the priority river basin management issues to tackle are water quality, habitat quality, and hydromorphology.

In the Old Bedford and Middle Level Catchment the priority river basin management issues are:

- developing a national voice on the importance and uniqueness of the Fenland catchments and the different challenges that they face;
- fully understanding what 'Good Ecological Potential' looks like in an artificial catchment;
- continuing to grow and strengthen its partnership organisations, ensuring that it can have a say on the improvement of the local water environment.

3.7.12 The Environment Agency records classification data for river basins to distinguish the environmental condition or 'status' of water bodies<sup>100</sup>. The Anglian river basin includes a total of 630 water bodies including: 522 rivers, 46 lakes, 13 coastal, 18 estuarine, and 31 groundwater. The status as of 2019 for surface water and ground water are showed in the tables below.

**Figure 41: Environmental status of the Anglian river basin district 2019**

<b>Ecological status or potential*</b>	<b>Bad</b>	<b>Poor</b>	<b>Moderate</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>High</b>	<b>Total</b>
Number of water bodies	21	103	428	47	0	599
Number of water body elements	110	405	658	826	3124	5123

\*Table summarises the current ecological status of surface water bodies. Water bodies are classified as being at high, good, moderate, poor or bad ecological status or potential.

<b>Chemical status*</b>	<b>Fail</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>Total</b>
Number of water bodies	599	0	599
Number of water body elements	1197	6997	8194

\*Table summarises the current chemical status of water bodies. These are classified as being at good or fail.

<b>Quantitative status*</b>	<b>Poor</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>Total</b>
Number of water bodies	14	17	31
Number of water body elements	15	109	124

\*Table summarises the quantitative status of groundwater water bodies. These are classified as being at good or poor.

<b>Chemical status*</b>	<b>Poor</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>Total</b>
Number of water bodies	15	16	31
Number of water body elements	23	132	155

<sup>100</sup> [Classifications data for Anglian River Basin District | Catchment Data Explorer](#)

\*Table summarises the chemical status of groundwater water bodies. These are classified as being at good or poor.

### **Nitrate Vulnerable Zones**

- 3.7.13 Nitrate Vulnerable Zones (NVZs) are areas designated as being at risk from agricultural nitrate pollution. They include about 55% of land in England. DEFRA reviews NVZs every 4 years to account for changes in nitrate concentrations.
- 3.7.14 A large proportion of Fenland particularly to the west, south and east of the district is in a Nitrate Vulnerable Zone (NVZ). Areas immediately to the east and west of the River Nene north of Guyhirn and in the northern part of the district fall outside the NVZ.<sup>101</sup>

### **Abstraction**

- 3.7.15 Excessive water abstraction for agricultural purposes is also a significant issue within Fenland as it can have a detrimental impact on aquatic ecosystems. The majority of abstraction occurs during winter months when river levels are highest. However, during dry summer periods pressure for abstraction increases with a potential risks to biodiversity in the river and drainage systems.

### **Water Recycling Centres**

- 3.7.16 There are a number of Waste Water Recycling Centres (WRC) throughout the district which treat sewage before discharging back into the river system. Each of the market towns is served by a WRC and there are additional plants at Doddington (and Wimblington), Benwick, Christchurch, Manea and Parson Drove. There are known deficiencies at Doddington.
- 3.7.17 The Council produced a Water Cycle Study in 2022 (along with a Level 1 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment) which considered growth proposed at that time. The study will need updating as part of the new local plan. The assessment found that Doddington, Manea and Whittlesey Water Recycling Centres (WRCs) would exceed their current dry weather flows permitted as a result of future growth. March and Parson Drove WRCs would be within 10% of their permitted DWF. These WRCs would require additional investment and treatment capacity upgrades to meet the requirements of the proposed development.
- 3.7.18 It is important that there is sufficient capacity in the system to cope with the anticipated growth and to ensure that receiving water courses are able to take additional discharges from treatment plants without impacting on water quality.

### **Evidence Gaps**

- Lack of up-to-date information on water quality specific to Fenland.
- Effects of surface water run-off and combined sewage overflows on water quality.

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<sup>101</sup> <https://environment.data.gov.uk/farmers/>

- Water affordability.
- Number of developments that incorporate water efficiency measures.
- Numbers of voluntary water meter inclusions.
- Water Cycle Study will need to be updated to reflect proposed growth.

## Specific Issues and Opportunities

### Key Issues:

- Growth will put pressure on limited water supply resources.
- Increased development will put pressure on the existing sewage infrastructure, which could lead to problems in treatment.
- Risks to water quality in the district's river and drainage system.
- A large proportion of the rural area is in a Nitrate Vulnerable Zone.

### Key Opportunities:


- Implementation of Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) which as well as reductions in the quantity of flows also provide advantages for wildlife, local amenity and decreases in pollution of watercourses, groundwater and soil through improved management of runoff.
- Reduction of additional potable and non-potable water supply and effluent to reduce the volume of water going into river catchments.
- Potential for efficient use of water using rainwater harvesting systems and/or grey water recycling
- Potential to naturalise and improve water bodies that run through or close to development sites to enable them to meet better standards within the Water Framework Directive.
- The Fens Reservoir has the potential to help meet growing demands on water supply in the East of England, whilst bringing a realm social, environmental and economic benefits to the local area.

## The Likely Situation without the Plan

3.7.19 Although the current Local Plan has several sustainable water management policies, local carrying capacity is already stretched, with water being diverted from elsewhere in the country; growth will further exacerbate this shortage with potential damage to water resources. Without the plan it will be more difficult to achieve a reduction in demand.

## Key Sustainability Objectives

3.7.20 Following a review of the relevant policies relating to the topics in this section, along with an assessment of the current situation, the following key sustainability objectives have been identified:

<b>7. Water Resources</b>		<p>7.1 Minimise water consumption and encourage re-use</p> <p>7.2 Avoid deterioration and seek opportunities to enhance water</p>
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		quality in rivers and other water bodies
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## 3.8: Pollution and Waste

### Introduction

3.8.1 This section is concerned with pollution and the impact it can have on people's health and the environment. It also considers the need to reduce waste and encourage recycling. The sustainability topics covered in this chapter are as follows:

- Pollution
- Waste
- Recycling

### Policy Context

#### National Planning Policy Framework:

3.8.2 Part of the NPPF's overarching environmental sustainability objective is to contribute to protecting and enhancing the natural built and historic environment, minimising waste and pollution and mitigating and adapting to climate change.

Paragraph 187 explains that planning policies and decisions should enhance the natural and local environment by preventing new and existing development from contributing to, being put at unacceptable risk from, or being adversely affected by, unacceptable levels of soil, air, water or noise pollution or land instability. Development should help to improve local environmental conditions such as air and water quality and the planning system should also remediate and mitigate despoiled, degraded, derelict, contaminated and unstable land.

Paragraph 198 also explains the need to ensure that new development is appropriate for its location taking into account the likely effects (including cumulative effects) of pollution on health, living conditions and the natural environment, as well as the potential sensitivity of the site or the wider area to impacts that could arise from the development.

#### Planning Practice Guidance:

3.8.3 Extensive guidance on pollution and waste planning is contained within the planning practice guidance, including the preparation of development plan documents and the determination of planning applications. It advises that Local Plans can affect air quality in a number of ways, including through what development is proposed and where, and the encouragement given to sustainable transport. Concerns could arise if development is likely to impact on air quality in an area where air quality is known to be poor.<sup>102</sup>

#### Other plans and policies<sup>103</sup>:

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<sup>102</sup> Paragraph: 002 Reference ID: 32-002-20191101

<sup>103</sup> For a full list of relevant plans, policies, programmes, strategies and initiatives, see Appendix A

- The Environment Act 2021
- A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment (2018)
- Defra Waste Management Plan for England 2021
- National Planning Policy for Waste (Oct 2014)
- Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Minerals and Waste Development Plan (2021)
- RECAP Waste Management Design Guide SPD (2012)
- Location and Design of Waste Management Facilities SPD (2011)

## The Current Situation

### Pollution

3.8.4 Pollution comes in a number of forms including air, water, land, noise, and odour which has serious implications for the health of the human population and wider environment.

### Air Pollution

3.8.5 Air pollution has a significant effect on public health, and poor air quality is the largest environmental risk to public health in the UK. It is estimated that long-term exposure to man-made air pollution in the UK has an annual effect equivalent to 28,000 to 36,000 deaths.<sup>104</sup>

3.8.6 Air pollution is associated with a number of adverse health impacts. It is recognised as a contributing factor in the onset of heart disease and cancer. Additionally, air pollution particularly affects the most vulnerable in society: children and older people, and those with heart and lung conditions. There is also often a strong correlation with equalities issues, because areas with poor air quality are also often the less affluent areas.

3.8.7 In 2019, mortality attributed to particulate air pollution in Fenland was 5.3%. The value is slightly lower than the East of England region as a whole which was 5.5%, but it is higher than the average for England of 5.1%.<sup>105</sup>

3.8.8 The East and South East of England have higher background levels of particulates as these regions receive a larger contribution of particulate pollution from mainland Europe. However, there are also hot spots in Cambridgeshire caused by traffic-related pollution, especially in busy urban areas such as Wisbech and around arterial and trunk roads such as the A14. There are higher levels of nitrogen dioxide in the winter months and peaks of larger particulate matter in the spring, which may lead to seasonal health impacts.

