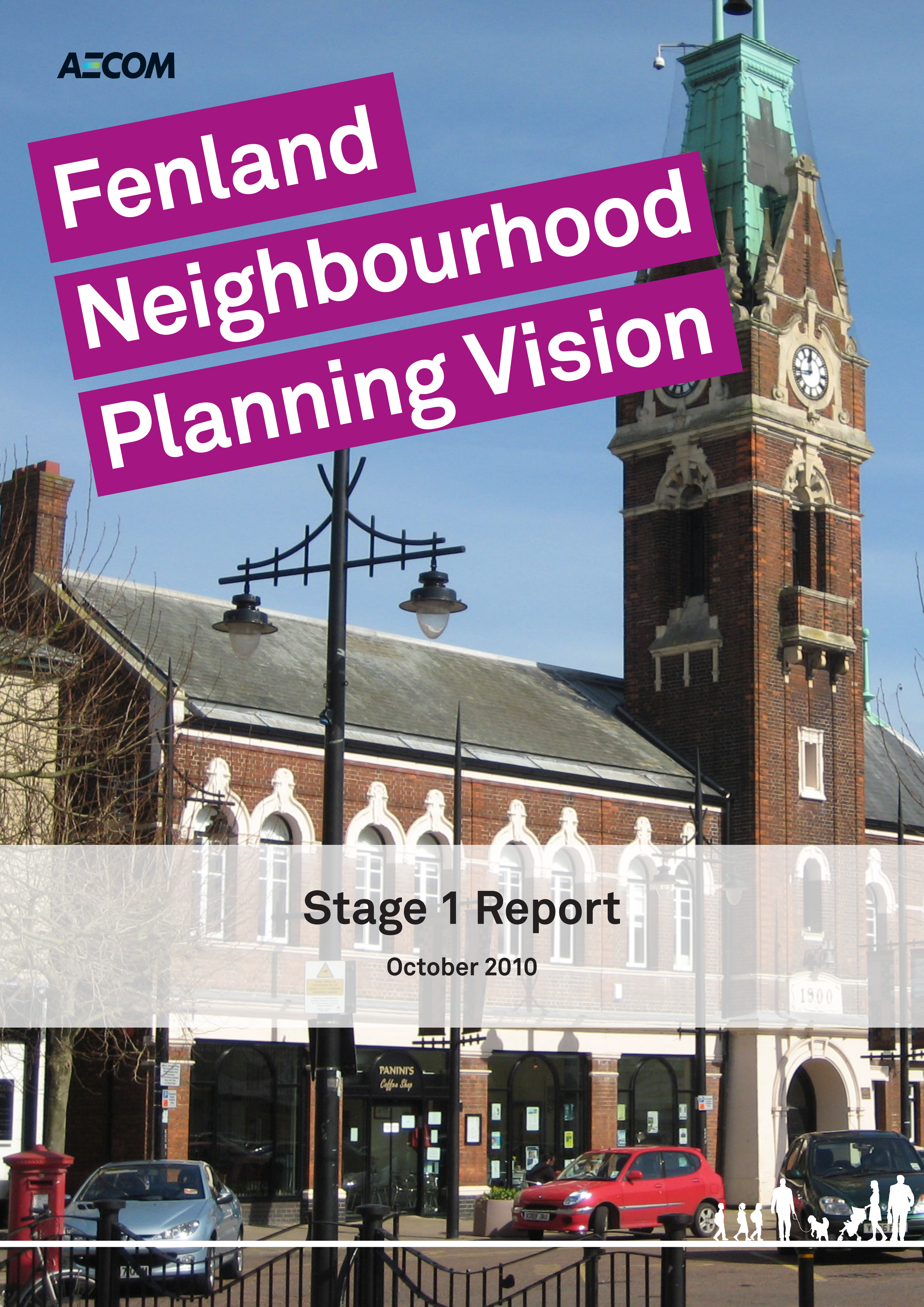
# Fenland Neighbourhood Planning Vision




## Stage 1 Report

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Stage 1 report

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# Fenland Neighbourhood Planning Vision

# Stage 1 Report – Final

# AECOM

# Contents

# Executive Summary

Fenland Neighbourhood Planning Vision (FNPV) is about developing an integrated and holistic economic, social and spatial strategy that will help to shape, inform and guide the future growth and development of the district to 2031. This will include a vision, options for growth, an infrastructure delivery plan and an action plan for Fenland and its partners to take forward. This Stage 1 report develops an economic, social and environmental vision, which will feed into spatial analysis and options for growth in Stage 2.

