



# Community Safety Evidence Report

February 2013

# 'Community Safety' Evidence Report

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## **1.0 Introduction and Policy Context**

### **Introduction**

- 1.1 Fenland District Council is producing the Fenland Core Strategy, which sets out the framework for how development will be considered across the District to 2031.
- 1.2 This Evidence Report (which is one of a collection) provides background information and justification for policy CS17, which deals with the Community Safety.

### **National Policy**

- 1.3 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was published in March 2012.
- 1.4 Section 7 of the NPPF concerns “requiring good design” and considers the prevention of crime and disorder as part of the design process. NPPF considers good design as a key aspect of sustainable development, is indivisible from good planning, and should contribute positively to making places better for people. The following points are particularly relevant:
  - Paragraph 58 – Planning policies and decision should aim to ensure that development: create safe and accessible environments where crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine quality of life and community cohesion (one of the bullet points in this paragraph).
  - Paragraph 69 – Promoting Healthy Communities, the bullet point included in paragraph 58 is repeated in this paragraph.
- 1.5 The above NPPF guidance has been taken into account in preparing the Core Strategy as a whole, and policy CS17 in particular.

## **2. Fenland Context**

- 2.1 Increasing Community Safety and reducing crime and the fear of crime are key to improving the quality of life for those who live and visit Fenland. Crime, fear of crime and anti-social behaviour within the urban and rural environments all have negative impacts upon community well being and quality of life. As well as the direct costs of crime experienced by its victims, the fear of crime contributes to social exclusion, particularly for vulnerable groups such as women, older people, children and ethnic minorities. Crime also threatens the success and vitality of town centres and employment areas by acting as a brake on economic growth and prosperity. As crime and disorder levels (and patterns) can change during the lifetime of a development, it is important that potential risks are considered as part of the design regardless of where a development is proposed.
- 2.2 Fenland Community Safety Partnership (FCSP) is working together to reduce crime, anti-social behaviour and the fear of crime. To do this CSP works with a number of partner organisations including Cambridgeshire County Council, Cambridgeshire Constabulary, Fire and Rescue service, NHS and the Probation Service. Overall crime levels in Fenland are relatively low compared to many other areas of the country. However, regular performance reviews are carried out to identify the current crime problems which must be tackled and reveal what the community thinks about crime in the Fenland area.

## **3. Core Strategy Policy**

- 3.1 In the Draft version of the Core Strategy (published for consultation in July 2011) and in the Further Consultation Draft (published for consultation in July 2012) there was no separate policy on the community safety. Safe environment and measures to deter crime had been included in policy CS16 as a criterion to be considered during the design process. However, comments received on the Core Strategy consultation identified the need to include policy which requires development to achieve design solutions which include crime prevention measures and measures to reduce fear of crime and antisocial behaviour.

- 3.2 Policies in the Core Strategy deal with environmental factors and how people will socialise in the built environment. It is not concerned with regulating society – and it cannot be expected to eradicate crime and disorder completely. However, a place where potential crime and disorder risks have been addressed as part of the design process should not only be safer, but can give its users a sense of well being and control over their surroundings, enhancing the quality of life of their communities. Careful design is therefore not a solution to crime and disorder in itself, but plays an important complementary role to initiatives that address the economic and social causes of crime.
- 3.3 Aside from the NPPF, the evidence to support the policy comprises of comments received on the Core Strategy policies and the desire of Fenland District Council to include a separate policy on community safety.

#### **4 Alternative Reasonable Options**

- 4.1 Option 1: No separate policy on the community safety: This was the option that the Council pursued in earlier versions of the Core Strategy (as explained in paragraph 3.1 above). However, with the publication of the NPPF in 2012 and representations received in response to the consultation and the desire of the Council to fulfil its duty under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, it was felt a separate policy on community safety would be necessary.
- 4.3 Option 2: A detailed policy to explain the circumstances in which planning permission would and would not be granted for development that would affect any aspect of community safety. This was rejected as it would be too detailed for the Core Strategy. Should a need for a detailed guidance on community safety arise in the future, this could be provided in the form of a SPD. Policy CS17 would provide the basis for the SPD.

#### **5. Conclusion**

- 5.1 This Evidence Report demonstrates that Fenland District Council's Core Strategy policy for the Community Safety is an entirely reasonable and appropriate response to the consultation and the need of needs of Fenland residents. Alternative options have been considered, but rejected.
- 5.2 Overall, the Council considers its Community Safety policy to be sound.