

Fenland Local Plan: Draft Local Plan Consultation

To:	Environment and Green Investment Committee
Meeting Date:	1 December 2022
From:	Steve Cox; Executive Director – Place and Sustainability
Electoral division(s):	Chatteris, March North and Waldersey, March South and Rural, Roman Bank and Peckover, Whittlesey North, Whittlesey South, Wisbech East, Wisbech West
Key decision:	No
Forward Plan ref:	N/A
Outcome:	The Committee will consider and endorse the County Council's consultation response to the draft Fenland Local Plan
Recommendation:	<p>The Committee is requested to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a) Endorse the consultation response to the draft Fenland Local Plan as set out in Appendix 1; andb) Delegate to the Executive Director (Place and Sustainability) in consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair of the Committee the authority to:<ul style="list-style-type: none">1. Make minor changes to the response: and2. Work with Fenland District Council to resolve the issues raised at paragraphs 2.4 and 2.5 of this report and where necessary to withdraw, maintain or submit further objections to the Pre-Submission version of the Local Plan.

Officer contact:

Name: Colum Fitzsimons
Post: Development and Policy Manager
Email: colum.fitzsimons@cambridgeshire.gov.uk
Tel: 07833 237194

Member contacts:

Names: Councillor Dupre and Councillor Gay
Post: Chair/Vice-Chair
Email: Lorna.Dupre@cambridgeshire.gov.uk / Nick.Gay@cambridgeshire.gov.uk
Tel:

1. Background

- 1.1 Fenland District Council is preparing a new Local Plan for the district, this is an important document as it will determine what the district will look like in the future. The new Local Plan will replace the adopted Fenland Local Plan (May 2014). It will not replace the recently adopted Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Minerals and Waste Plan (July 2021).
- 1.2 Local Plan preparation follows a process set out in national legislation and guidance and is independently tested at a public examination to check it is 'sound' – this means that it is realistic, deliverable and based on good evidence – before it can be formally adopted.
- 1.3 The draft version of the Local Plan sets out the emerging strategies and policies for growth and regeneration to 2040. The Foreword to the Local Plan says it will “focus on commercial deliverability, market demand, and meeting growth targets as well as supporting and encouraging economic growth. The new Local Plan will also place far greater emphasis on directing growth to areas where there is market demand, to where people want to live, and to where businesses want to invest, considering the unique and historic pattern of development and settlements in the district. Growth should benefit all communities, down to the smallest level, rather than seeking to focus growth only in the largest settlements. Our strategy should recognise the ways that our district functions and should provide consumer choice.”
- 1.4 Fenland District Council has undertaken a six-week consultation with the deadline for making responses to this consultation on 19th October 2022. Consequently, internal consultations have been conducted with other County Council service areas and a technical officer response has been submitted to the District Council in advance of this Committee. The District Council is aware these comments are subject to the Committee's agreement.
- 1.5 The consultation documents can be viewed on the on the Fenland District Council (FDC) website at the following link: [Emerging Local Plan - Fenland District Council](#).
- 1.6 The District Council will now consider the responses made by all parties during this consultation before publishing the Pre-submission draft for further consultation prior to submitting it to the Planning Inspectorate for public examination.

2. Main Issues

- 2.1 The key issues for the County Council to consider are:
 - What are the implications for County Council services and infrastructure from the scale and location of proposed development? Are there policies in place to help mitigate any adverse impacts and support the delivery of services?
 - Is the strategy and the proposed policies consistent with the corporate objectives of the County Council?
- 2.2 The internal consultation undertaken within the County Council has generated responses from Strategic Waste, Energy and Climate Change, Libraries, Minerals and Waste Planning Authority, Education, Public Health, Connecting Cambridgeshire, Biodiversity and

Greenspaces. These responses have been included in Appendix 1, which has formed the basis for the Council's response to FDC.

- 2.3 Generally, the responses expressed support for the Local Plan with several comments being supportive and complementary to the County Council's corporate priorities. In particular, support was given to policies relating to the natural environment and biodiversity, renewable and low carbon energy, flood risk, health and wellbeing and meeting housing needs. These expressions of support often came with further comments with suggesting how the policy could be strengthened and the District Council should be encouraged to take these comments into account when considering the next version of the Local Plan.
- 2.4 There are several instances, however, where the County Council has objected to the Plan, either on the grounds that it considers it necessary to amend a policy or in some circumstances an entirely new policy should be included in the Plan. The table below shows the policies which are subject to an objection and summarises the key issue for the County Council.

CCC Team	Local Plan Policy	Reason for Objection
Connecting Cambridgeshire	LP19 Strategic Infrastructure	Request inclusion of policy or SPD to require the delivery of quality digital infrastructure as part of new developments
Education	LP39 Residential Site Allocations for March	The deletion of a housing allocation in the adopted local plan will prejudice opportunity to secure additional land to expand Neale Wade Academy
Education	L48 and LP50 Residential Site Allocations in Doddington and Wimblington	The Local Plan does not provide any certainty that a site and funding will be available to deliver the additional primary school places necessary to meet the demands created by new development in both villages.
Education	LP51 Residential Site Allocations in Coates	The policy does not provide any certainty that a site and funding will be available to deliver the replacement school needed because of new development in the village
Local Lead Flood Authority	LP32 Part B Water Quality and Efficiency	The policy lacks sufficient detail regarding the management of surface water in developments
Minerals and Waste	LP15 Employment	Concern relating to the potential for introducing inappropriate uses into employment areas that may conflict with minerals and waste related uses.

CCC Team	Local Plan Policy	Reason for Objection
Minerals and Waste	LP37 Site allocations for non-residential development in Wisbech	Conflict with Policy 16 of the Minerals and Waste Local Plan
Minerals and Waste	LP40 Site allocations for non-residential development in March	Conflict with Policy 16 of the Minerals and Waste Local Plan
Public Health	Chapter 10 Health and Wellbeing	The Local Plan needs to include a policy with a specific requirement for Health Impact Assessments to be prepared in support of development proposals

2.5 Where an objection has been made, Officers will continue to work with the District Council towards resolving these issues before the Plan progresses to the next stage. The District Council intends to publish the Pre-submission Local Plan in January 2023 which will be the last opportunity to comment before the Plan is submitted for Public Examination. It may not be possible to bring a further paper to the Committee before the Plan is submitted and therefore the recommendation requests the Committee grants delegated authority to resolve these issues and if necessary to withdraw, maintain or submit further objections to the Plan at the Pre-submission stage.