Fenland is a place where quality of life and opportunities for its residents are lower compared to its neighbours and to other similar rural districts. As part of the London-Stansted-Cambridge-Peterborough Growth Area, the district has an opportunity to use growth as a catalyst for change, improving life chances by effecting a step change in the economic, social and environmental opportunities. The FNPV project is concerned with shaping the proposed growth towards these outcomes.

Fenland is an area that has already seen significant population and economic growth over the past 10 years. However, without proper planning it is unlikely that this trend will continue. Much of the growth has come about through an in-migration of older people and this has brought with it a higher dependency on services. Moreover, the housing growth has not been able to significantly affect the affordability gap, with access to housing still a major issue for residents.

The stage one report sets out a baseline against the five Sustainable Community Strategy themes, identifying the issues and strategic direction currently being taken. It then sets out Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats of Fenland's position against these themes and uses this to establish a draft vision. From this it establishes a series of strategic proposition to guide future intervention in the district.

**Build economic and sustainable Fenland communities**

Affordable housing is a key issue in creating sustainable communities in Fenland, with slow growth against a picture of significant need. Moreover, fuel poverty and general standard of some private sector housing is also cause for concern. FNPV sets the framework for new affordable homes and sets out how up-skilling residents in areas such Modern Methods of Construction and retrofitting energy saving technologies could provide part of long term answers to skills and housing quality shortages.

Fenland is blessed with tremendous potential. It has a good location offering proximity to dynamic neighbouring economies; high quality heritage and built assets of the market towns with the potential to drive growth across a range of sectors; an explicit commitment from stakeholders to excellence in partnership working, strategy and delivering growth; potential niche sector specialisms in food, logistics, advanced engineering and renewable sectors; and an ongoing investment in education and training through existing strategy and key projects such as BSF.

However, these opportunities are being held back by major structural issues. Fenland has a narrow and relatively low value economic base dominating by declining or slow growth sectors. This is compounded by a low wage occupational structure, along with lower than average incomes. Lack of skills is also a major issue, creating an uncompetitive skills base with too few people with entry level qualifications (NVQ2) and too few with higher level qualifications (NVQ4). Spatially, this manifests itself in underperforming market towns and a lack of quality employment space, along with persistent pockets of deprivation and low economic participation. FNPV will need to support the economy and these target sectors, by providing opportunities for growth and investment, and also improving skills and access for residents.

**Make sure children and young people have the opportunity to achieve their full potential**

Education and support for young people is absolutely vital to FNPV, with a direct link to the skills necessary to support economic growth and investment, attracting new families to the area and through lifelong learning, impacting on health, confidence, motivation, participation and above all raise the aspiration of residents. In 2009, Fenland saw the biggest improvement in results in pupils achieving Level 2+ in Key Stage 1 Mathematics across Cambridgeshire, along with an increase of 2 percentage point in pupils achieving Level 2+ in Key Stage 2 Reading. However, Fenland consistently achieves lower poorer results than the county and national averages at every stage, and furthermore, the gap gets wider as young people move through the educational system. FNPV will need to provide a framework through which service providers can work together to address these issues, focusing on raising aspiration, providing high class facilities and education and attracting more skilled teachers to the area.

