

**Fenland District Council Local Plan
Issues and Options Consultation October and November 2019**

Form A: Local Plan Consultation Response Form

From 11 October to 21 November 2019, we are consulting on the Issues and Options report. This is your first opportunity to comment on this new plan, which can be viewed at: www.fenland.gov.uk/newlocalplan.

This form can be used to respond to the Local Plan Issues and Options consultation. Submit completed forms -

- by email to: localplan@fenland.gov.uk or
- by post to: *Local Plan Team, Fenland District Council, Fenland Hall, County Road, March, PE15 8NQ.*

Alternatively, you can comment online at: www.fenland.gov.uk/newlocalplan. All comments must be received by **11.59pm 21 November 2019**. Late comments **will not** be considered.

Part A : Your Details

Organisation (if applicable):	Agent (if applicable):
Name:	Name:
Address:	Address:
Postcode:	Postcode:
Email:	Email:
Tel:	Tel:
Signature: (not required if submitted electronically)	Date:
Please tick this box if you <u>would</u> like us to notify you of future consultations on the emerging Fenland Local Plan	

Data Protection and Freedom of Information

All personal information that you provide will be used solely for the purpose of the Local Plan consultation. Please note that each comment and the name of the person who made the comment will be featured on the Fenland Local Plan website, comments will not be confidential. This information will be held by the Council for four months after the adoption of the Local Plan.

Any personal information you give us will only be used in accordance with principles found in the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR). Please see www.fenland.gov.uk/privacy for further information. **By submitting this form you are agreeing to these conditions.**

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Part B: Your Comments

We are currently at the first stage in the process of preparing a new Local Plan for Fenland. We are consulting on issues and options to help identify what the new Local Plan should include and the type of policies required. Your views are essential at this early stage in helping to shape the growth of the district.

Please refer to the [Issues and Options consultation document](#), especially **section 3**, when providing your answers. The Issues and Options document sets out background information and context for different topics.

Alternatively, you can make comments via the [online questionnaire](#).

You do not need to answer all questions, and can pick topics or issues you are interested in.

Question 1: The Vision

Local Plans should set out a clear vision for what an area will be like at the end of the plan's life (known as a plan period) and a list of objectives intended to achieve that vision. The vision and objectives in a Local Plan should provide a framework for the policies in the plan to sit within.

Please tell us what Fenland should be like in the future.

1) What is your vision for Fenland - what should Fenland be like in the future?

Question 2: Housing Need

As of March 2019, the Local Housing Need figure is calculated at 550 dwellings per year for Fenland. This is, coincidentally, exactly the same as the annual figure in the adopted Local Plan 2014. Over the past five years, Fenland has delivered an average of 425 dwellings per year, so a figure of 550 is about 125 dwellings more than what we have recently achieved.

2a) This new Plan must have an end date of at least 2037. We think 2040 is about right. What do you think, and why?

2b) Government policy says our minimum housing target should be 11,550 new homes, to 2040. To attempt to go lower would highly likely breach national policy, but we could go higher. Should we? If so, why?

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2c) We will undertake research to determine what appropriate job growth and employment land targets should be, and consult with you at the next stage on these findings. In the meantime, do you have any views on what sort of jobs we should try to facilitate, and what locations would be suitable for new employment land?

Question 3: Settlement Hierarchy

A settlement hierarchy ranks towns and villages according to their size, range of services and facilities. The purpose of the hierarchy is to guide decision-making about the scale and location of new development and provision of new services and facilities, helping to achieve more sustainable communities.

Page 12 of the Issues and Options consultation document shows the settlement hierarchy identified in the adopted Local Plan.

3a) Do you agree or disagree that we should have a settlement hierarchy policy?

3b) What are your views on the existing settlement hierarchy? Should there be different categories?

3c) Should any villages be moved up or down the hierarchy? If so, which ones and why?