2.6 These are technical officer comments on behalf of the statutory functions and services of the Council. A separate response has been sent to FDC on behalf of the Council as a landowner following consideration of the representations by the Corporate Leadership Team.

3. Alignment with corporate priorities

3.1 Environment and Sustainability

The Local Plan contains policies to promote and regulate development for new renewable and low carbon energy infrastructure (LP6), carbon capture and carbon sequestration (LP26), biodiversity (LP25), and green infrastructure (LP29) which are generally consistent with the Council's priority tackling climate change.

3.2 Health and Care

Health and wellbeing (LP5) are considered a high priority for the Local Plan with the promoting healthy lifestyles and the reduction of health inequalities running through the Plan. Whilst this is broadly in conformity with the Council's priorities an objection has been made seeking a separate policy on Health Impact Assessments. The Plan also has policy setting targets for providing homes for older and vulnerable people and for accessibility standards in new homes although the County Council is suggesting that these targets could be more challenging to help meet the demand for these types of homes given the demographic of Fenland

3.3 Places and Communities

Policy LP17 supports the development and retention of a range cultural and community facilities, including libraries, across the District. Policy LP31 seeks to increase the provision and accessibility to opens space, sports, and leisure facilities.

3.4 Children and Young People

Paragraph 2.4 above and Appendix 1 raises objections to ensure that the Plan properly addresses the need for additional education facilities as a consequence of major new development.

3.5 Transport

New development (LP20) requires new development to provide safe and well-connected pedestrian and cycle routes, promote road safety and ensuring that development is accessible to services and facilities.

4. Significant Implications

4.1 Resource Implications

There are no significant implications within this category.

4.2 Procurement/Contractual/Council Contract Procedure Rules Implications

There are no significant implications within this category.

4.3 Statutory, Legal and Risk Implications

There are no significant implications within this category.

4.4 Equality and Diversity Implications

There are no significant implications within this category. An equality impact assessment has been undertaken and has identified no equality impact.

4.5 Engagement and Communications Implications

There are no significant implications within this category.

4.6 Localism and Local Member Involvement

There are no significant implications within this category. Members have been made aware of the emerging Local Plan and a briefing has been held for local members and Members of this Committee.

4.7 Public Health Implications

There are no significant implications within this category. An objection has been made in respect to the need to include a specific policy on Health Impact Assessments (see paragraph 2.4)

4.8 Environment and Climate Change Implications on Priority Areas:

4.8.1 Implication 1: Energy efficient, low carbon buildings.

Positive/neutral/negative Status: Positive

Explanation: The Council's response includes comments seeking to strengthen policies relating to energy efficiency and low carbon buildings and if adopted by the District Council will have a positive impact

4.8.2 Implication 2: Low carbon transport.

Positive/neutral/negative Status: Neutral

Explanation: New developments will be required to provide pedestrian and cycle links to the wider settlement which will help promote low carbon transport. However, it should be noted that most new land for employment is located in Wisbech which may result in increased commuting from the other market towns.

4.8.3 Implication 3: Green spaces, peatland, afforestation, habitats, and land management.

Positive/neutral/negative Status: Positive

Explanation: The Council's response includes comments seeking to strengthen policies relating to green spaces, peat, afforestation, habitats, and land management and if adopted by the District Council will have a positive impact.

4.8.4 Implication 4: Waste Management and Tackling Plastic Pollution.

Positive/neutral/negative Status: N/A

Explanation: N/A

4.8.5 Implication 5: Water use, availability, and management:

Positive/neutral/negative Status: Negative

Explanation: Policy LP32 makes insufficient provision for the management of surface water within new development.

4.8.6 Implication 6: Air Pollution.

Positive/neutral/negative Status: Positive

Explanation: Requirements for air quality assessments and low emission strategies will help to manage air quality.

4.8.7 Implication 7: Resilience of our services and infrastructure and supporting vulnerable people to cope with climate change.

Positive/neutral/negative Status: N/A

Explanation: N/A

Have the resource implications been cleared by Finance? Yes

Name of Financial Officer: Sarah Heywood

Have the procurement/contractual/ Council Contract Procedure Rules implications been cleared by the Head of Procurement? Yes

Name of Officer: Clare Ellis

Has the impact on statutory, legal and risk implications been cleared by the Council's Monitoring Officer or LGSS Law? Yes

Name of Legal Officer: Fiona McMillan

Have the equality and diversity implications been cleared by your EqlA Super User? Yes

Name of Officer: Elsa Evans

Have any engagement and communication implications been cleared by Communications? Yes

Name of Officer: Sarah Silk

Have any localism and Local Member involvement issues been cleared by your Service Contact? Yes

Name of Officer: Emma Fitch

Have any Public Health implications been cleared by Public Health? Yes

Name of Officer: Iain Green

If a Key decision, have any Environment and Climate Change implications been cleared by the Climate Change Officer?

Name of Officer: Not applicable

5. Source documents guidance

5.1 Source documents

Fenland Local Plan documents

5.2 Location

[Emerging Local Plan - Fenland District Council](#)

Appendix 1: Cambridgeshire County Council Response to the Draft Fenland Local Plan Consultation

Biodiversity and Greenspaces

Policy LP24 - Natural Environment

Support

We support the inclusion of LP24. We suggest that LP24(e) be expanded to include local Biodiversity Action Plan habitats / species (e.g., drainage ditches)

We welcome the requirement for surveys for protected species / habitats within Part B. We recommend this be expanded to also include irreplaceable habitats and priority species / habitats (e.g., reword as protected and priority species and/ habitats and irreplaceable habitats). This would help to address previous issues caused by developers providing inadequate evidence to demonstrate impact to priority habitats (e.g., wood-pasture and parkland).