**Improve health and social wellbeing**

Fenland is an area of significant health inequalities, closely linked to wider deprivation indicators, with life expectancy, mortality and morbidity rate worse than its neighbours. Fenland has the highest rate of early deaths linked to cancer, heart disease and stokes as well as those linked to smoking across Cambridgeshire. Healthy eating is a major issue, with lower rates of consumption than the recommended 5 a day that the national or regional averages. This is compounded by a relatively inactive population and a high prevalence of smoking. The link between deprivation and health has a major impact on children and young people in Fenland, with significant numbers living in poverty and a likelihood of lower birth weights, higher risk of hospital admissions and poorer overall health all identified as key risks for this age group. FNPV looks to affect this by changing people's relationship with food and exercise. The ageing population structure also increases demand for services, with better access and targeting of services a key objective through FNPV. The link between economic performance and the health of the population provides more support for improving health across current and future generations.

**Safer and stronger communities**

Community cohesion is a priority across Fenland, with the district performing relatively badly against national indicators, with the need to find better ways of integrating new and existing communities a key challenge. Boosting civic pride, improving access to open space where communities can better integrate and better provision of joined up services form key elements of the strategy to address problems. Like many places around the country, anti-social behaviour, often linked to the market towns is identified as an issue for Fenland, especially in Wisbech. Fear of crime is also identified as a major concern. Masterplanning key towns, to provide better design and mix of uses, along with town centre management strategies will need to come forward as growth in Fenland takes shape.

**A cleaner and greener district, which everyone can enjoy**

Fenland's natural environment contains a number of assets that need to be conserved and enhanced. It also offers a range of opportunities to provide multiple social and economic benefits for local communities. The area has excellent wind resource, already being tapped into, but with potentially more opportunities for communities to benefit from. However, access to natural green space is limited, both in terms parks and gardens within towns and larger strategic green space. This will have links to both community cohesion and health issues. Like most of south east England, Fenland is an area of serious water stress and this will affect development opportunities and the need to bring forward water sensitive designs to ensure growth does not exacerbate the identified water deficit. Conversely, flooding is also a major issue with much of Fenland within flood zone 3, which potentially limits development options. Sustainable drainage will be an important part of any solution providing appropriate development opportunities. Moreover, adapting to climate change, which will see longer drier summers and wetter winters, will be a key challenge that must be addressed. Growth will need to come forward in a manner that incorporate and adapts to climate change and provide opportunities through sustainable technologies to improve opportunities for Fenland's residents.

**Transport**

While not a SCS theme in itself, it is a key area to address in order to provide a clear overview of this key area for growth. Out-commuting and heavy reliance on the private car are key issues for the district, with patterns of internal movement between the four main towns putting pressure on the A47 (T) and the A141, Wisbech also suffers from localised congestion. However, a high proportion of households with no access to the car and public transport access from the villages to the towns difficult results in an accessibility problem for many. Community car schemes and dial-a-ride services plug a gap, but do not provide services for commuting. Walking and cycling connections are in need of improvement and expansion across the district to support more sustainable modes of transport. FNPV sets the framework for growth to work to help address these issues through infrastructure improvement and behaviour change.

**Understanding issues, challenges and opportunities, towards a vision**

The baseline analysis seeks to identify strengths and weaknesses across Fenland and assets which should be exploited. The overall aims of economic, social and environment sustainability have been used to inform a cross cutting vision and a series of strategic programmes, which should guide interventions moving forward.

The draft vision that emerges from this work seeks to provide a basis against which economic, social and environmental is:

‘Fenland’s future success will be based on creating distinctive places and improved opportunities for all. This will be achieved through a ‘can do’ culture, where those who live or work in the district are encouraged to desire a better standard of living.

Fenland will aspire to be a resource efficient district with resident communities benefiting from its ambitious and comprehensive approach to renewable power and energy efficiency. Fenland’s strength in agriculture and food production will be harnessed to drive up new employment, encouraging healthy lifestyles and form the basis of an exciting new visitor economy. A radical multi-partner approach to education and skills development will create a new ‘learning district’ raising aspirations and creating a culture of achievement. Distinctive market towns will become vibrant hubs of commercial activity and capture economic value and investment from throughout the region and beyond.

This vision is supported by a series of strategic programmes against which interventions and growth should be planned and organised.

**Distinct Fenland – growth as a vehicle for exploiting Fenland’s assets and potential**

The key aim for this set of programmes is to ensure the creation of sustainable local communities founded on quality of place. Three core areas of opportunity have emerged from the analysis so far.