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Question 4: Settlement Boundaries

Settlement boundaries are used to define the edge of a town or village. The primary purposes of settlement boundaries are to prevent the spread of development into the countryside, to maintain the character of each settlement, and control the growth within and outside each settlement in accordance with the settlement hierarchy.

4a) Would you support the re-introduction of settlement boundaries?

4b) If the Plan includes settlement boundaries, should the supporting policy result in:

i) a hard boundary with strict policies that limit development outside of the boundary?

or

ii) a flexible policy that could allow development which adjoins the settlement boundary, provided a number of sustainability criteria are met?

4c) If the Plan is to include settlement boundaries, how should we go about determining where they go? You may even want to send us a map of where you think the boundary should go, for any settlement you have an interest in.

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Question 5: Growth Options

Once the Local Plan growth targets for homes and jobs have been identified it is then important to establish how this proposed growth should be distributed across the district. The Issues & Options Consultation Document (Section 3 pages 15 and 16) explores six options for how growth could be distributed. Please look at these different options before answering question 5.

5a) Which option/s do you prefer?

5b) What are the positive and negatives of the option/s?

5c) Which option/s do you dislike and why?

5d) Are there alternative options which should be considered?

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Question 6: Settlement Policies

The current Fenland Local Plan includes a section which sets out specific policies and requirements for each of the market towns. This includes a brief description of the town and a key diagram that highlights areas for growth. However, there are alternative options, as set out in the following question.

6a) Should the Plan include:

Option 1. Bespoke policies for each market town only?;

Option 2. Bespoke policies for each market town and other higher-order settlements, such as large villages?; or

Option 3. Bespoke policies for all settlements in the settlement hierarchy?

Question 7: Health and Wellbeing

The government's health profile for Fenland shows that life expectancy, obesity and physical activity are all significantly worse than the England average. It is an objective of the Council to turn that around and promote health and wellbeing for all.

7a) Do you think the new Local Plan should include specific policies about health and wellbeing?

7b) Do you think the Local Plan should include a policy to restrict the amount, or location of, hot food takeaways?

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7c) Do you agree or disagree that developers of large schemes should submit a Health Impact Assessment to show how the new development will help achieve healthy and safe communities?

Question 8: Renewable Energy

In preparing this new Local Plan we intend to provide a wide-ranging set of policies which will demonstrate Fenland's leadership in tackling and adapting to climate change.

National policy says Local Plans should help increase the use and supply of renewable and low carbon energy and heat.

8a) Should the Local Plan require (rather than just encourage) developers to incorporate renewable energy generation?

8b) Should the Local Plan allocate specific areas in Fenland where commercial windfarms would, in principle, be suitable?

8c) Are there any opportunities to co-locate new development with existing or new renewable/low carbon energy supply systems?

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Question 9: Energy Efficiency

Local Plans can set energy performance (or energy efficiency) standards for new housing that are higher than the Building Regulations, up to a set level.

9a) Should the Local Plan require developers to go beyond basic Building Regulation minimum standards, and build homes and other buildings with greater energy efficiency?

Question 10: Facilitating Low Carbon Future

It is likely our future energy demands will be met by electricity generated from low carbon sources (e.g. renewable or nuclear energy). This means gas in homes and petrol/diesel in cars will likely become a thing of the past, quite possibly before the end date of this new Local Plan (2040).

There is currently no requirement for electric car charging points; national policy only says to enable them in the future. Therefore, it is up to local policies to determine if this should become a local requirement or not. However, government is currently consulting on changes to Building Regulations which could mean in the future all new homes must have electric charging points.

10a) Should the Local Plan ensure buildings are designed to minimise energy use, by taking in to account layout, building orientation and landscaping?

10b) Should the Local Plan encourage or require large scale proposals to increase the use and supply of low carbon energy and heat infrastructure to new homes and buildings?

10c) Should the Local Plan require all new development to put in place electric vehicle charging points?