There have been a few mineral / waste developments that have not considered the importance of the fens for key species. We therefore suggest that surveys are required for drainage ditches which are likely to support notable species/ assemblages, such as aquatic plants and invertebrate.

The policy map identifies all statutory designated wildlife sites and Local Sites, as well as Goose and Swan Functional Land. However, the Local Plan does not identify key wildlife corridors or stepping-stones or consider connectivity of the designated sites and other notable habitats. A nature network showing these features should be produced.

Comment

Work commissioned by the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Biodiversity Partnership (Rouquette, J., 2019) has produce initial Habitat Opportunity Maps showing existing habitats and opportunities for grassland, woodland and wetland in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, including Fenland. These findings provide a good basis upon which to develop a strategic nature network for Fenland to help meet the requirements of NPPF paragraph 179, although additional ground-truthing and incorporation of local information would be required. Similar work has been completed within Cambridge and East Cambridgeshire (currently in draft) to create local Nature Networks, which identify priority areas for nature conservation within the local authorities.

Chapter 20 – Natural Environment

Comment

Goose and Swan Functional Land - We suggest reference to the Habitats Regulations 2019 is explained in the glossary, or alternatively, the full reference to the legislation is provided in paragraph 20.5.

Habitats – irreplaceable, priority and local BAP habitats - Paragraph 20.15 discusses the drainage network as important habitat and does not really fit within the “Goose & Swan Functional Land Impact Risk Zone (IRZ)” heading. We suggest a new heading of “irreplaceable and priority habitats.”

Natural England is currently writing guidance that will provide a definition and a definitive list of irreplaceable habitats in England. The Local Plan should provide considerations of these habitats within Fenland, such as lowland fen or veteran trees (if present).

Consideration should also be given to priority habitats present within the area. Details surveys of priority habitats should be included as part of scheme design. In addition, the presence of priority habitats should be considered as part of Allocated Site assessments and mapping of ecological networks. This should include priority habitats identified within National Priority Habitat Inventories and mapping projects by the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Environmental Records Centre (e.g., traditional orchards and woodlands).

We agree that the extensive waterways and ditch network are key wildlife corridors within the landscape. It should also be recognised that drainage ditches are identified as a local biodiversity action plan habitat, with many watercourses supporting notable and aquatic plant and invertebrate species and assemblages. It is important that adequate survey work is completed to determine impact on these important habitats / species. Furthermore, it would be beneficial to recognise the importance of the area for fen habitat and habitats supporting fen specialists, including priority and notable species, as identified within the Fenland Biodiversity Audit 2012.

Species - The subsection “protected species” discusses priority species, rather than protected species. We suggest this section be expanded to include “protected, priority and notable species” with additional text relating to protected species found within Fenland (e.g., water vole, otter, bats) and referencing locally important species listed in the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Additional Species of Interest.

Policy LP25 – Biodiversity Net Gain

Support

We welcome the inclusion of a policy for Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG), which provides an opportunity to meet local needs for biodiversity and influence how biodiversity enhancement is delivered across the authority.

Comment

We are concerned that policy LP25 only seeks to deliver the mandatory 10% BNG minimum. While this is a national target identified in the Environment Act it does not reflect that Cambridgeshire is one of the most nature depleted counties in the country with only 13% of land identified as supporting semi-natural grassland, woodland, and water habitats (Roquette 2019). In fact, this figure is potentially lower for Fenland given the extent of habitat depletion and woodland cover across the district.

Local authority ecologists and the Wildlife Trust in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough consider that it is likely to require much higher value than 10% BNG to deliver meaningful improvements to biodiversity within the County. It is suggested that 20% BNG would be a more appropriate target. Local Plan Policy LP25 provides an excellent opportunity to seek 20% BNG to help meet local needs for biodiversity. This would also be in line with other local plans across the country, which seek locally determined BNG values within local policy / SPDs.

It is therefore recommended that further work is undertaken to demonstrate whether the current 10% BNG is sufficient to halt the decline of biodiversity within Fenland and deliver FDC’s commitment to supporting Natural Cambridgeshire’s vision to double nature. As part of this work, it should be considered how wider green infrastructure, such as increasing accessible greenspace, could contribute to help contribute to BNG.

Policy LP25 also provides an opportunity to shape how BNG is delivered locally. Consideration needs to be given as to the importance of BNG delivering strategically important nature conservation projects as part of development. It is suggested that a similar approach is taken to the interim BNG statement that have been produced by Greater Cambridgeshire Partnership or

Peterborough City Council (unless further information from Defra on deliver of BNG is provided). In addition, it would be beneficial to produce a nature network for Fenland (as discussed above) to help identify strategic sites for BNG.

Policy LP29 – Green Infrastructure

Support

We welcome the inclusion of Local Policy LP29's Part D: Designated Nature Sites – Mitigation of Recreational Impacts of Development which states that "development may be required to provide open space" where there is a potential for the development to have a significant adverse effect on the integrity of a wildlife site. However, the Local Plan does not demonstrate how this is likely to be adequate to address adverse impacts, nor does it address existing pressure on wildlife sites.

Comment

Local Plan Policy LP29 looks at green infrastructure for new development on a site-by-site basis. However, it does not address the current lack of greenspace provision within Fenland, which falls short of Natural England's Accessible Natural Greenspace Standard (ANGSt). There are also only two Local Nature Reserves which provides very limited access to nature for local residents.

Policy LP29 should be expanded to provide a strategic approach to green infrastructure. This should address existing lack of green infrastructure. Providing better access to greenspace would help improve existing residents' health and well-being, while also helping to relieve recreational pressure from wildlife sites. It would also help maximise ecosystem service as well as climate change adaption, when compared with delivering site-by-site green infrastructure for new development.

It should look at existing green infrastructure provision within the local authority and identify how and where key 'buffer,' stepping-stones, or complimentary sites within the nature network for Fenland. As well as providing additional Local Nature Reserves to provide access to nature that is away from sensitive wildlife sites.