**Build Fenland** – Housing and employment growth will bring opportunities to build strong communities around the established town’s of Fenland. This growth must benefit local companies and the local labour market.

**Resource efficient Fenland** – Fenland is in a unique position to become the first district in England to become resource efficient, with a whole range of community and environmental benefits.

**Eat Fenland** – Food is central to Fenland, but there are significant opportunities to make it do more in terms of employment, education, tourism, lifestyle and cohesion.

**Opportunity Fenland – growth as a catalyst for reducing inequalities of opportunity**

There are widespread inequalities across Fenland and the wider sub-region. FNPV should seek to address these inequalities by understanding what and where services and infrastructure are needed.

> **Active Fenland –** The link between healthy lifestyle and an active workforce is key to the success for Fenland. A focus on activity to improve life chances and productivity is an important element of the economic and social vision for Fenland
>
> **Aspirational Fenland** –Raising aspirations and fostering positive attitudes around learning and skills is essential for the future well-being and prosperity of people in Fenland. Partners need to tackle the prevailing culture of low aspiration from early years.
>
> **One Fenland –** There are a large number of public sector organisations working in Fenland. This proposition looks to better focus these services towards the public, improve delivery and reduce costs.
>
> **Connected Fenland -** Improving connections will be vital to reducing inequalities. The rural nature of Fenland means that isolation will be an ever present challenge to accessibility. Enabling movement around, in and out of the district will be key to unlocking potential.

**The next steps**

The next steps will see the vision built upon through spatial analysis and the development of options for growth. These will be grounded in infrastructure analysis, as well as economic, social and environmental opportunities and constraints.

# 1. Introduction - FNPV project overview

**Fenland's position in a growing region**

***Fenland's economic context can perhaps be characterised as a growing district located in Cambridgeshire -the fastest growing county in a growing regional economy.***

1.1 Over the last 25 years the East of England has been one of the fastest growing regions in the UK and Europe. Between 1981 and 2006 the region's population grew by over 13 per cent to around 5.6 million, more than double the rate for the UK as a whole. Between 2001 and 2006, The Office for National Statistics (ONS) estimated population growth to have been around 206,000, or 3.8 per cent. The largest percentage increases were in Cambridgeshire (6.3 per cent). Net migration has been the most important driver, accounting for three quarters of the recent increase (158,000 as compared with 48,000 'natural change'). In Cambridgeshire, Norfolk and Suffolk, net migration gain was 5 per cent for the 2001 to 2006 period; in Norfolk, growth has solely been due to in-migration as deaths have exceeded births.

**The Cambridgeshire context**

1.2 Cambridgeshire is a centre of excellence and a renowned international leader in higher education and research. This has created a world class science base comprising international research institutes, globally significant information and communications technology and biotech clusters, multi-national HQ functions and a dense hinterland of professional service, legal and consultancy networks- known collectively as the Cambridge phenomenon. This high level knowledge intensive employment is located predominately in the South of the county. The economic strengths in the North (which includes Fenland) include specialist engineering, manufacturing, agriculture and food processing, distribution and logistics. Cambridgeshire as a whole is the least deprived part of the East of England. There are however wide contrasts between the 48 districts with South Cambridgeshire having the least deprivation and North Cambridgeshire (Fenland and Huntingdonshire) being the most deprived. Cambridge itself is a university city with a strong and dynamic economy with a large share of the vibrant high-tech clusters mentioned above. It is recognised as the key economic driver in the East of England with the largest retail and service sector in the sub-region, historically it has very low unemployment. Salaries in the knowledge and high tech sectors tend to be relatively high, however housing affordability issues still persist in Cambridge for key workers and those on lower incomes.

**The local context**

1.3 At a more local level, three areas have an influence on areas within Fenland by virtue of proximity and transport connections.