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10d) Should the Local Plan require new development to be entirely electric based (i.e. not connected to the gas network), thereby future proofing the development to how homes and businesses will be powered in the future?

Question 11: Minimise Carbon Losses from Wider Activities

Whilst using gas, petrol and diesel to power our homes and cars is an obvious contributor to greenhouse emissions and climate change, there are other less obvious activities which can result in high levels of greenhouse emissions. In Fenland, the biggest contributor is through the farming of peat soils.

Should the Local Plan:

11a) Set out a specific policy on the loss of peat-based soils, and the carbon impacts of it?

11b) Require developers, as part of their contribution to open space provision, to create 'carbon sinks', such as through tree planting, creation of wet-grasslands or preservation/restoration of peat soils?

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Question 12: Other Proposals to Reduce Greenhouse Gas Emissions

The Local Plan could require developers to create new communities which directly or indirectly help minimise carbon emissions.

12a) Should the Local Plan require developers to provide allotments or other growing areas, which can help reduce damaging 'food miles'?

12b) Should the Local Plan make provision of cycle and footways, which are designed in a way so that they become the natural choice to use for short journeys, rather than the car?

Question 13: Design and Amenity

Good design can help create attractive places and spaces for people to live, work and visit and can contribute to the creation of healthy and sustainable places. Design is not only about appearance, it is also about how places function.

Achieving good design 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.

13a) Do you think the new Plan should include a strategic design policy for the district?

13b) Do you think there is a need for different local design policies for each individual town and / or village?

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13c) Are there any specific local issues which need to be addressed through design policies?

13d) Should the Local Plan require developers to use national toolkits, such as Building for Life?

Question 14: Optional Standards

Since the adoption of the 2014 Local Plan, the government has set out policy preventing Local Plans from setting their own standards for the design of new homes. New national standards have, instead, been introduced via the Building Regulations system. However, government allows three exceptions to this general rule. A Local Plan can require:

- Internal minimum space standards for all homes, but the standards can only be those as prescribed by government;
- Water efficiency measures in new houses which would aim to reduce average household use of water down from 125 litres per person per day (as required by Building Regulations) to 110 litres per person per day; and
- Higher access standards in relation to access to, from and within buildings, than required by Building Regulations. Such higher standards are generally beneficial to people who are disabled, elderly or have limited mobility, and also allow homes to more easily be adapted in the future.

14a) Do you think the Local Plan should include any of the following optional standards (subject to need and viability testing)? If so why?

i) Internal Space standards of new homes

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- ii) Water efficiency of new homes
- iii) Access standards to new homes

14b) Do you have any evidence to suggest the introduction of the above standards would significantly affect viability of housing schemes?

Question 15: Meeting Housing Need

The Council will, over the coming months assess the local need for different sizes and types of homes and the amount and type of affordable housing required. This will inform the draft policy in the new Local Plan to be consulted upon next year. However, at this early stage, we would like your views on the types and size of homes you think are needed in the area.

15a) What size, types and tenure of homes do you think are needed, either across Fenland or in your local area?

15b) Do you think the Local Plan should have a rural exception site policy to help provide affordable homes in areas with a need?

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15c) Should the plan encourage 'community-led' based housing schemes?

Question 16: Gypsy and Travellers

Government's overarching aim is 'to ensure fair and equal treatment for travellers' The Council will assess the needs of the Gypsy and Traveller community through a needs assessment to be prepared over the coming months and ensure their needs are met through the Local Plan.

16a) The Local Plan must meet the needs of the Gypsy and Traveller community. Accordingly, should large scale housing sites be required to include an element of Gypsy and Traveller provision as part of the masterplanning of the site?

16b) What other suitable locations for Gypsy and Traveller pitches are there?

Question 17: Park Homes and Houseboats

The government recently introduced new requirements for Local Plans to review the need for moorings for houseboats and sites to accommodate permanent caravans such as park homes.