The Local Plan should identify key strategic green infrastructure sites, including allocation of land for green infrastructure, such as new Local Nature Reserves and future county parks. For example, the expansion of green infrastructure around March, including a new country park and Great Reed Way, to provide additional access to nature by residents as well as helping to manage existing recreational pressure on Rings End Local Nature Reserve and nearby sites which are already very popular.

Connecting Cambridgeshire

Policy LP19 – Strategic Infrastructure

Object

The draft Local Plan does not include a specific policy or reference to Digital Infrastructure. "Supporting high quality communications" forms section 10 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) which states:

"Advanced, high quality and reliable communications infrastructure is essential for economic growth and social well-being. Planning policies and decisions should support the expansion of electronic communications networks, including next generation mobile technology (such as 5G) and full fibre broadband connections. Policies should set out how high-quality digital infrastructure, providing access to services from a range of providers, is expected to be delivered and upgraded over time; and should prioritise full fibre connections to existing and new developments."

Connecting Cambridgeshire considers that unless Digital Connectivity is covered in the Local Plan or a Supplementary Planning Document it will be difficult to enforce any requirement for high quality communications in new developments. As a society we have become increasingly reliant on digital connectivity and as such having digital infrastructure included within planning policy is an important step in ensuring that residents and businesses have access to this important infrastructure.

Education

Policy LP19 – Strategic Infrastructure

Comment

The County Council is concerned that future funding secured through planning obligations is unlikely to be sufficient to fund the delivery of the additional school places necessary to meet the demands from new housing development. The District Council's approach outlined in the Local Plan Viability Assessment allows for a disproportionate amount of surplus development value to go towards affordable housing with insufficient allocated for essential infrastructure, currently £2,000 per dwelling. It is therefore necessary to strike a more equitable balance when apportioning development surplus between funding through S106 agreements and affordable housing.

The County Council's own financial position, in keeping with many local authorities, means that it is seeking to restrict its borrowing and fund the creation of additional school places through developer contributions or capital grant. If there is a shortfall in developer contributions the Council may have to consider other solutions such as temporary accommodation and transporting children to alternative schools, an unpopular and costly measure in a rural district.

Policy LP37 – Residential Site Allocations for Wisbech

Comment

The County Council has been working with the Department for Education on establishing a new secondary school in Wisbech. The lower allocation of housing in the town, notably the deletion of the East Wisbech Strategic Allocation is a concern with the reduced pupil yield arising from new development potentially impacting on the delivery and long-term viability of the new secondary school.

Policy LP39 – Residential Site Allocations for March

Object

The scale of housing proposed in March and the surrounding villages will require additional secondary school places. There will also be demand for an additional 2 form of entry primary school in addition to the school being provided as part of the March West development. Neale Wade Community College is on a restricted site and cannot be expanded further. The adopted Local Plan (2014) included provision for the expansion of Neale Wade as part of the adjacent Southeast March strategic allocation. The deletion of the strategic allocation removes the opportunity to deliver the expansion of Neale Wade and creates uncertainty around the provision of primary and secondary school places needed within the town.

Policy LP48 and LP50 – Residential Site Allocations for Doddington and Wimblington

Object

Both local primary schools at Doddington and Wimblington are on restricted sites and have no scope for expansion. There is currently limited space capacity at Thomas Eaton Primary School (Wimblington), however this is not sufficient to accommodate all the pupils expected to be generated from the proposed housing allocations in both villages. The Council has been negotiating additional land to expand Lionel Walden CE Primary School as part of a planning obligation associated with a proposed development at land east of Bevills Close Doddington (F/YR21/1072/FDL). If this is successful, then there would be some scope to expand the school.

Since the Council's response was submitted, the planning application referred to above has been refused by the Fenland District Council Planning Committee. This has removed the opportunity for the County Council to secure the land necessary to expand the Lionel Walden Primary School. Without the ability to expand school places in either village it will not be possible mitigate the scale of growth proposed in the Local Plan.

The Plan should demonstrate how this necessary infrastructure will be delivered.

Policy LP51 – Residential Site Allocations in Coates

Object

The existing primary school at Coates is on a restricted site which has no potential for expansion beyond its current capacity of 210 places. The additional developments in the village will require a further 210 primary places. Whilst the Council welcomes that the allocated sites in Coates are required to “Facilitate the re-location of Coates Primary School”, the policy does not provide any certainty regarding the provision of a suitable alternative site (2.4ha is required) for the replacement school. Furthermore, the Council has concerns about the viability of this strategy as the policy does not indicate how both the replacement and additional school places will be funded.

Climate Change and Energy

Policy LP6 – Renewable and Low Carbon Energy Infrastructure

Support

Part D of Policy has a presumption in favour of ground-based photovoltaics ‘including commercial large-scale proposals’, unless there is clear and demonstrable significant harm, or it is on BMV land unless it's peat and the scheme would protect or enhance it, or the site is allocated for another purpose. This is positive and supported by the County Council, as it strikes a balance between the need for renewables and other priorities within the countryside.

Comment

The section under Part A of Policy LP6 addressing additional policy considerations for wind turbine proposals should be amended so that a larger area is allocated as potentially acceptable for medium to large wind turbine developments, preferably by allocating the whole of Fenland, and thereby allowing any future proposal to be considered on its own merits.

Policy LP7 – Design

Comment

Solar PV should be a requirement and at the very least, designing new dwellings to be adaptable and “retrofit ready” such as providing physical space to install heat pumps.

Policy LP7 Part H should be amended to introduce and strengthen the requirement for new homes and buildings to include low carbon heating systems (wherever technically feasible) and rooftop solar PV.

New buildings should not be connected to the gas network or have fossil fuel heating of any type unless it can be demonstrated that heat pumps are not technically feasible for that site.

Policy LP26 – Carbon Sinks and Carbon Sequestration

Support

Policy LP26 protecting existing carbon sinks such as peat soils is welcome. However, the wording should be amended as it is currently unclear what is intended by “enhancing and protecting” the carbon sink of peatland.