1.4 Huntingdonshire to the South West of Fenland has a population of 168,000 people and about 50% of them live in the market towns of Huntingdon, St Neots, St Ives and Ramsey. Huntingdon is the administrative centre and the main retail town and is well connected by the road network and the East Coast Mainline. St Neots has the largest population and has a railway station and direct access to the A1. The economy is focussed on business, services, manufacturing and a strong public sector base. The economy is stronger more diversified and generally higher value than Fenland with key employers in high tech manufacturing, bio-tech and life sciences. Huntingdon Life Sciences being a notable employer. Some pockets of deprivation still exist in wards to the north of the district. Huntingdon is potentially better placed geographically speaking to take advantage of any overheating in Cambridge but is challenged by demands on its physical and social infrastructure. Fenland has potential cost advantages over Huntingdonshire in terms of employment space, housing and labour.

1.5 Peterborough also has a significant impact on the Fenland economy bordering the district in the West near Whittlesey. The strategy for the Peterborough economy is about preparing for accelerated growth and transformation across the sub-region with its population expanding to more than 200,000 between 2010-2031. The central objective of Peterborough's strategy is building upon its position as UK's environmental capital and its strategic location with easy access to London or the North vis the East Coast Mainline, the A1 and numerous ports and gateways. Peterborough has real growth and productivity potential in environmental technologies, logistics, high level business and professional services, high tech manufacturing, and ICT. The Peterborough economy is significant in a number of ways, it is a source of high quality jobs for residents of Fenland and is potentially a source of investment as employers look to alternative locations to save costs.

1.6 King's Lynn, with a population of 36,400 is the main economic driver and employment centre of the West Norfolk. It is centred upon an historic medieval core although there are numerous examples of Georgian heritage and Victorian town expansion. A large part of the car free shopping centre has recently been redeveloped. It is a central government Growth Point, with a requirement to become a strategic sub-regional centre; as well as delivery a minimum of 7,000 new houses. 75% of West Norfolk allocated employment in their draft Core strategy is in King's Lynn. Wisbech and Kings Lynn's development will be closely linked, with plans for 500 homes adjacent to Wisbech set out in West Norfolk's Core Strategy.

**What is the FNPV Project?**

1.7 An integrated and holistic economic, social and spatial strategy that will help to shape, inform and guide the future growth and development of the district to 2031.

**What are the key outputs?**

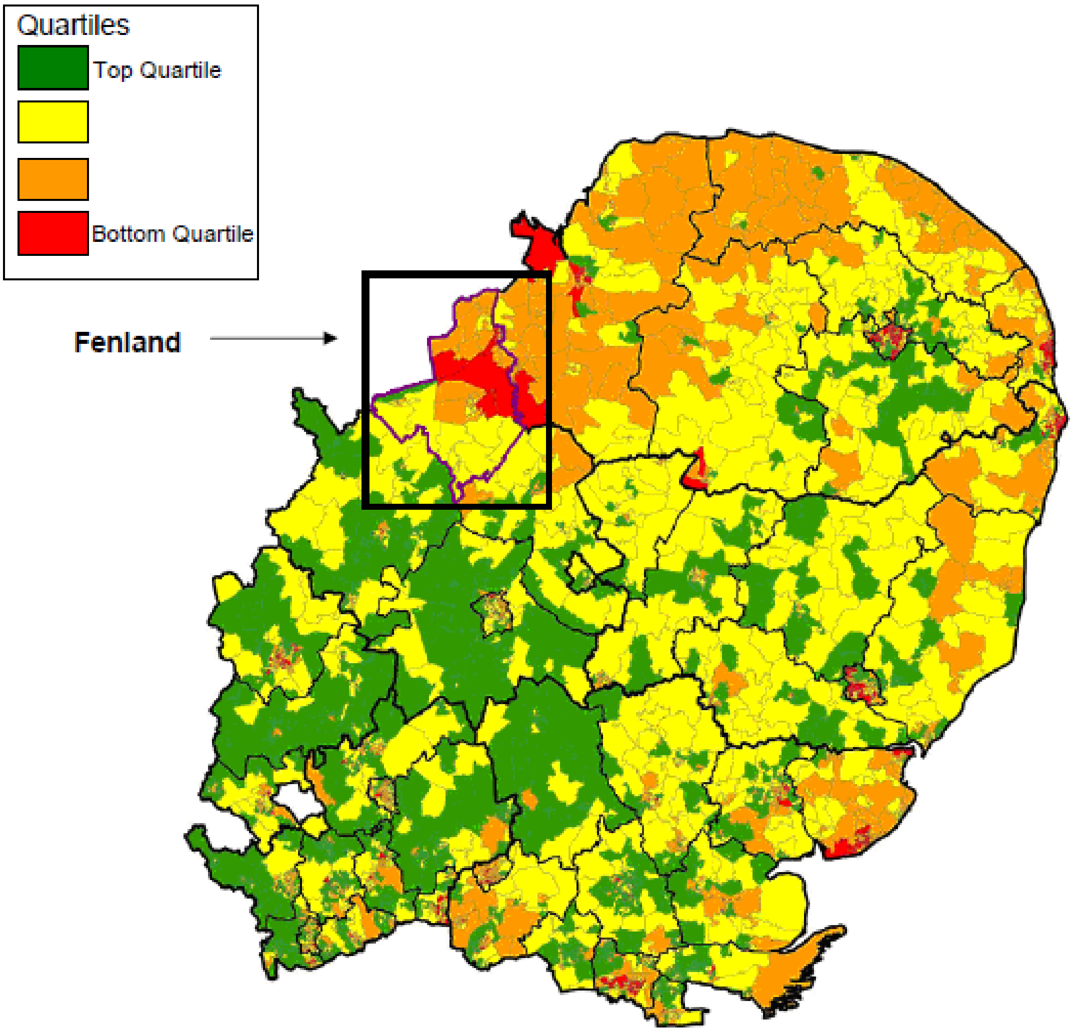
- A vision for <u>growth</u> in Fenland
    - Economic
    - Social
    - Environmental
    - Spatial
- Spatial element of draft Core Strategy
- Core Strategy's Infrastructure Delivery Plan