3.8.9 Small particulates from traffic and other sources such as manufacturing can also enter buildings contributing to poorer indoor air quality. Although concentrations of pollutants are at lower levels than ambient (outdoor) air pollution, people spend most of their time indoors and therefore receive most of their exposure indoors.

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<sup>104</sup> [Health matters: air pollution - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/health-matters-air-pollution)

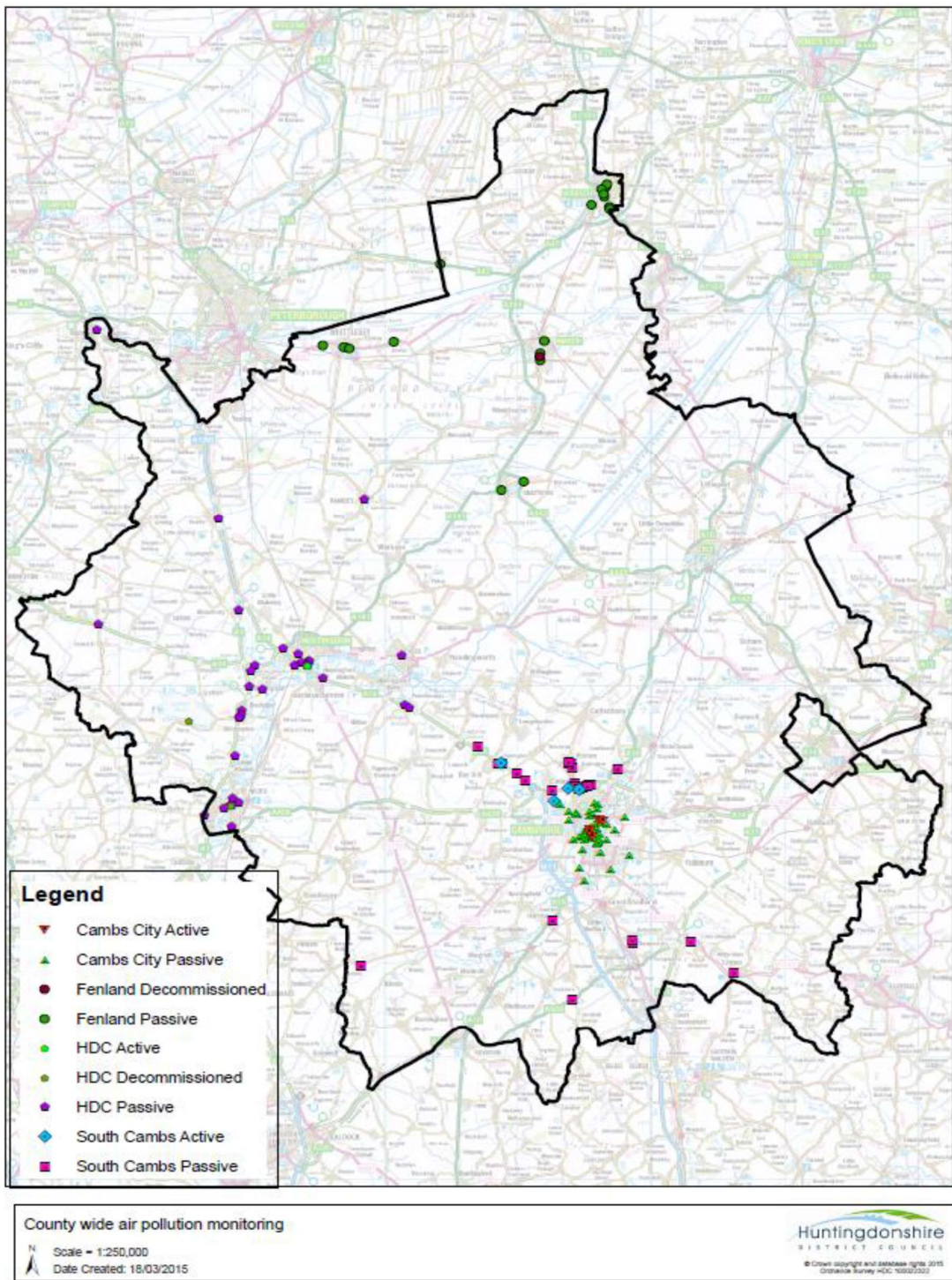
<sup>105</sup> [ASR\\_Template\\_England\\_2023\\_Fenland.pdf](#)

- 3.8.10 The Council assesses air quality as required by the Air Quality Standards Regulations 2010. There are around 25 air quality monitoring sites in Fenland which are shown on the map below (Figure 40) and two Air Quality Management Areas (AQMA). One of the AQMAs is in Wisbech along Lynn Road (B198), where the main pollutants present are sulphur dioxide and PM10 particles. The other AQMA is in Whittlesey around the brickworks, which is monitored for sulphur dioxide.
- 3.8.11 The 2022 Annual Screening Review shows that air quality in Fenland continues to meet the national objectives for all pollutants.<sup>106</sup>
- 3.8.12 In England, the most deprived wards experience the highest levels of air pollution. There tend to be a higher proportion of children living in these areas who may be more susceptible to the health effects of air pollution. This is reflected in Fenland where a number of the air quality monitoring sites fall within some of the most deprived wards in the district in Wisbech.
- 3.8.13 It is worth noting that there are levels of air pollution in Cambridgeshire that impact health, even though most annual averages may not be over Air Quality Thresholds. In 2018 the Council received an increased number of enquiries from the public raising concerns of the air quality in their community and the impact of poor air quality on their health and wellbeing. As a result the Council has developed an Air Quality Action Plan to guide its future priorities and supplement the Council's Health and Wellbeing Strategy.

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<sup>106</sup> [ASR\\_Template\\_England\\_2023\\_Fenland.pdf](#)

Figure 42: Map showing air pollution monitoring sites in Cambridgeshire



Source: Huntingdonshire District Council

## Water pollution

3.8.14 Water pollution happens when poisonous, noxious or polluting substances enter inland and coastal waters (including groundwater). The Council is responsible for ensuring that the water supply for commercial food activities is safe. Waste water also needs to be carefully monitored to ensure there is no adverse impact on the environment. For instance the discharge of treated sewage water from Water Recycling Centres into the river network is controlled by licenses from the Environment Agency to ensure no adverse impact on the biodiversity and ecology of receiving water courses. This is discussed in more detail in Section 3.7 - Water Resources.

### **Contaminated Land**

3.8.15 The Council has a statutory duty through its Environmental Health role to regulate contaminated land in the district which happens through the planning application process. This seeks to ensure that land that has been contaminated in the past through industrial and waste activities is suitable for the proposed new purpose.

3.8.16 Constraints mapping, which includes areas of contaminated land, is used in the determination of planning applications and highlights where remediation may be required before new development can take place. Since 2001, there have been two major land pollution incidents which occurred in Fenland in 2018.

### **Light Pollution**

3.8.17 Light pollution is a generic term meaning artificial light which shines where it is neither wanted nor needed. There are three broad types of light pollution: 1) Skyglow – the pink or orange glow visible for miles around towns and cities, 2) Glare – the uncomfortable brightness of a light source, and 3) Light intrusion – light spilling beyond the boundary of a property, sometimes shining through windows and curtains.<sup>107</sup>

3.8.18 The NPPG provides guidance and information on what light pollution considerations planning need to address. It is acknowledged that artificial light provides valuable benefits to society and can be essential to a new development, but for maximum benefit, it is important to get the right light, in the right place and for it to be used at the right time. Lighting schemes can also be costly and difficult to change, so getting the design right and setting appropriate conditions at the outset is important.<sup>108</sup>

3.8.19 The Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE) produced a mapping tool which shows the levels of light pollution and dark skies across Britain. Fenland is ranked as the 81<sup>st</sup> darkest district out of 326 within England.<sup>109</sup>