It is disappointing to see that under Policy LP26, as long as the land is allocated for development then harming the peat/carbon stores is permitted (albeit marginally caveated with the need to minimise the harm as far as possible).

Measuring the carbon flux, particularly for peat, is still not straightforward and there remains some debate over methodologies. Consequently, there is potentially a lot of leeway in this policy, and it does not go far enough in dissuading development of peatland sites.

Policy LP4 – Securing Fenlands Future

Comment

Policy LP4 should be strengthened in line with para 8.8 and 8.9, to explicitly refer to the requirement stated at paragraph 152 of the NPPF, to contribute towards “radical reductions” in greenhouse gas emissions (rather than just ‘minimisation’), to ensure that development and use of land contributes towards the legally binding requirement of emissions in the UK to become net zero by 2050.

Chapter 11 – Renewable Energy

Comment

Whilst it is positive that all of Fenland will be considered as potentially suitable for small to medium wind turbines, it is disappointing that further areas are not ‘allocated’ as suitable for medium to large scale wind energy development. Given that any wind turbine proposal would still need to obtain planning permission and meet various other requirements (as stated in paragraphs 11.19 and 11.20), not ‘allocating’ the whole of Fenland as ‘potentially’ suitable for medium to large scale wind generation, puts unnecessary barriers to further development of this low carbon, low-cost technology.

Paragraph 11.2 implies that the UK being a net importer of natural gas is the sole reason for the UK being vulnerable to global price volatility. There are a number of reasons for this vulnerability which the UK would still be subject to, whether or not it was as net importer of natural gas. Other drivers of vulnerability to price volatility include the UK’s high dependence on natural gas for heating, the coupling of gas and electricity prices in the market mechanisms, and the ability of

private gas/oil extractors and energy generators to sell on the global markets irrespective of whether the gas originated from the UK.

Libraries

Policy LP17 - Culture, Leisure, Tourism and Community Facilities

Comment

The Library service recommends that wording of Policy LP17 is amended to include reference to the co-location of library and other customer facing public services, where appropriate, as both a cost effective and benefit for residents. This would enable leisure services delivered alongside health and wellbeing. Increasingly libraries providing services on behalf of both public health and NHS and reflect this trend.

It is further recommended that the section covering Loss of Culture, Leisure, Tourism and Community Facilities is also amended. The Library service requires the flexibility to rationalize and move facilities as part of new development in established communities if the development draws away natural use/footfall away from an existing site.

An additional bullet is suggested:

- Proposals include provision that is more accessible and better suits needs of the wider community.

Lead Local Flood Authority

Policy LP32 Part A – Flood Risk

Support

It is encouraging to see this policy includes all sources of flood risk rather than just river (fluvial) as outlined in the most recent iteration of the Planning Practice Guidance (PPG).

However, in respect of the requirement for a site-specific flood risk assessment, it is recommended that the wording is strengthened to match the wording of the national PPG. It should be specified that flood risk assessments will be required for minor developments meeting the criteria. The cumulative impact of minor development can often have a greater impact on flood risk than single major developments.

It is positive to see the requirement for SuDS on major developments but ideally the policy would go further in requiring SuDS for all developments where feasible.

Policy LP32 Part B – Water Quality and Efficiency

Object

We are very surprised not to see a specific policy or sub-section of policy around surface water management on new developments, particularly given the prevalence of surface water flooding in Fenland. Part B is the closest to this but is not specific in its title and it needs to be strengthened quite significantly to match the NPPF, PPG and Flood and Water SPD.

The policy does not include any requirements around limiting surface water discharge rates and volumes to pre-development rates, nor does it include requirements for surface water attenuation.

The drainage hierarchy laid out in the policy does not include rainwater harvesting/reuse as the first element but instead skips straight to infiltration into the ground. This should be updated,

particularly given the likely increase in frequency of drought situations where water supply on a wider level could become a problem.

We would like to see the policy explicitly state that surface water must be treated and cleansed in line with national standards before being discharged from the site. This will reduce the risk of developers discharging unclean or polluted water into local watercourse systems.

There should be consideration of other organisations involved in surface water management in Fenland such as Internal Drainage Boards (IDBs). IDBs have specific bylaws associated with their systems and are integral to the overall management of flood risk in the area.

Riparian ownership and existing drainage infrastructure needs to be considered as part of this policy. Fenland is characterised by the presence of many ditches and watercourses that are essential to flood risk management and these must be preserved through development. Development should not create additional riparian owners through building adjacent to watercourses and thus sub-dividing the ownership. This can have significant implications on watercourse management and subsequently flood risk.

Overall this policy requires less from developments than previous policies contained within Fenland's local plans which is disappointing.

Additionally, where reference is made to 'Cambridgeshire Flood and Water SPD' I note there is reference to the current 2016 revision. In the event this is updated (which is planned to happen over the next 12-24 months) this should include a statement such as "or any subsequent revision" to cover future versions of this document under the Local Plan.

Minerals and Waste Planning Authority

Policies Map

Support

The Minerals and Waste Planning Authority supports the depiction of the MWLPA sites and consultation areas on the Fenland Policies Map.

The Minerals and Waste Planning Authority supports the depiction of the MWLPA sites and consultation areas on the Fenland Policies Map.

Policy LP1 – Settlement Hierarchy

Support

The Minerals and Waste Planning Authority welcomes reference to Minerals and Waste Local Plan (2021) (MWLP) in Part B – Settlement Boundaries.

Policy LP15 – Employment

Object

The Policy refers to Use Class E(g). Use Class E(g) is not a defined use class within the legislation; Use Class E encompasses all the uses listed within the Use Class E and changing between the uses within Use Class E is not considered to be development. Unless restricted by condition, there will be no restrictions on introducing potentially inappropriate uses, such as nurseries and doctors' surgeries into industrial areas permitted with Use Class E uses. Careful consideration should be given to identifying industrial areas suitable only for use classes B2/B8 and those suitable for B2/B8/E; or identifying by policy a mechanism so that only the specific use

E(g) is permitted. Waste management are more suited to areas without Use Class E land uses, and Policy 4 the MWLP directs waste development to industrial areas in the first instance.