**Why is it needed?**

1.8 While Fenland is an area with many strengths and opportunities, it is also one where the deprivation and life chances of its residents are lower than its neighbours and that of other similar rural districts. The project looks at how planned growth in the district can be harnessed to improve quality of life for those that live and work in the Fenland area, encouraging a more sustainable future and raising aspirations within the community.

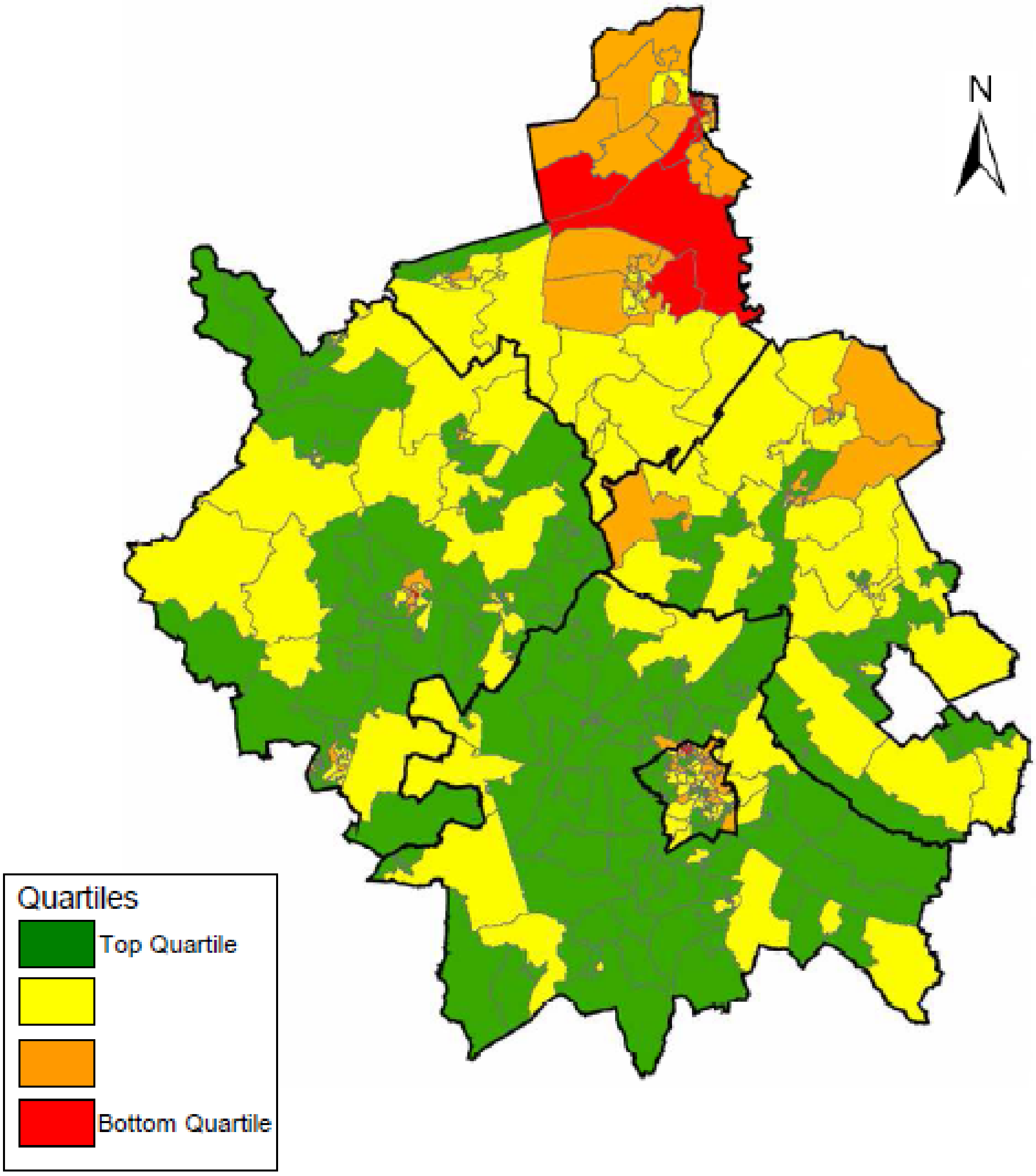
1.9 Figures 1.1 and 1.2 illustrate that deprivation in Fenland is striking relative to the rest of Cambridgeshire and the East of England. Fenland diverges starkly from the overall picture of affluence and economic dynamism that characterises the East of England generally, and Cambridgeshire in particular, with its IMD profile is more consistent with a rundown inner-city area than a rural district.