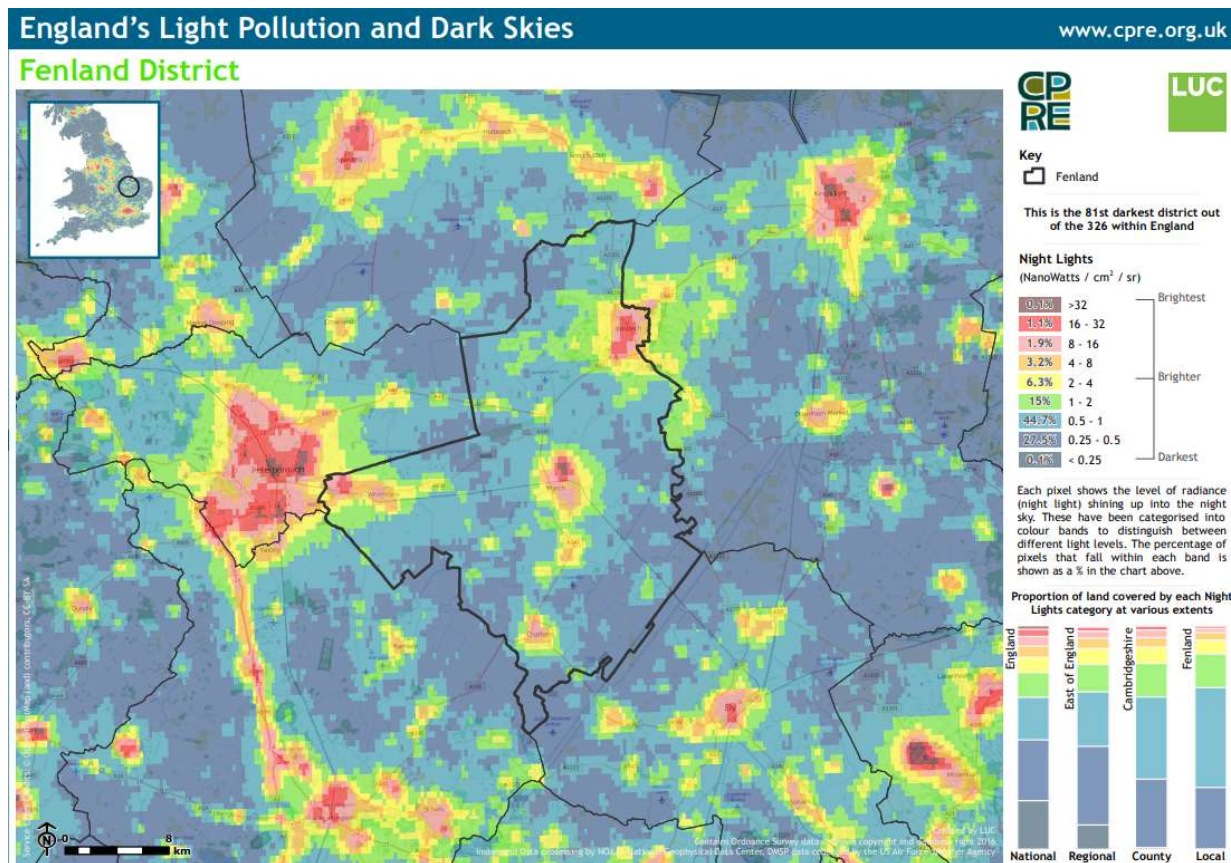
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<sup>107</sup> [What is light pollution, and how can you take action about it? - CPRE](#)

<sup>108</sup> [Light pollution - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

<sup>109</sup> [England's Light Pollution and Dark Skies \(cpre.org.uk\)](#) [Light pollution - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

#### 4 Figure 43: Light pollution and dark skies in Fenland



Source: CPRE

### Waste

- 4.8.1 It is estimated that in 2019, waste arising within the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Minerals and Waste Development Plan area totalled around 3.246 million tonnes of various types of waste including municipal, commercial & industrial (C&I), construction, demolition & excavation (CD&E), hazardous wastes and imported household, industrial and commercial.<sup>110</sup>
- 4.8.2 The County Council provide three domestic recycling centres within Fenland, in March, Whittlesey and Wisbech. Fenland District Council is responsible for domestic waste and recycling collections and commercial waste and recycling collection services to local SMEs.
- 4.8.3 The amount of domestic recycling collected in Fenland is in the top quartile nationally, 18% higher than the national average, with 206.1 kilogrammes per household collected in 2022/23, against a national average of 175.7 kilogrammes.

<sup>110</sup> [Annual Monitoring Report 2019 \(cambridgeshire.gov.uk\)](https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/annual-monitoring-report-2019)

**Figure 44: WRAP Average Weight of Materials Per Household (kgs) in Fenland 2022/23**

	Six Core Materials	Paper	Cardboard	Cans	Glass	Plastic Bottles	Plastic Tubs and Trays
<b>Fenland</b>	206.1kg	43.2kg	58.7kg	12.5kg	65.1kg	14.4kg	12.2kg
<b>UK</b>	175.7kg	33.7kg	47.3kg	11.9kg	56.9kg	14kg	11.8kg

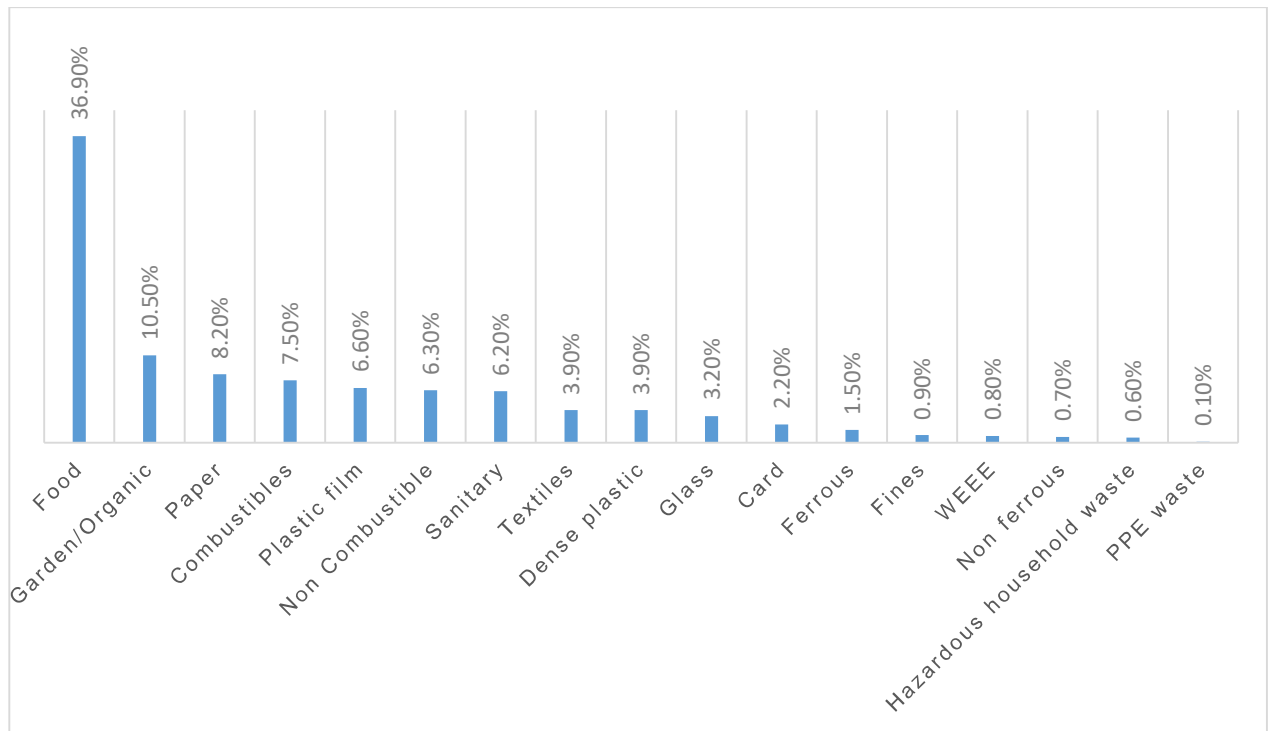
Source: WRAP

4.8.4 The official England waste from households recycling rate for 2022 was 43.4%, down from 44.1% in 2021. In Fenland the amount of garden waste decreased between 2021 and 2022, and the recycling rate for Fenland was less than 40%.<sup>111</sup>

4.8.5 Fenland’s lower than average recycling rate is influenced by the chargeable garden waste service, which does not allow food waste, and results in larger than average residual waste weights per household. Within waste analysis of residual waste, food waste makes up the highest proportion at 36.9% of the waste analysed, along with 30.4% of other waste which was ‘widely recyclable’ in the kerbside domestic recycling and at local household waste recycling centres or bring banks.

4.8.6 There is capacity for Fenland to continue to improve recycling rates and with weekly food waste collections set out in the Environment Act 2021, Fenland should expect to see an improvement from 2026.