This is a strategic concern to the MWPA and a Statement of Common Ground may be appropriate.

Policy LP36 – Residential Site Allocations in Wisbech

Comment

Site allocations, LP36.08 and LP36.11 are within the Consultation Area for Wisbech Port, Wisbech TIA. Development will need to ensure that it does not prejudice the use of the port as per Policy 16 of the MWLP.

Policy LP37 – Site Allocations for Non-residential Allocations in Wisbech

Object

Development within site allocations LP37.02 and LP37.08 will need to comply with Policy 16 of the Minerals and Waste Local Plan. This requires that “development which would result in the loss of or reduced capacity of such infrastructure will not be permitted unless it can be demonstrated that either: (a) the loss or reduced capacity will have no impact on the ability of minerals or waste to be transported by sustainable means, both now and for accommodating future planned growth; or (b) alternative, suitable and sufficient capacity is to be developed elsewhere (and in which case the authorities are likely to require it to be implemented before the loss or reduced capacity has occurred).

This is a strategic concern to the MWPA and a Statement of Common Ground may be appropriate.

Development within site allocations LP37.06 LP37.01 LP37.04, LP37.03 and LP37.09 is within the Consultation Area for the Algores Way Waste Management Facility and Wisbech HWRC. Development will need to ensure that it does not prejudice the use of the ongoing use of the safeguarded sites as per Policy 16 of the MWLP.

See comments in relation to LP15 Employment with regards to Use Class E.

Policy LP39 – Site Allocations in March

Comment

Site allocation LP39.29 falls within the Consultation Area for Whitemoor Rail Sidings Transport Infrastructure Area (TA). Development will need to ensure that it does not prejudice the use of the port as per Policy 16 of the MWLP.

Site allocation LP39.06 is within the Consultation Area for the March Anaerobic Digestion (AD) Plant (Westry) WMA. Development will need to ensure that it does not prejudice the ongoing use of the safeguarded sites as per Policy 16 of the MWLP.

Policy LP40 – Site Allocations for Non-residential Development in March

Object

Allocations LP40.01 and LP40.07 fall within the Consultation Area for March Landfill Waste Management Area (WMA), Lions Yard WMA, Whitemoor Rail Depot WMA, and Whitemoor Rail Sidings Transport Infrastructure Area (TIA). Development will need to ensure that it does not prejudice the ongoing use of safeguarded sites as per Policy 16 of the MWLP.

Allocation LP40.01 includes proposals for Use Class E uses. This Use Class is unlikely to be acceptable in proximity to the safeguarded waste management facilities (see comments on LP15)

The Lions Yard WMA falls within Allocation LP40.01. Policy LP40 should demonstrate how the Lions Yard facility will be retained or relocated.

Policy LP44 – Site Allocations for Non-residential Development in Whittlesey

Comment

Development within site allocations LP44.01 and LP44.20 are within the Consultation Area for the Must Farm MDA and Kings Dyke MAA. Development will need to ensure that it does not prejudice the use of the port as per Policy 16 of the MWLP.

Policy LP45 – An Aspirational Community

Comment

Developments proposed under Policy LP45 fall within the Consultation Areas for the Chatteris-Nightlayer Fen Water Recycling Centre (WRC) and the Furlong Farm Waste Management Area. Development will need to ensure that it does not prejudice the ongoing use of safeguarded sites as per Policy 16 of the MWLP. Please note the policy requirement for an odour assessment in relation to developments in proximity to the WRC.

Policy LP48 – Residential Site Allocations in Doddington

Comment

There is the potential for sand and gravel to be located under site allocations LP48.02,04,06,08,09,07 and 03. Development should make best use of any material incidentally extracted.

Policy LP50 – Residential Site Allocations in Wimblington

Comment

There is the potential for sand and gravel to be located under site allocations LP50.01,02,04,03,05. Development should make best use of any material incidentally extracted.

Policy LP51 – Residential Site Allocations in Coates

Comment

There is the potential for sand and gravel to be located under all LP51 sites (01-04). Development should make best use of any material incidentally extracted.

Policy LP52 – Employment Allocations in Coates

Comment

There is the potential for sand and gravel to be located under all LP52 sites (01). Development should make best use of any material incidentally extracted.

Policy LP60 – Residential Site Allocations in Eastrea

Comment

There is the potential for sand and gravel to be located under LP60.01. Development should make best use of any material incidentally extracted.

Public Health

Chapter 10 – Health and Wellbeing

Support

Public Health welcome the approach taken in Chapter 10 (Health and Wellbeing) which references the District Council's corporate objective to 'Promote health and wellbeing for all' and acknowledges that the Local Plan can play a key role helping achieve this by setting out policies that will ensure new development will support and encourage healthy lifestyles and meet the NPPF aim to 'achieve healthy, inclusive and safe places'

Comment

1. The references to the Draft Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Joint Health Strategy (2020 to 2024) are out of date – this strategy was delayed during Covid and is no longer current. There is a new joint strategy which should be used and referenced, there is a requirement in the NPPF/NPPG for the local plan process to have due regard to any local strategy – the Joint Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Health and Wellbeing Strategy is one such strategy which the local plan must have regard to. ([Joint Health and Wellbeing Integrated Care Strategy - Cambridgeshire County Council](#))
2. The supporting text in 11.1 would benefit from reference to the impact of cold homes and overheating in relation to impacts on human health and reference to the importance of energy efficiency in other policies within the plan.
3. Chapter 13 clearly sets out the shortfall in affordable housing with paragraph 13.5 stating “*total annual affordable housing requirement of around 289 dwellings which is over 50% of the total housing need for Fenland.*” With 13.6 recognising the importance of “*get the right balance between meeting affordable housing needs and meeting infrastructure needs*” and 13.8 *understanding the “clear north-south divide”* In terms of viability of affordable housing across the fens with the north being 10 -15% lower. This is reflected in two separate “affordable housing zones” which allow the NPPF requirement of 10% affordable housing to be met in the North, with the South's viability providing more affordable housing. However, it is unclear how this will successfully support housing in the more deprived communities in the North of the county, such as Wisbech and March and if it will impact in areas with high levels of deprivation.
4. Gypsies and Travellers. There is only one reference in the supporting paragraphs to health and wellbeing and is a quote taken from the Planning Policy for Traveller Sites (PPTS), August 2015. An increased emphasis of the benefits this policy can have on health of Gypsies and Travellers in both policy and the supporting text would be welcome, with reference to the increased local evidence that is likely to be revealed as part of the Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessment.
5. Policy LP16: Town Centres, in terms of maintaining and enhancing the vitality and viability of town centres, it is disappointing that no reference is made to measures to encourage cycling and walking, particularly with investment from elsewhere such as the governments emerging “Towns Fund” programme in March.

