

CS3 Strategic Vision and Objectives for Block Fen / Langwood Fen, Earith / Mepal

The vision for Block Fen / Langwood Fen is:

- to undertake development in a planned and sustainable way, ensuring there is no adverse impact on the integrity of the Ouse Washes. This will take into account the need to address climate change by incorporating into the proposals for this area such measures as recycling of waste to encourage the use secondary materials, water storage and transfer to address nature conservation, sustainable flood risk management, and water supply issues across the wider area. It will also include the creation of new habitat which will enhance the Ouse Washes and will assist in conserving for the long term high quality peat soils; as well as active traffic management designed to influence lorry and other traffic movements to use appropriate routes
- a continuation in the role of the area as a major producer of sand and gravel, to 2026 and beyond, the sand and gravel, being used largely to supply the construction industry in the delivery of planned growth i.e. houses, employment, schools, roads, and other supporting infrastructure in the Cambridge, and wider Cambridgeshire area. The focus for this development would be the Block Fen / Langwood Fen area, with operations at Earith and Somersham closing when reserves under current consents are worked.
- the development of Block Fen and Langwood Fen as a strategic resource for the recycling of construction waste and for the disposal of inert waste that cannot be recycled, the latter largely comprising soils and sub soils arising from the planned developments in Cambridgeshire
- an area with its close links to the neighbouring internationally important Ouse Washes being positively strengthened over the Plan period and beyond. Due to inappropriate water levels and water quality issues the Ouse Washes is currently in 'unfavourable' condition. The restoration of mineral void to high quality wet grassland adjacent to the Washes will provide enhancement habitat for the nationally and internationally important breeding and wintering bird populations currently using the Washes. Potentially this will be of particular value for breeding waders whose habitat might be flooded in the spring, and for some species of wintering duck who find water levels too deep and flooding too extensive, for feeding purposes. This will be achieved by the disposal of inert waste in containment engineered cells with soils replaced to bring land back to original levels and the sustainable use of peat soils to create lowland wet grassland. The new habitat will require active management in the long term, and this will be secured through planning obligations with the land being placed under the control of a suitably experienced and responsible conservation body. The Block Fen / Langwood Fen area will continue to be an important buffer area for the Ouse Washes, with the maintenance of a landscape which has few trees and hedges which could harbour predators

- an area which will make a growing contribution to the management of water in the Fenland area and which has a key role to play in the delivery of the Environment Agency's Cranbrook / Counter Drain Strategy, which seeks to secure sustainable flood risk management in this area. This will be achieved through the creation of a number of water storage bodies following mineral extraction. These water storage bodies will be used to store flood water which would normally be pumped into the Ouse Washes. The water will be stored and used to supply the Middle Level and Sutton and Mepal Internal Drainage Board area with irrigation water, providing a significant water resource to farmers in a catchment area where there is a shortfall of water for summer irrigation of crops
- an area which will become an important recreational resource for this and a wider area, with the new water bodies contributing to formal recreation provision, with informal recreation opportunities associated with the new lowland wet grassland habitat, and supported by a local visitor centre. Coupled with the following objective, this will increase access to the countryside, tourism and supplement the local economy
- an area with improved local navigation, specifically in relation to the Forty Foot where the provision of a clay wall will result in reduced water seepage out of the drain. Potential for restoration of enhanced navigation in this area will contribute to wider objectives such as those in the Fenland Waterways Link strategy

The objectives for Block Fen / Langwood Fen are:

- to enable the supply of 1.4 million tonnes of sand and gravel per annum from Block Fen / Langwood Fen from 2010 onwards to 2026 and beyond.
- to establish at least 3 long term construction waste recycling facilities, capable of recycling up to 50%, increasing up to 70%, of construction waste by 2026.
- to enable inert waste disposal of around 0.5 million cubic metres of inert waste from 2011 onwards to 2026 and beyond.
- to ensure there is no adverse impact to the Ouse Washes through the extraction, landfill and restoration of the Block Fen / Langwood Fen area, through well planned, designed and controlled working and restoration.
- the creation of around 480 hectares of lowland wet grassland providing enhancement habitat to complement the Ouse Washes, using inert waste and peat soils to create the wet grassland.
- to provide for the long term management of the enhancement habitat adjacent to the Ouse Washes.
- the creation of water storage / supply bodies with capacity of 10 million m³.

- to provide for the long term management of the water resource created.
- to provide for new and enhanced recreational opportunities including a local visitor centre
- to secure, through the creation of lowland wet grassland and the disposal of inert waste, the 'sealing' with clay of the southern boundary of the Forty Foot, enabling the restoration of navigation
- to secure the sustainable use of soils as a resource for the future
- to address traffic management in the area i.e. movements associated with the use of land for mineral extraction and waste management, and long term uses such as recreation

Block Fen / Langwood Fen Master Plan Supplementary Planning Document (July 2011)

The vision for Block Fen / Langwood Fen area is:

- to undertake development in a planned and sustainable way, ensuring there is no adverse impact on the integrity of the Ouse Washes, taking into account the need to address climate change by incorporating into the proposals for this area such measures as recycling of waste to encourage the use secondary materials, water storage and transfer to address nature conservation, sustainable flood risk management, and water supply issues across the wider area, including the creation of new habitat which will enhance the Ouse Washes and will assist in conserving for the long term high quality peat soils, and active traffic management designed to influence lorry and other traffic movements to use appropriate routes
- a continuation in the role of the area as a major producer of sand and gravel, to 2026 and beyond. The sand and gravel being used largely to supply the construction industry in the delivery of planned growth i.e. houses, employment, schools, roads, and other supporting infrastructure in the Cambridge, and wider Cambridgeshire area. The focus for this development would be the Block Fen / Langwood Fen area, with operations at Earith and Somersham closing when current consents are worked
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- to provide for the long term management of the enhancement habitat adjacent to the Ouse Washes
- the creation of water storage / supply bodies with capacity of 10 million m³
- to set out a mechanism for the long term management of the water resource created
- to provide for new and enhanced recreational opportunities, including a local visitor centre
- to secure, through the creation of lowland wet grassland and the disposal of inert waste, the 'sealing' with clay of the southern boundary of the Forty Foot, enabling the restoration of navigation
- to secure the sustainable use of soils as a resource for the future
- to address traffic management in the area i.e. movements associated with the use of land for mineral extraction and waste management, and long term uses such as recreation