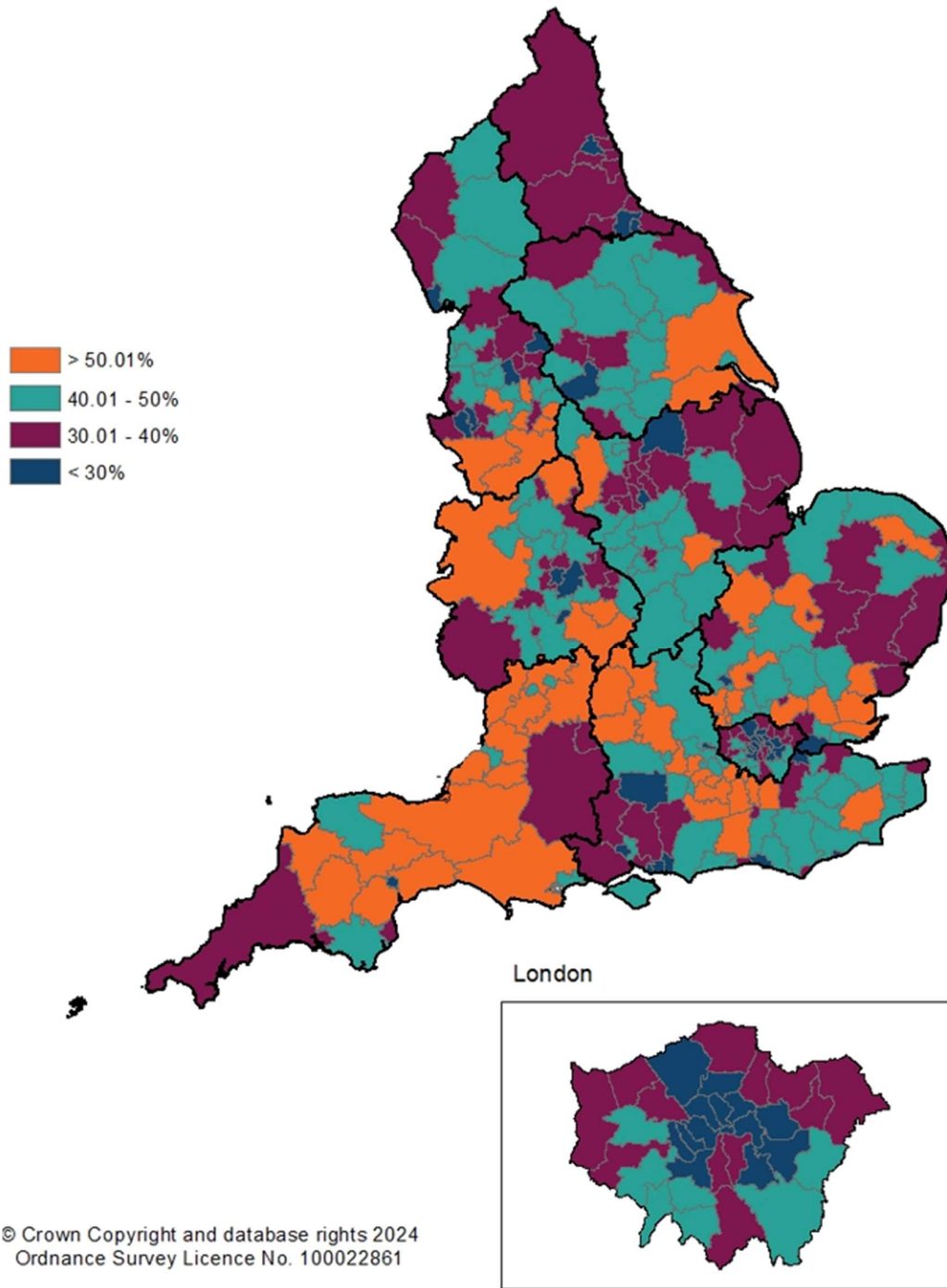
**Figure 45: Composition of kerbside residual waste in Fenland (%)**



Source: WRAP

<sup>111</sup> [Local authority collected waste management - annual results - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/local-authority-collected-waste-management-annual-results)

**Figure 46: Map of household waste recycling rates for individual local authorities in England 2022/23**



Source: DEFRA

4.8.7 The Council works with The Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Waste Partnership (RECAP) to continuously improve waste services, increase recycling and reduce waste, find cost effective and environmentally responsible ways to meet the needs of local

communities. Over the last 20 years, the recycling rate in Cambridgeshire & Peterborough has increased significantly, from 17% in 1999/2000 to over 52% in 2018/19. <sup>112</sup>

## Evidence Gaps

- Numbers directly impacted by air pollution in Fenland leading to poor health or death.
- No noise pollution data.

## Specific Issues and Opportunities

### Key Issues:

- Air pollution has an adverse impact on health and life expectancy.
- Growth puts pressure on water quality of river systems and water bodies.
- Water contamination threatens biodiversity.
- Recycling rates below the regional and national averages.

### Key Opportunities:


- On-going monitoring of air quality informs required policies to deal with pollution and can assist in targeting new development to appropriate areas.
- Structure and culture for recycling and composting already established.
- Scope to reduce construction and demolition waste through a circular economy policy.

## The Likely Situation without the Plan

4.8.8 Without the plan there is potentially an increased risk of people to pollution sources. Potential lack of waste recycling facilities e.g. bin stores would weaken the existing culture of recycling in the district.

## Key Sustainability Objectives

4.8.9 Following a review of the relevant policies relating to the topics in this section, along with an assessment of the current situation, the following key sustainability objectives have been identified:

<b>8: Pollution &amp; Waste</b>		8.1 Reduce emissions of greenhouse gasses and other pollutants (including air, water, soil, noise, odour, vibration and light) 8.2. Reduce the risk of pollution to the environment and health from contaminated land 8.3 Support and enhance opportunities for the reduction, reuse and recycling of waste
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<sup>112</sup> [About Recap](#)



## 3.9 Sustainable Resources

### Introduction

3.9.1 This section covers renewable energy as well as the supply of minerals and the use of materials for building operations. It is therefore structured under the following headings:

- Renewable Energy
- Minerals
- Materials

### Policy Context

#### National Planning Policy Framework:

3.9.2 Part of the NPPF's overarching environmental sustainability objective is to use natural resources prudently and mitigate and adapt to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy.

Paragraph 161 explains that the planning system should support the transition to net zero by 2050 and take full account of all climate impacts including overheating, water scarcity, storm and flood risks and coastal change. It should help to shape places in ways that contribute to radical reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, minimises vulnerability and improves resilience and encourages the re-use of existing resources and supports renewable and low carbon energy and associated infrastructure.

Paragraph 222 sets out that *“it is essential that there is a sufficient supply of minerals to provide the infrastructure, buildings, energy and goods that the country needs. Since minerals are a finite natural resource, and can only be worked where they are found, best use needs to be made of them to secure their long-term conservation.”*

#### Planning Practice Guidance:

3.9.3 The PPG contains specific planning considerations relating to hydropower, active solar technology, solar farms and wind turbines. Many of the considerations relating to these technologies (for example landscape and visual impact assessment) can be applied to other forms of energy generation.<sup>113</sup>

The PPG also contains information relating to the restoration and aftercare of minerals sites including aggregate land banks.<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>113</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/renewable-and-low-carbon-energy>

<sup>114</sup> Paragraph: 040 Reference ID: 27-040-20140306

## Other plans and policies<sup>115</sup>:

- Energy Act 2011
- Planning and Energy Act 2008
- Anaerobic Digestion Strategy and Action Plan (2011)
- Code of practice for the sustainable use of soils on construction sites (2018)
- Overarching National Policy Statement for Energy (EN-1) (2023)
- Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Minerals and Waste Development Plan (2021)
- Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Local Aggregate Assessment 2022

## The Current Situation

### Renewable Energy

3.9.4 Renewable energy can be defined as energy generated from natural resources, such as sunlight, wind, rain, tides and geothermal heat, which is naturally replenished. These do not omit carbon dioxide and by reducing emissions help reduce the impact of climate change.

3.9.5 Fenland has embraced the need for renewable energy in recent years. There are a significant number of large wind turbines within the district or close to the district boundary in other districts. Between 2004 and 2017 just over 124 megawatts wind capacity was installed. The Fenland skyline has become dominated by turbines in some areas and the capacity of further additional large wind turbines in the district may be limited due to visual amenity and landscape character impact grounds. In more recent years the Council has supported the provision of photovoltaic farms with just over 39 megawatts of capacity installed between 2008 and 2023.

3.9.6 Whilst the electricity generated is fed into the national grid, the provision of a local electricity source means that less needs to be imported into the district from elsewhere. The table below indicates the types of renewable energy that have been provided in Fenland since 2001.

3.9.7 The table is only concerned with those schemes that require planning permission and therefore does not include schemes that would be permitted under the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995 or by subsequent amendments which are predominantly smaller scale, domestic facilities.

**Figure 47: Installed renewable energy generation by type in Fenland 2001 - 2023<sup>116</sup>**

Type	Megawatts Installed
Wind	125.954
Biomass	9.7434
Landfill gas	1.0030
Sewage gas	0

<sup>115</sup> For a full list of relevant plans, policies, programmes, strategies and initiatives, see Appendix A

<sup>116</sup> [Microsoft Word - Fenland Monitoring Report 2022-2023 V3](#)

Photovoltaic	39.2487
Hydro-power	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>175.949</b>

Source: Fenland Monitoring Report 2022-23

3.9.8 In 2022, Fenland generated a total of 306,125MWh from renewable energy sources. Onshore wind produced the most energy, producing 214,438MWh. Anaerobic digestion produced the second highest with 57,952MWh and photovoltaics produced 33,735MWh.<sup>117</sup> The table below shows renewable energy generation between 2017-2022 for Fenland.

**Figure 48: Total installed renewable energy generation in Fenland 2017 - 2022**

Year	MWh
2017	300,242
2018	290,790
2019	287,661
2020	325,434
2021	285,169
2022	306,125

Source: Department for Energy Security and Net Zero

### Central heating breakdown

3.9.9 According to the 2021 census, 70% people living in Fenland have gas central heating. This is slightly less than the average for England of 74%. Oil (10.3%) and electric (8%) were the other two main sources of heating used in Fenland. The amount of homes heated by electric in Fenland is similar to the national average of 9% of households across England, however the number of homes in Fenland heated by oil is considerably higher than the average across England (3%). Only 1.1% of households in Fenland have central heating powered by renewable energy, which is similar to the total for England of less than 1%. 1.1% of households have no central heating, again this is similar to 1% across England.<sup>118</sup>

3.9.10 A considerable change will therefore be required if Fenland households are to move away from the use of gas to help combat climate change. These statistics relate to existing homes but the government announced in March 2019 that it will introduce a Future Homes Standard mandating the end of fossil-fuel heating systems in all new houses from 2025.<sup>119</sup> Policies in the new local plan can therefore assist in ensuring that Fenland households move towards more sustainable central heating systems.