6. Policy LP17: Culture, Leisure, Tourism and Community Facilities, the policies for new community facilities that will be supported in principle if they: Prioritise and promote access by walking, cycling and public transport and are accessible for all members of society are welcomed, however, In terms of loss, via redevelopment, of an existing culture, leisure, tourism or community facility, the stipulation that this only permitted if it is demonstrated that: *“The service provided by the facility is met by alternative provision that exists within reasonable proximity....”* needs further clarification in terms of “reasonable proximity” as what is reasonable for local people with access to car can be unreasonable for those who rely on public transport. This is particularly important as according to census data with over 7,000 households in the Fens are without car. Furthermore, no reference is made to community health facilities in this policy.
7. Air Quality, Paragraph 22.9 states “Fenland is in a region affected by particulate pollution from mainland Europe which can cause an adverse impact on background (ambient) air quality. There tends to be higher levels of nitrogen dioxide in the winter months and peaks of larger particulate matter in the spring, which can contribute to seasonal health impacts.” This statement could be more robust and include reference to the number of people currently suffering from respiratory illness e.g. hospital admissions and the latest evidence relating to conditions such as dementia and a number of cancers linked to PM 2.5.

Policy LP5 – Health and Wellbeing

Support

The objectives within this policy to maintain and enhance the provision of allotments, community orchards and farmers’ shops and markets is welcomed as an essential component for promoting healthy living.

The supporting text should reference the need to deliver community infrastructure at an early stage of the phasing of development to ensure that the adverse health and wellbeing impacts on new residents can be addressed.

Comment

However, the policy should be a separate policy focusing on the control of fast food outlets. There is a strong relationship between spatial planning and the wider determinants of health, and the planning system can shape the built environment and therefore influence human behaviour and lifestyles. In response to obesity, planning can help to:

- Improve healthier eating choices and opportunities for urban growing.
- Promote physical activity by encouraging active travel and improving access to open spaces and sports and recreation facilities.

A quick review of other local authorities’ local plans and SPDs show that many have introduced specific policies to control hot food takeaway outlets, so this approach has been tested through the planning system and a precedent has been set to control the proliferation of hot food takeaways through the planning system

Any such policy could limit either the location of fast-food outlets near sensitive receptors e.g., schools, workplaces etc. and/or the density of fast-food outlets near sensitive receptors.

Policy LP10 – Community Safety

Support

Policy LP11: Community Safety, relating to crime is supported, however there is no standard set on which to judge an application.

Reference should be made in the Policy to the “secure by design” standard, although the supporting text in 12.20 states that secure by design principles should be taken into account as part of LP7 this is not the case and LP7 does not specifically mention secure by design.

Policy LP12 – Meeting Housing Needs

Comment

Policy LP12 Part D – This section on homes for older people is welcomed, however, the plan would benefit from the inclusion of a policy and/or supporting text to encourage street furniture for older people e.g., benches, within new developments and public spaces.

It is disappointing that Policy LP12 does not extend the requirement for Building Regulations Part M4(3) to the affordable rented sector only to social rented properties. The policy clearly acknowledges that the population of Fenland is an ageing population – this aging population is not limited to affordable rented occupants. The current target will only achieve the Part M4(3) standard on 1% of all dwellings on sites greater than 100 dwellings.

Paragraph 36.36 - Whilst the argument that minimum room sizes affects viability is acknowledged the Local Plan would benefit from the inclusion of a policy on minimum room sizes. Adequate space provides personal privacy and can reduce depression, anxiety and stress, giving children room to play and a good night's sleep. Cramping of different activities (studying, socialising, and relaxing) into limited space may adversely affect family life, creating a difficult dynamic which may play a part in the breakdown of relationships.

Policy LP22 – Parking Provision

Comment

Whilst Policy LP22 requires appropriate cycle parking to be provided the policy Appendix 6 do not set a standards or specifications for cycle parking. Cycle parking should be provided for all use classes of development to promote active travel and the resultant health benefits that will accrue.

The E use class (medical etc.) may need additional larger spaces/drop-off areas for ambulance(s) or other large vehicles in addition to the car parking requirements. Cycle parking should be provided. As the model of services delivered from these use class changes the parking requirements may also need to change. The model used “parking spaces per consulting room” may no longer be fit for purpose as the model of health care is shifting towards combined surgeries/health centres etc. and colocated services, as such advice should be sought from the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Integrated Care System, NHS England, Cambridge Community Services and Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Foundation Trust.

Policy LP31 and LP32 – Local Green spaces and Other Existing Open Spaces

Support

The local plan Policy LP30 and LP31 would benefit from a supportive policy to encourage the provision of green space near older people's housing. Walkable green spaces near the residences of older people aged 75+ significantly and positively influences five-year survival.

Appendix 5 – Open Space Standards would benefit from including other design features as part of the standard required for open space such as policy requirements to provide paths, drinking fountains, street furniture etc. within open/green spaces. These may be better addressed within

design Supplementary Planning Documents rather than the Local Plan itself and public health would welcome the opportunity to work with Fenland District Council on this.

Despite mentioning “blue space” in paragraph 20 as part of the “doubling Nature” programme it has been included with the requirement for green space – both “blue” and green space are important environmental determinants of health and the need for blue space would be better served by have a separate policy or an exploration of the need for both blue and green space within an open space SPD.