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17a) Is there a need for moorings for houseboats or sites for caravans in Fenland? Any evidence to support your comments would be welcome, or suggestions as to how such need could be identified in Fenland.

Question 18 - Plots for Custom and Self-Build

The government has introduced new rules that place a requirement on councils to maintain a register of people who wish to find land to build their own homes (known as self-build or custom build homes). Councils are also required to grant planning permission on sufficient serviced plots of land to meet the identified need for self-build and custom build.

18a) Should we require larger housing sites to provide serviced plots for self-build and custom build?

18b) Should we allocate sites which are set aside only for self-build and custom build?

Question 19: Employment

Fenland's economy has seen a continued shift away from the land-based sector, where employment has reduced due to productivity improvements and new working methods. However, its association with the food based industry has continued. The majority of employment in Fenland is manufacturing, wholesale and retail, business services, healthcare, and education sectors. Together these account for a large proportion of overall total employment.

19a) Should the Local Plan retain existing employment areas in employment use, or should other

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uses be allowed in these areas?

19b) Do any employment sectors in Fenland have specific locational requirements which should be addressed through the Local Plan?

19c) Are there any barriers to employment growth which the Local Plan could help to address?

19d) How should the Local Plan support the rural economy?

Question 20: Retail and Other Town Centre Uses

Shopping habits and the wider retail economy are changing. The prevalence of online shopping is creating a very challenging environment for high street retailers. Such changes mean the role and function of our town centres are also changing. National policy says that Local Plans need to consider a range of uses to help provide a positive strategy for the future role of town centres.

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20a) Do you agree that the Local Plan should strengthen the role of town centres to encourage people to shop and visit?

20b) Should existing shops be protected or do you think other types of development such as leisure and recreation should be encouraged in the town centres?

20c) Should the retail hierarchy be amended? What changes should be made and why?

20d) Do you think the boundaries of any Town Centres, District Centres, Local Centres and Primary Shopping Areas need to be extended or reduced? If so, which and why?

20e) Should the new Local Plan set a threshold for when an Impact Assessment for out of centre retail is required, such as 500 sq m in the current Plan? If so what should the threshold be?

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Questions 21: Community Infrastructure

The new Local Plan will ensure that new development is supported by appropriate infrastructure for transport, schools, health, open spaces, community facilities and water supply and treatment.

21) Do you think the Local Plan should include a policy to protect the loss of existing community facilities?

Questions 22: Transport

The main transport and infrastructure requirements for the Fenland area are set out in the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Local Transport Plan (LTP) which is a document prepared by the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority. Therefore, any Local Plan policies must support this.

22a) Should the Local Plan place a strong emphasis on encouraging walking, cycling and public transport or does the rural nature of Fenland mean the private car will always need to be accommodated as a priority?

22b) Do you think the new Local Plan should set parking standards? If so please provide further comments to explain what standards you think are needed and where they should apply.

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Question 23: Historic Environment

The Fen landscape has a unique rural character; large scale, flat, open landscape with extensive views to the horizon. The huge skies give the area a strong sense of place and tranquillity.

Each of the four market towns in the district has its own individual, historic character which has evolved over time.

In Fenland there are 20 scheduled monuments, 10 conservation areas and over 650 listed buildings of special architectural or historic interest. The gardens of Peckover House in Wisbech are included in Historic England's register of parks and gardens of special historic interest.

23a) Should the Local Plan go beyond the minimum requirements for protecting the historic environment?

23b) Should the Plan identify buildings of local importance?

23c) Are there any areas that you think require additional protection that are not already identified as conservation areas?

Question 24: Natural Environment

"Our natural environment is our most precious inheritance" according to the government's 25 Year Environment Plan, which also states that the government's aim is to be "the first generation to leave [the] environment in a better state than we found it and pass on to the next generation a natural environment protected and enhanced for the future".