<sup>117</sup> [Regional Renewable Statistics - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/regional-renewable-statistics)

<sup>118</sup> [Census 2021: how homes are heated in your area - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](https://www.ons.gov.uk/census/2021/how-homes-are-heated-in-your-area)

<sup>119</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/spring-statement-2019-philip-hammonds-speech>

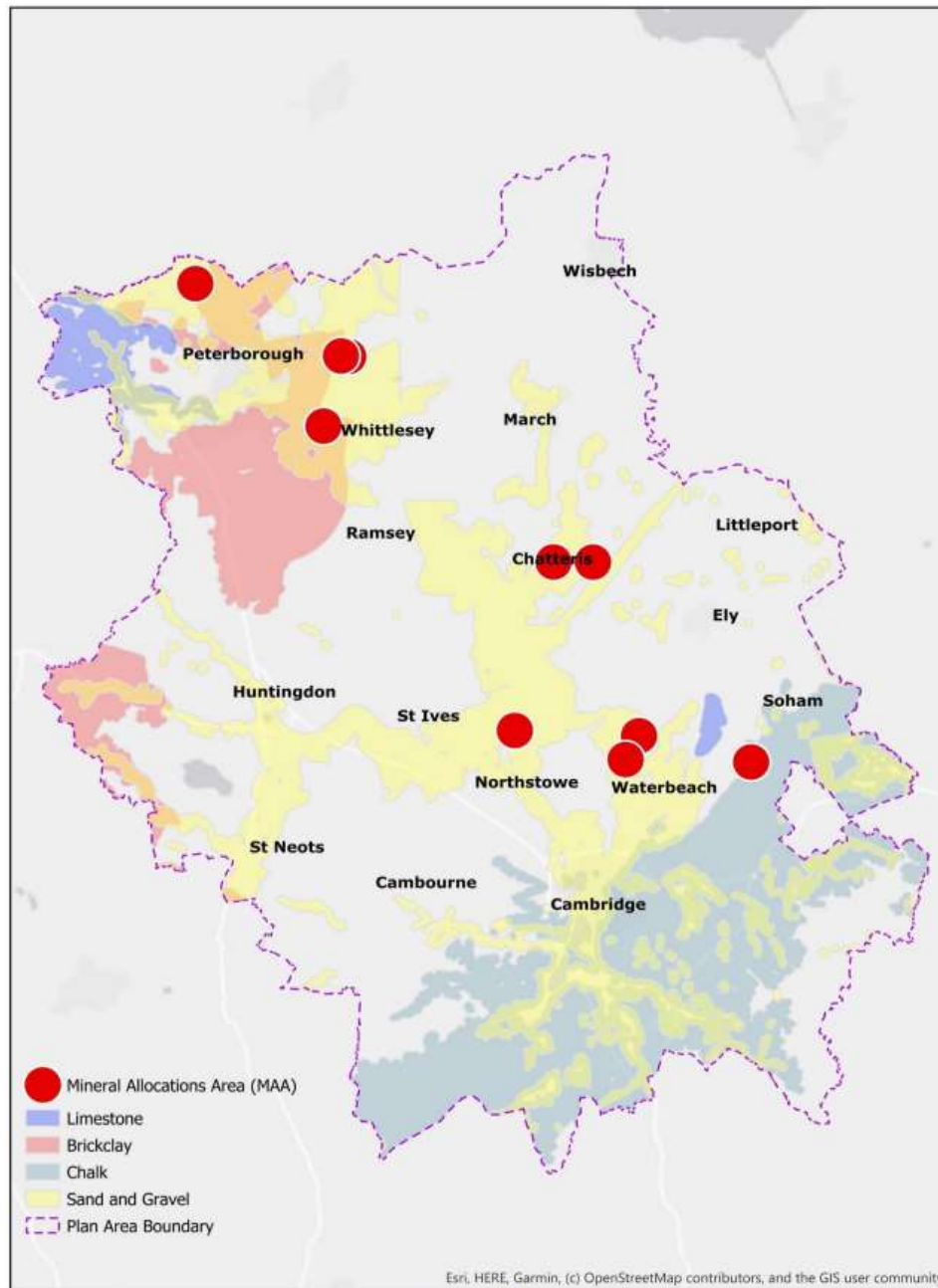
## Minerals

- 3.9.11 Major growth can only be facilitated through obtaining large amounts of building materials. In order to meet regional (and national) demand for minerals, each minerals and waste local authority in the East of England monitors their supply of raw materials over a 10 year rolling average period.
- 3.9.12 There is a range of sustainability issues associated with the minerals extraction and transport activity which are required to meet these targets. These may be considered secondary impacts of the housing and employment growth envisaged in Fenland and elsewhere in the region.
- 3.9.13 There are a number of aggregate reserves in Fenland. Brick and clay are extracted near Whittlesey and sand and gravel to the east near Chatteris and Manea.
- 3.9.14 The Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Minerals and Waste Plan was adopted in July 2021. Figure 47 shows the distribution of minerals in Peterborough and Cambridgeshire<sup>120</sup>.

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<sup>120</sup> [Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Minerals and Waste Local Plan | Cambridgeshire County Council](#)

Figure 49: Distribution of Minerals in Peterborough and Cambridgeshire<sup>121</sup>



Source: Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Minerals and Waste Local Plan

## Materials

3.9.15 As well as referring to primary materials, 'materials' also refer to secondary or manufactured materials. These can be products used in the construction industry, such as glass, blockwork, different fibreboards and upvc doors and windows

<sup>121</sup> [Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Minerals and Waste Local Plan | Cambridgeshire County Council](#)

3.9.16 It is important that, where practical and viable, new developments are constructed using the most sustainable materials possible. This means materials which are of a sustainable form, are sourced as locally as possible in order to reduce transport emissions, will last for the lifetime of the development, can easily be put to re-use at the end of their initial life cycle, can be efficiently recycled.

### **Circular economy**

3.9.17 Primarily concerned with products, the term 'circular economy' is generally focussed on product life cycle analysis. How products can be designed in ways which not only extend their lifetime, through the use of better quality materials and more user serviceable parts, but also how they can be disassembled at the end of one life, so that their components can be re-used in other products.

3.9.18 This is a concept that is being taken forward by neighbouring districts such as Peterborough which aims to not only reduce the amount of waste it produces, but will also reduce the amount of raw materials and products it imports.<sup>122</sup> There are obvious opportunities for Fenland to develop a similar strategy.

### **Evidence Gaps**

- Capacity of Fenland's landscape for more wind turbines.
- Levels and sources of minerals and materials required to meet projected growth.
- Assessment of potential secondary and recycled aggregates.
- Assessment of potential material flows; circular economy.

### **Specific Issues and Opportunities**

#### **Key Issues:**

- High reliance on fossil fuel consumption.
- Cumulative impact of windfarms on the landscape.
- New development is likely to require significant quantities of minerals and other building material to be imported into the area.
- New development is likely to use materials which are not intended to be re-used once they have come to the end of their life
- Financial viability of developments in Fenland.
- Continuation of inefficiencies in material flows within the district.

#### **Key Opportunities:**

- New developments to utilise low or non-carbon energy.
- New developments to be built using truly sustainable materials.
- Embody the idea of the importance of a circular economy within the district.
- Locally sourced and prudently recycled materials can assist viability.

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<sup>122</sup> [Future Peterborough - Opportunity Peterborough](#)

- DEFRA National Waste and Resources Strategy to determine future delivery of waste and recycling services.


### The Likely Situation without the Plan

3.9.19 Without preparing a new Plan, growth and development is anticipated to happen according to the currently adopted Local Plan, i.e. the development of 11,000 homes and the creation of 7,200 jobs.

3.9.20 This growth is likely to result in increased demand for and importation of natural resources for building and other associated activities. It is however not known how much of this can be met locally and/or through secondary or recycled materials. The National Aggregate Monitoring Survey has certain limitations in the monitoring of these materials, and data on secondary and recycled aggregates is not yet available from the Environment Agency.