Policy LP37 – Site Allocations for Non-residential Development in Wisbech

Comment

There is no requirement to consider suitable access and footway and cycle connectivity despite transport connectivity being sighted as an issue in terms of economic growth in Wisbech earlier in the Local Plan. This is particularly important as Wisbech and March have the lowest level of cycling in the county. It is recommended that under Policy LP37 and LP40 that a requirement for “suitable access and footway and cycleway connectivity” be included to promote walking/cycling between the home and employment locations.

Chapter 10 – Health and Wellbeing

Object

Health Impact Assessment Policy (HIA). The Local plan would benefit from a specific policy on requiring applications to be supported by an assessment of the impacts on human health. This could be in the form of a specific policy requiring health impact assessments, or by some other assessment which would achieve the same aims. The policy could either reference the three types of Health Impact Assessments (Full, Rapid, and Desktop) or reference further guidance/SPD which could be produced at a later stage. To give clarity to developers/applicants on what type of HIA is “fit for purpose”.

Strategic Waste

Paragraph 8.3 – Securing Fenland’s Future

Comment

It is recommended that the addition of an additional bullet point is added to this paragraph:

- “Reducing the amount and environmental impact of waste produced”

Policy LP8 Part B – Amenity Provision

Comment

In point (K) it is recommended that consideration should also be given to how collection vehicles reach properties as well as turning points. Narrow roads, lack of parking provision and road layout, including sharp turns can necessitate using additional smaller collection vehicles. Also, the Policy should take account of known expected changes to collection service arrangements.

Policy LP14 Gypsies and Travellers and Travelling Showpeople

Comment

It is recommended that bullet point f is amended to include a requirement to ensure that the site is capable of being serviced by waste collection services.

Policy LP18 Development in the Countryside

Comment

It is recommended that Part A is amended to include a bullet requiring that suitable access is available to public services, most notably waste collection vehicles.

Policy LP20 Accessibility and Transport

Comment

It is recommended that bullet point A is expanded to ensure that development layouts can accommodate public and emergency services, such as waste collection, fire and rescue and public transport vehicles.

Transport Strategy

The Transport Strategy Team is supportive of the Fenland Local Transport Plan and has the following comments on the draft. Comments are also provided on some of the supplementary documents.

Paragraph 18.5 - Transport Infrastructure

Comment

Within section 18.5 of the draft Local Plan, we note that reference has been made to the emerging Local Transport and Connectivity Plan. We believe that it would be useful to include the reducing in car mileage and zero carbon targets that are detailed within. It would also be useful to highlight the link between land use planning and the major role this must play in reducing the need to travel, providing access, and supporting low carbon/public transport options- e.g., developments located with easy access to rail and enabling and encouraging active travel.

Paragraph 18.11 – Development Viability

Comment

We note in section 18.11 it mentions that if the “infrastructure ask is too high new development will be stifled” we believe that all developments should provide the infrastructure that is required to support sustainable growth. This is in line with policy 2 of the draft Fenland Transport Strategy and Policy LP19 of the draft Local Plan. If the development cannot do this, it is the people of Fenland that will suffer through developments coming forwards which are not supported by suitable infrastructure.

Paragraph 18.18 – Accessibility and Transport

Comment

Whilst there is reference to the LTCP and Fenland Cycling, Walking and Mobility Improvement Strategy 18.18 (noting version 2 was recently adopted) we would welcome reference to the draft Fenland Transport Strategy and draft Cambridgeshire’s Active Travel Strategy which will become child documents of the LTCP.

<https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/residents/travel-roads-and-parking/transport-plans-and-policies/fenland-transport-strategy>

<https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/residents/travel-roads-and-parking/transport-plans-and-policies/cambridgeshires-active-travel-strategy>

Following the adoption of the updated Fenland Transport Strategy it would be good if any mention of safeguarding of land for transport schemes could be included within the Local Plan. These schemes are likely to include the Wisbech Rail reconnection scheme.

Paragraph 18.35 – Wisbech Rail

Support

The County Council is supportive of Wisbech Rail reconnection and note that the CPCA are leading on this work. We note the ambition in terms of the timescales in section 18.35 but believe that it is unlikely that work will start in 2023 and the timescales should be confirmed with the CPCA.

Paragraph 18.44 – Local Projects

Comment

At section 18.44 we see that the MTTS are referred to, we would be grateful if this could be replaced by the reference to the draft Fenland Transport Strategy. It is unclear which package has secured funding from the Greater Cambridge Greater Peterborough Growth Deal. At section 18.46 reference should be made to the draft Cambridgeshire's Active Travel Strategy.

Transport Assessment

We understand that the Transport Assessment to support the Local Plan is currently in development and have reviewed the 'Fenland District Council Local Plan Transport Assessment Interim Report Fenland District Council 28 July 2022' (TA) and support the modelling approach, considering the cumulative impact of all the development sites. We note that in the next stages it states the results of the work will be published and we would be grateful if these could be shared when they are available. Within section 3.2 Public Transport Assessment it is noted that this section is likely to require an update following the Stagecoach service cuts in October 2022 and the work of the CPCA which followed.

In Table 4.9 of the TA we note that three junctions in Wisbech proposed mitigation is stated as being covered by WATS. It should be noted that these are currently unfunded improvements, and significant further development work would be required to bring these improvements forward.

Section 4.2 of Transport Assessment Report has an Error! Reference source not found.

In table 4-2 Transport Assessment Report of the Junction Model Checklist it is noted that three models in the Wisbech area have not been obtained. We believe that these models are available and are happy to work with FDC and Atkins to make these available.

Draft Fenland Infrastructure Delivery Plan (June 2022)

As further information is developed by the TA for the Local Plan it is possible that the IDP will need to be updated to include this the last information and the latest infrastructure requirements.

2.55 MTTS as mentioned, these are being replaced with the draft Fenland Transport Strategy and the draft Cambridgeshire's Active Travel Strategy. Please could these be referred to in this section and reference to the MTTS's removed.