National planning policy is more specific as to what development should do, including a requirement for a 'net

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gain' in biodiversity. Natural Cambridgeshire, the Local Nature Partnership for our area, has recently (June 2019) agreed a vision to double the area of rich wildlife habitats and natural green space across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, with the aim of creating a world-class environment where nature and people thrive, and businesses prosper. The Combined Authority for our area endorsed that vision in July 2019.

24) How do you think the Local Plan should protect and enhance biodiversity and the natural environment?

Question 25: Open Space Standards

The new Local Plan can require new development to provide open space. The 2014 Local Plan sets standards for the provision of the following types of open space:

- Country parks
- Children's play
- Natural green space
- Allotments
- Amenity greenspace
- Sports pitches and playing fields

During preparation of the new Local Plan, open space standards will be reviewed. Alongside, or shortly after, consulting on this Local Plan, we intend to undertake separate more detailed consultation on open space needs and desires, so please check our website for further details on this.

25a) What type of open space should new development provide?

25b) What do you think of the quality of open space in your area?

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25c) Should the Plan identify other areas of open space to be protected?

25d) Do you have any specific standards that should be applied to all development schemes (such as a certain area of land for open space per certain development size)?

25e) Should we work with neighbouring authorities with the aim of establishing common standards across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough?

Question 26: Flood and Water Management

Flood risk is an important issue for the district due to the flat and low-lying landscape of the area and impact of climate change, with related sea-level rises and increased incidents of heavy rainfall. On its flood zone maps, the Environment Agency identifies specific zones of flood risk across Fenland.

26a) Do you have any views on how new development could reduce flood risk?

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Question 27: Any Other Comments

This consultation document has set out what is proposed for the new Local Plan, but there may be additional items not covered in this consultation which you would like to raise.

27a) Is there anything else you would like to raise – has anything been missed, or are there any general comments you would like to make?

Question 28: Your Priorities

The new Local Plan must be aspirational but deliverable. If the Local Plan is excessive in its requirements, we may fail to meet the area's growth needs.

We would like to understand your broad priorities for the future growth of Fenland.

As such, we'd really welcome you completing the following question, to help us understand, overall, which issues are most important to you.

28a) What, overall, are your priorities? Please select up to five from the following list:

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• New buildings which have high energy efficiency and/or renewable energy included, such as solar panels;	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• More genuinely affordable housing;	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• New homes which are easily adaptable and accessible for the disabled or elderly;	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• New homes which have room sizes of at least a minimum set size;	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Attracting inward investment to Fenland and creating more jobs;	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• New community facilities as part of a new housing area, such as community hall, corner shop, small health centre;	<input type="checkbox"/>

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<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Investment in walking and cycling infrastructure;	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Good quality, accessible open space (parks, play areas, etc);	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Genuine efforts to create areas for nature;	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Protecting the character of towns, villages and the countryside.	
28b) Please identify any other top priorities.	

Question 29: Neighbourhood Planning

Neighbourhood planning gives Parish and Town Councils direct power to develop a shared vision for their area and shape development and growth. Once a Neighbourhood Plan has been 'made' (adopted) it forms part of the development plan for the district, so it has the same legal status as a Local Plan. which issues are most important to you.

29a) The new Fenland Local Plan must set a housing target for all Parish and Town Councils which are designated as a Neighbourhood Area. Do you have any views on what those targets should be, or how we should calculate it?

29b) Should we set a housing target for all parish areas, so that a Parish or Town Council has clarity as to what level of homes are needed in their area should they wish to prepare a Neighbourhood Plan?

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29c) Is there anything else this Local Plan could do to help preparation of Neighbourhood Plans?

Please submit your comments to: localplan@fenland.gov.uk or to *Local Plan Team, Fenland District Council, Fenland Hall, County Road, March, PE15 8NQ*. Or alternatively you can make comments online at: www.fenland.gov.uk/newlocalplan.

Thank you for taking time to respond