### Key Sustainability Objectives




3.9.21 Following a review of the relevant policies relating to the topics in this section, along with an assessment of the current situation, the following key sustainability objectives have been identified:

<p><b>9. Sustainable Resources</b></p>		<p>9.1 Reduce energy consumption, increase energy resilience and the use of renewable and low carbon energy sources</p> <p>9.2 Support the use of locally sourced building materials and encourage those that are of a sustainable form and allow for re-use</p>
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## 4. Sustainability Appraisal Objectives Framework

- 4.1 Section 3 of this report looked at the baseline situation for the social, environmental and economic characteristics of Fenland. The full range of topics assessed focussed on nine themes which have emerged from the Council's Business Plan, the sustainability objectives in the NPPF and the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) regulation topics. This is to ensure that the aims and aspirations of the Council are embedded at the heart of the plan making process.
- 4.2 The baseline assessment of the topics covered under each of the nine themes has allowed the relevant issues and opportunities to be drawn out, in order to provide a focus for identifying the appropriate Sustainability Objectives. These objectives, which are also found at the end of each of the nine themes in Section 3, are summarised in the table below:

**Figure 50: Sustainability Appraisal Objectives Framework**

	<b>1. Healthy Communities</b>
1.1 Provide for an ageing population; and redress inequalities related to health, well-being, age, gender, disability, race, faith, location and income	
1.2 Improve the quality, range and accessibility of services and facilities (e.g. health, transport, education, training, leisure opportunities and community activities); and ensure all groups thrive in safe environments	
1.3 Create and enhance multifunctional open space that is accessible, links with a high quality green infrastructure network and improves opportunities for people to access and appreciate wildlife and wild places	
1.4 Encourage healthy choices and opportunities for the consumption of locally produced food by maintaining and enhancing the provision of allotments, community orchards and farmers' shops and markets	
	<b>2. Jobs, Education and Housing</b>
2.1 Help people gain access to a range of employment, education and training opportunities	
2.2 Support investment in people, places, communications and other infrastructure to improve the efficiency, competitiveness, vitality and adaptability of the local economy	
2.3 Help provide decent and affordable homes that meet the various needs of all in appropriate locations	
	<b>3. Transport</b>
3.1 Reduce the reliance on private motor vehicles and encourage more sustainable	

transport modes such as walking, cycling and public transport and contribute to the safety of all highway users.

3.2 Seek to ensure that all new developments can be accessed by a variety of transport modes and provide permeability



#### **4. Heritage, Place Making and Landscape**

4.1 Conserve and where appropriate, enhance heritage assets, their setting and the wider historic environment

4.2 Create places, spaces and buildings that are attractive and well designed, contribute to a high quality public realm and maintain and enhance diversity and local distinctiveness of townscape character

4.3 Retain the distinctive character of Fenland's landscape



#### **5. Resilience to Climate Change and Flood Risk**

5.1 Limit or reduce vulnerability to the effects of climate change

5.2 Minimise and wherever possible remove the vulnerability of people, places and property to the risk of flooding from all sources



#### **6. Land Use and Wildlife**

6.1 Minimise the irreversible loss of undeveloped land, particularly high grade agricultural land

6.2 Utilise brownfield sites for re-development in appropriate circumstances

6.3 Minimise and avoid where possible impacts to biodiversity and geodiversity, both within and beyond designated sites of international, national or local significance, and on protected species

6.4 Achieve net gains in biodiversity and create and enhance an ecological network that is resilient to the effects of climate change



#### **7. Water Resources**


7.1 Minimise water consumption and encourage re-use

7.2 Avoid deterioration and seek opportunities to enhance water quality in rivers and other water bodies



#### **8. Pollution and Waste**

8.1 Reduce emissions of greenhouse gasses and other pollutants (including air, water, soil, noise, odour, vibration and light)

8.2. Reduce the risk of pollution to the environment and health from contaminated land
8.3 Support and enhance opportunities for the reduction, reuse and recycling of waste
 <b>9. Sustainable Resources</b>
9.1 Reduce energy consumption and increase energy resilience and the use of renewable and low carbon energy sources
9.2 Support the use of locally sourced building materials and encourage those that are of a sustainable form and allow for re-use

- 4.3 In order to fully integrate the aims and aspirations of the Council into the new Local Plan, it is intended that the sustainability objectives identified in the Sustainability Appraisal Objectives Framework will also form the objectives of the Local Plan.
- 4.4 As the Local Plan is being progressed, each emerging Policy will be assessed against the sustainability objectives identified in the table below, using the assessment criteria (positive and / or negative effect). Each policy will be scored using the Sustainability Appraisal Scoring System shown in Figure 4 in Section 2.

**Figure 51: Sustainability Appraisal Framework for the Fenland Local Plan**

 **1. Healthy Communities**

#	SA OBJECTIVE	POSITIVE EFFECT	NEGATIVE EFFECT	INDICATORS (Include but are not limited to)
1.1	Provide for an ageing population; and redress inequalities related to health, well-being, age, gender, disability, race, faith, location and income	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Results in increased access to and provision of health services and facilities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Results in reduced access to and provision of health services and facilities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Living environment deprivation</li> <li>Proximity and travel time to healthcare and leisure facilities</li> </ul>
1.2	Improve the quality, range and accessibility of services and facilities (e.g. health, transport, education, training, leisure opportunities and community activities); and ensure all groups thrive in safe environments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Results in the provision of increased access to services and facilities</li> <li>Results in a reduction in the levels of crime, anti-social behaviour and the fear of crime</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Results in reduced access to and provision of services and facilities</li> <li>Results in increases in the levels of crime, anti-social behaviour or the fear of crime</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provision of and access to services and facilities</li> <li>Number of visitors to recreation and leisure facilities</li> <li>Indices of multiple deprivation</li> <li>Rates of crime</li> </ul>
1.3	Create and enhance multifunctional open space that is accessible, links with a high quality green infrastructure network and improves	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Results in increased access to greenspace and leisure activities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Results in a reduction in access to greenspace and leisure facilities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provision and accessibility of open green space and green infrastructure.</li> </ul>

	opportunities for people to access and appreciate wildlife and wild places			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hectares of accessible open space per 1,000 population</li> <li>• Percentage of the population having access to a natural greenspace within 400m of their home</li> </ul>
1.4	Encourage healthy choices and opportunities for the consumption of locally produced food by maintaining and enhancing the provision of allotments, community orchards and farmers' shops and markets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Results in improved health for residents</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Results in worse health for residents</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of allotment sites / plots</li> <li>• Number of farmer market outlets</li> <li>• Number of community orchards</li> </ul>



## 2. Jobs, Education and Housing

#	SA OBJECTIVE	POSITIVE EFFECT	NEGATIVE EFFECT	INDICATORS (Include but are not limited to)
2.1	Help people gain access to a range of employment, education and training opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Results in increased employment in areas with employment deprivation</li> <li>• Results in the increased provision of additional and/or better</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Results in a loss of employment in deprived areas</li> <li>• Results in a reduced provision and range of jobs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unemployment rates</li> <li>• Attainment levels</li> <li>• Number of people in education</li> <li>• Income deprivation</li> </ul>

		<p>paid jobs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Results in increased education and training opportunities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Results in a reduction of education and training opportunities (more impact in poor performing areas)</li> </ul>	<p>Disposable income</p>
2.2	<p>Support investment in people, places, communications and other infrastructure to improve the efficiency, competitiveness, vitality and adaptability of the local economy</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Results in a diverse range of business sectors</li> <li>• Results in an increase in higher value jobs</li> <li>• Results in support for existing and new industries</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Results in a reduction of the range of business sectors</li> <li>• Results in a decrease in higher value jobs</li> <li>• Results in obstruction to existing and new industries</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of business start-ups</li> <li>• Total area of new employment floorspace</li> <li>• Number of vacant business units</li> <li>• Demand for employment land</li> <li>• Transport infrastructure capacity</li> </ul>
2.3	<p>Help provide decent and affordable homes that meet the various needs of all in appropriate locations</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Results in an increase in the provision of affordable housing</li> <li>• Results in a decrease in the relative cost of housing</li> <li>• Results in provision of a suitable mix of housing to meet the</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does not result in an increase in the provision of affordable housing</li> <li>• Results in an increase in the relative cost of housing</li> <li>• Results in an inadequate provision of</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Percentage of dwellings delivered as affordable housing</li> <li>• Number of people on the housing register</li> <li>• House price to earnings ratios</li> <li>• Proportion of and size,</li> </ul>

		needs of the current and future populations, including those with specialist housing needs.	housing to meet the needs of the current and future populations, including those with specialist housing needs.	<p>type, tenure and quality of housing built</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of extra care homes, and accessible and adaptable homes to meet the needs of the population</li> <li>• Provision of pitches and plots for Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople</li> </ul>
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### 3. Transport

#	SA OBJECTIVE	POSITIVE EFFECT	NEGATIVE EFFECT	INDICATORS (Include but are not limited to)
3.1	Reduce the reliance on private motor vehicles and encourage more sustainable transport modes such as walking, cycling and public transport and contribute to the safety of all highway users.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Results in increased access to and provision/use of sustainable transport modes, including public transport, walking and cycling.</li> <li>• Results in a reduced need to travel</li> <li>• Results in a reduction of community</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Results in reduced access to and provision/use of sustainable transport modes, including public transport, walking and cycling.</li> <li>• Results in an increase need to travel</li> <li>• Results in community severance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Proximity and connectivity of walking and cycling links</li> <li>• Distance and accessibility to public transport options</li> <li>• Mode of transport, distance and travel times to work</li> <li>• Mode of transport,</li> </ul>

		<p>severance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Results in a reduction of the necessary distance travelled (particularly by car)</li> <li>• Results in new services and facilities in sustainable locations where appropriate</li> <li>• Results in increased capacity of the passenger rail network</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Results in an increase in the distance required to travel</li> <li>• Results in a loss of services and facilities increasing the need to travel</li> <li>• Results in no net increase in the capacity of the passenger rail network</li> </ul>	<p>distance and travel times to key services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Passenger rail capacity</li> </ul>
3.2	Seek to ensure that all new developments can be accessed by a variety of transport modes and provide permeability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Results in an increased number of people walking / cycling</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Results in a decrease in number of people walking / cycling</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New development sites offering a real choice of travel modes</li> </ul>



#### 4. Heritage, Place Making and Landscape

#	SA OBJECTIVE	POSITIVE EFFECT	NEGATIVE EFFECT	INDICATORS (Include but are not limited to)
4.1	Conserve and where appropriate, enhance heritage assets, their setting and the wider historic environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Results in the creation of high-quality built environments</li> <li>• Results in the protection and/or</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Results in harm to the quality of built environments</li> <li>• Results in harm to/loss of designated or non-</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Change in condition of heritage assets</li> <li>• Heritage assets on Historic England's Heritage at Risk</li> </ul>

		enhancement of designated and non-designated heritage assets	designated heritage assets	Register Public satisfaction with quality of built environment
4.2	Create places, spaces and buildings that are attractive and well designed, contribute to a high quality public realm and maintain and enhance diversity and local distinctiveness of townscape character	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Results in an increase in the daytime and night time population of the urban centres</li> <li>• Results in an increase in the provision of services (including community facilities), jobs and housing within the city</li> <li>• Results in a good quality urban environment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Results in no net increase in the daytime and night time populations of the urban centres</li> <li>• Results in a loss of services, jobs and housing within the city</li> <li>• Results in a poor quality urban environment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Daytime population</li> <li>• Visitor numbers</li> <li>• Town centre health check</li> <li>• Crime and anti-social behaviour rates</li> </ul>
4.3	Retain the distinctive character of Fenland's landscape	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Results in the protection and/or enhancement of landscape character</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Results in harm to the landscape character</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Change in landscape character</li> <li>• Identified local landscape characteristics and sensitivities within the published Landscape Assessment for the district and for the main towns</li> </ul>



## 5. Resilience to Climate Change and Flood Risk

#	SA OBJECTIVE	POSITIVE EFFECT	NEGATIVE EFFECT	INDICATORS (Include but are not limited to)
5.1	Limit or reduce vulnerability to the effects of climate change			
5.2	Minimise and wherever possible remove the vulnerability of people, places and property to the risk of flooding from all sources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Results in a reduction in the risk of flooding</li> <li>Results in development in flood zone 1 making a significant contribution to flood risk reduction</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Results in an increase in the risk of flooding</li> <li>Results in an increase in the amount of development in flood zone 3</li> <li>Results in development in flood zone 1 making no contribution to flood risk reduction</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Amount of development approved in each flood risk category</li> <li>Number of planning applications granted permission contrary to Environment Agency advice</li> <li>Number of homes and businesses at risk of flooding</li> </ul>



## Land Use and Wildlife

#	SA OBJECTIVE	POSITIVE EFFECT	NEGATIVE EFFECT	INDICATORS (Include but are not limited to)
6.1	Minimise the irreversible loss of undeveloped land, particularly high grade agricultural land	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Results in the preservation of best and most versatile land</li> </ul>	Results in harm or loss to best and most versatile land (grade 1 or 2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Protection of agricultural land</li> <li>Planning permissions</li> </ul>

				<p>granted on green field land</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• House completion data</li> <li>• Employment completion data</li> </ul>
6.2	Utilise brownfield sites for re-development in appropriate circumstances	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourages development on brownfield land with minimal development on green field sites</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourages development on green field land</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Protection of agricultural land</li> <li>• Planning permissions granted on brownfield land</li> <li>• House completion data</li> <li>• Employment completion data</li> </ul>
6.3	Minimise and avoid where possible impacts to biodiversity and geodiversity, both within and beyond designated sites of international, national or local significance, and on protected species	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Results in the protection and/or enhancement of habitats and species</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Results in harm to habitats and/or species</li> <li>• Results in harm to designated sites</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Change in integrity and or condition of habitats / designated sites</li> <li>• Quality and extent of priority habitats and numbers affected</li> <li>• Change in landscape character</li> <li>• Number of</li> </ul>

				developments permitted contrary to Natural England advice
6.4	Achieve net gains in biodiversity and create and enhance an ecological network that is resilient to the effects of climate change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Results in the protection and/or enhancement of habitats and species</li> <li>• Results in the protection and/or enhancement of landscape character</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Results in harm to habitats and/or species</li> <li>• Results in harm to the landscape character</li> <li>• Results in harm to designated sites</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Change in integrity and or condition of habitats / designated sites</li> <li>• Quality and extent of priority habitats and numbers affected</li> <li>• Number of developments permitted contrary to Natural England advice</li> <li>• Uplift in biodiversity units provided in new developments measured using the DEFRA BNG Metric</li> <li>• Hectares of biodiversity habitat delivered through strategic site allocations</li> </ul>



## 7. Water Resources

#	SA OBJECTIVE	POSITIVE EFFECT	NEGATIVE EFFECT	INDICATORS (Include but are not limited to)
7.1	Minimise water consumption and encourage re-use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Results in a reduction in water consumption</li><li>• Re-use of water increases</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Results in an increase in water consumption</li><li>• No re-use of water</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Water consumption levels</li><li>• Water re-use levels</li></ul>
7.2	Avoid deterioration and seek opportunities to enhance water quality in rivers and other water bodies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Results in a reduction in the risk of combined sewage overflows</li><li>• Results in a reduction of the sources of water pollution</li><li>• Results in an improvement in the water quality of rivers, other water bodies and/or groundwater supplies</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Results in an increased risk of combined sewage overflows</li><li>• Results in an increase in the sources of water pollution</li><li>• Results in a degradation in the quality of water in rivers, other water bodies and/or groundwater supplies</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Risk of combined sewage overflows</li><li>• Change in water quality of water bodies</li><li>• Number of developments given planning permission contrary to EA advice relating to river water quality or the protection of groundwater.</li></ul>



## 8. Pollution and Waste

#	SA OBJECTIVE	POSITIVE EFFECT	NEGATIVE EFFECT	INDICATORS (Include but are not limited to)
8.1	Reduce emissions of greenhouse gasses and other pollutants (including air, water, soil, noise, odour, vibration and light)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Results in a reduction of the sources of pollution which affect human health, such as noise, light and air pollution</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Results in an increase in the sources of pollution which affect human health, such as noise, light and air pollution</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Changes in levels of noise, light and odour pollution affecting sensitive receptors</li> <li>Number of illnesses and deaths caused through pollution</li> <li>Carbon dioxide / methane emissions</li> </ul>
8.2	Reduce the risk of pollution to the environment and health from contaminated land	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Results in fewer people at risk</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Results in more people at risk</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Planning applications assessed</li> </ul>
8.3	Support and enhance opportunities for the reduction, reuse and recycling of waste	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Results in a reduction in waste arisings</li> <li>Results in an increase in waste recovery / re-use and / or recycling (including energy from waste)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Results in an increase waste arisings</li> <li>Results in an increase in waste for landfill</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Waste arisings</li> <li>Percentage of the district's waste that is recycled or composted</li> <li>Waste recovered including energy produced in MWh</li> </ul>



## 9. Sustainable Resources

#	SA OBJECTIVE	POSITIVE EFFECT	NEGATIVE EFFECT	INDICATORS (Include but are not limited to)
9.1	Reduce energy consumption and increase energy resilience and the use of renewable and low carbon energy sources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Promotes an increase in renewable energy generation</li><li>• Results in improvements in the energy efficiency of new and existing developments</li><li>• Results in a reduction of unmitigated carbon dioxide / methane emissions</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Results in a further reliance on non-renewable and high carbon energy sources</li><li>• Results in no change or a reduction in the energy efficiency of developments</li><li>• Results in no change or an increase in the levels of unmitigated carbon dioxide / methane emissions</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Percentage of energy generated from renewable sources</li><li>• kWh renewable energy usage</li><li>• Carbon emissions from domestic, industrial and commercial sources in the district</li><li>• Percentage of new developments meeting BREEAM 'excellent' standard</li><li>• Percentage of households in fuel poverty</li><li>• Percentage of households reliant on fossil fuels</li><li>• Planning permissions granted for renewable</li></ul>

				energy
9.2	Support the use of locally sourced building materials and encourage those that are of a sustainable form and allow for re-use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Results in a reduction in current consumption of non-renewable resources</li> <li>• Results in an increase in the use of materials which are designed for re-use</li> <li>• Results in an increase in sustainable construction principles</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Results in an increase in the consumption of non-renewable resources</li> <li>• Results in an increase in the use of non-recyclable and/or non-reusable materials</li> <li>• Results in no net increase in sustainable construction principles</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Amount of raw materials imported / used</li> <li>• Amount of secondary / recycled materials used</li> </ul>

4.5 As the Local Plan is being progressed, each emerging Policy will be assessed against the sustainability objectives identified above, using the assessment criteria (positive and / or negative effect). Each policy will be scored using the Sustainability Appraisal Scoring System at Figure 4 in Section 2.

## 5. Next Steps

- 5.1 This Scoping Report for the Sustainability Appraisal of the new Fenland Local Plan has been undertaken according to current National Planning Practice Guidance and is the outcome of the first stage (**Stage A**) of the SA process.
- 5.2 The review of relevant plans and programmes should be used to ensure that the Local Plan accords with the sustainability objectives and requirements of the relevant national, regional and local policy guidance, plans, and strategies. The SA Framework of objectives, positive and negative effects and indicators has been drafted, and is the tool against which the options, policies and proposals of the Local Plan will be appraised. Baseline information has been collected which will also be used as a basis for the appraisal of policies and proposals against which to judge their effects on the Local Plan. It should also be noted that more data and information will likely become available as the SA progresses. This will need to be incorporated into the SA process and the final SA Report.
- 5.3 The stages of SA are set out in Figure 3 in Section 1 of this report. Following consultation on this draft SA Scoping Report, the Council will undertake the next stages (Stages B and C, and part of Stage D) of the SA for the Fenland Local Plan. This principally involves the assessment of the effects of the emerging Local Plan, using the SA Framework, and preparation of the SA Report.
- 5.4 The details for the preparation, format and content of the Local Plan are still being developed. As a result, it is not yet possible to be prescriptive about how the SA process will feed into, and help refine the Local Plan. However, the following sections outline the key considerations for how it is envisaged the tasks will be undertaken at this stage. The exact format of outputs from these tasks will be determined at each stage in the process.

### **Stage B: Developing and refining alternatives and assessing effects**

#### **1. Test the Local Plan objectives against the SA Framework**

- 5.5 It is intended that the objectives developed through this SA scoping report process, i.e. the Sustainability Appraisal Framework, will be the same as the objectives of the Local Plan. Traditionally, sustainability objectives are developed for the Local Plan and these are then tested against those of the SA. By ensuring that the Plan and SA are prepared with a single set of objectives, this should ensure that there is no conflict between the objectives of the Plan and the sustainability principles formulated through the SA process. If the Plan is intended to meet all of the objectives identified through the SA process, then the two sets of objectives should naturally be the same.

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## **2. Develop the Local Plan options including reasonable alternatives**

5.6 By testing each emerging policy in the Local Plan against the sustainability objectives, (using the defined decision making criteria in the SA framework), this should ensure that all policies are compatible with the Plan objectives and by extension meet the sustainability principles identified of the SA. Fenland is currently considering options for the development of the Local Plan. It is likely that the main types of option (or 'alternatives') that will be considered will be as follows:

- Alternative overall spatial strategies for development
- Alternative policy approaches (including criteria based policies)
- Alternative site allocations/areas of growth

5.7 The SEA Directive requires only “reasonable alternatives” to be taken into account, and so not every possible alternative will be considered. In some instances, other policy considerations (e.g. those contained within Neighbourhood Plans) may pre-determine which policy approach needs to be adopted, effectively ruling out some options. In any event, the number of options will need to be kept manageable and focused on those aspects where real choices have to be made.

## **3. Evaluate the likely effects of the Local Plan and alternatives**

5.8 The significant effects of each of the options considered will be compared with the likely evolution of the Fenland district without the Local Plan. Policy options for the Local Plan, including the Preferred Options, will need to be appraised as they are developed. The SA objectives along with the positive and negative effects identified in the SA Framework will be used to assess the likely significant effects of the emerging policy options. These effects can include secondary, cumulative, synergistic, short, medium, long-term, permanent, temporary, positive and negative effects. Any judgements made through the assessment of policy options will be explained including any assumptions, in order to make the SA process as transparent as possible. The application of the SA Framework should also assist in the transparency of the SA.

## **4. Consider ways of mitigating adverse effects and maximising potential effects**

5.9 Conclusions on the sustainability strengths and weaknesses of each option will be recorded in the SA Report, together with recommendations for improving the positive effects and reducing (mitigating) potential negative effects. Reasons for eliminating other options will also be recorded. In many instances however, it is likely that it will not be possible to quantify the effects of the Plan, especially given that the Local Plan will be only one influence on what actually happens on the ground. It is intended that sufficient flexibility is built into the Plan in order to respond to changing circumstances (such as economic upturns/downturns).

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## **5. Propose measures to monitor the significant effects of implementing the Local Plan**

- 5.10 The SA Framework lists a series of indicators which will help to develop a monitoring framework with which to monitor the effects of the adopted Plan. Most if not all of the anticipated effects are currently monitored through some existing mechanism, however through consultation on the SA and the emerging Local Plan policies it may become apparent that some additional monitoring mechanisms may be required, if for example potential effects are identified which are not currently monitored.

### **Stage C: Preparing the Sustainability Appraisal Report**

- 5.11 The Final SA Report when written will show in detail the SA process which was undertaken, along with the results of the appraisal of the policy options of the Local Plan. It will include an overall assessment of the sustainability effects of the Local Plan policies on each of the SA/Plan objectives. The final report structure is subject to change following consultation on the SA and the emerging Local Plan.

### **Stage D: Seek representations on the sustainability appraisal report from consultation bodies and the public**

- 5.12 The final SA Report for the Local Plan will be consulted on for a statutory minimum six-week period alongside the Local Plan as part of the proposed submission public consultation stage. Consultation will need to comply with the Council's Statement of Community Involvement and the requirements of the SEA Directive. Should any significant changes be made to the Local Plan as a result of public consultation, additional appraisal work may need to be carried out and the SA Reports may need to be amended to reflect the results.

### **Stage E: Post adoption reporting and monitoring**

#### **1. Prepare and publish post-adoption statement**

- 5.13 Regulation 16 of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 states that as soon as is reasonably practicable after adoption of the Local Plan, the Council must publish an adoption statement. This statement will include the title of the Plan, the adoption date, the address where copies of the document and accompanying SA can be viewed and the times they can be viewed. The Council will also inform the statutory consultees and those persons who made representations at pre-submission stage or who asked to be informed of the adoption.

#### **2. Monitor significant effects of implementing the Local Plan**

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- 5.14 The final SA Report will set out recommendations for monitoring the sustainability effects of the Local Plan, including a set of proposed indicators. Measures for monitoring will be linked to the SA process, that is, the objectives and indicators used in assessing the effects of the Plan, features of the baseline, the likely significant effects and the mitigation measures proposed to off-set adverse significant effects. The monitoring results will be reported in the Council's Authority Monitoring Report, published yearly.

### **3. Respond to adverse effects**

- 5.15 Regulation 17 of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 requires councils to monitor the significant environmental effects of the Plan, in order that any unforeseen adverse effects can be identified at an early stage and appropriate mitigation measures can be implemented.

## Appendices

### Appendix A: List of relevant Policies, Plans, Programmes, Strategies and Initiatives (PPPSIs)

<b>International Policy</b>
Bern Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats (1979)
Bonn Convention on Conservation of Migratory Species (1979)
Convention on Biological Diversity – Kunming-Montreal Global biodiversity framework (UN Biodiversity Conference – COP15, 2022)
IPCC AR6 Synthesis Report: Climate Change 2023
Kyoto Protocol to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (1992)
Ramsar Convention on Wetlands of international importance, especially waterfowl habitat (1971)
UNESCO Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and National Heritage (1972)
UN Climate Change Conference (COP27) in Sharm el-Sheikh (2022)
UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) (1992)
Paris Agreement under the UNFCCC (2016)
2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2015)

<b>National Policy</b>
A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment (2018)
Air Quality Standards Regulations (2010)
Anaerobic Digestion Strategy and Action Plan (2011)
Building Regulations Update 2022 (uplift in standards for Part L, Part F and new Part O)
Circular 06/05: Biodiversity & Geological Conservation – Statutory Obligations and their Impact within the Planning System
Climate Change Committee Sixth Carbon Budget (2020)
Climate Change: The UK Programme (2006)

<b>National Policy</b>
Code of practice for the sustainable use of soils on construction sites (2018)
DEFRA: Our integrated plan for delivering clean and plentiful water (2023)
DEFRA Rights of Way Circular (1/09) (2011)
DEFRA Clean Air Strategy (2019)
DEFRA Air Quality Plan for Nitrogen Dioxide (NO <sub>2</sub> ) in UK (2017)
DEFRA Future Water: The Government's water strategy for England (2011)
DEFRA Water resources planning: how water companies ensure a secure supply (2017)
DEFRA Biodiversity 2020: A strategy for England's wildlife and ecosystem services (2011)
DEFRA Environmental Improvement Plan (2023)
DEFRA Waste Management Plan for England (2021)
DEFRA National Policy Statement for Waste Water (2012)
DfT Outcome Delivery Plan 2021 to 2022
DfT Active Travel England - The Second Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy (2022)
DfT Gear Change - A bold vision for Cycling and Walking (2020)
DfT De-carbonising Transport: A better, greener Britain (2021)
DfT Walking and Cycling Statistics, England (2021)
DfT Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy (2017)
Education Act 1996
Education and Skills Act 2008
Energy Act 2011
Environment Act 2021
Environment Agency's Approach for Groundwater Protection (2018)
Environment Agency – Meeting our future water needs: a national framework for water resources (2020)

<b>National Policy</b>
Equalities Act 2010
Fields in Trust Guidance for Outdoor Sport and Play (2020)
Future Homes and Building Standards (due to come into effect in 2025)
Growth and Infrastructure Act 2013
Health and Social Care Act 2012
HM Government Transitioning to zero emission cars and vans - 2035 delivery plan
How Britain's bus services have drastically declined by Friends of the Earth (November 2023)
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## **Cambridgeshire and Peterborough**

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Fenland Outline Water Cycle Study (June 2022)
Fenland Level 1 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (June 2022)
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<b>Fenland District Council</b>
Future Fens – Flood Risk Management Baseline Report (December 2020)
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March Area Transport Study (Various reports and assessments 2018-2021)
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