*Figure 1.1 – IMD across the East of England*




Source: FDC IMD 2007 Maps

*Figure 1.2 – IMD across Cambridgeshire*




Source: FDC IMD 2007 Maps

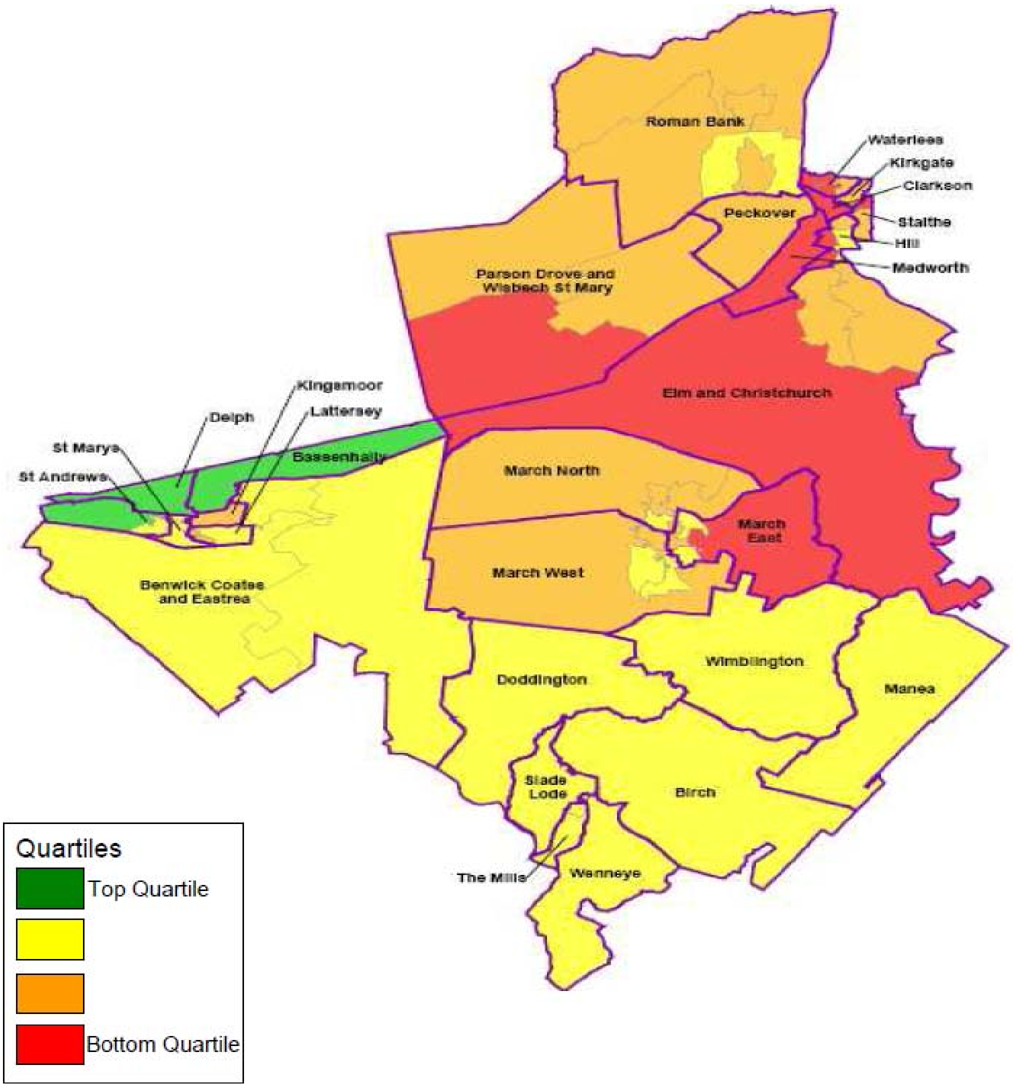
1.10 Across Cambridgeshire, 25 wards fall into the 20% most deprived wards in Cambridgeshire. 18 of them are within Fenland (Table 1.1). Drilling down into the district, Figure 2.5 illustrates that deprivation levels in Fenland are generally more severe to the north of the district, Wisbech in particular, with areas further south likely to score more favourably. This is possibly due to their proximity to the employment and educational opportunities in the larger and more prosperous centres of Cambridge and Peterborough.

*Table 1.1: 20% most deprived wards in Cambridgeshire*

| Local Authority | Ward | IMD 07 Score |
|---|---|---|
| Fenland | Waterlees | 41.52 |
| Fenland | Clarkson | 32.83 |
| Fenland | Medworth | 32.01 |
| Fenland | Staithe | 31.21 |
| Huntingdonshire | Huntingdon North | 27.00 |
| Fenland | Elm and Christchurch | 25.73 |
| Fenland | Parson Drove and Wisbech St Mary | 25.39 |
| Cambridge | King's Hedges | 25.10 |
| Fenland | Hill | 24.41 |
| Fenland | Kirkgate | 24.36 |
| Fenland | Kingsmoor | 23.01 |
| Cambridge | Abbey | 21.93 |
| Fenland | Roman Bank | 21.24 |
| Fenland | Peckover | 20.42 |
| Fenland | March East | 20.08 |
| Cambridge | East Chesterton | 20.03 |
| East Cambridgeshire | Littleport West | 19.47 |
| Cambridge | Arbury | 18.97 |
| Fenland | March North | 17.83 |
| Fenland | Lattersey | 17.24 |
| Fenland | Birch | 16.78 |
| Fenland | March West | 16.49 |
| East Cambridgeshire | Littleport East | 16.48 |
| Fenland | Wenneye | 16.06 |
| Fenland | Wimblington | 15.55 |

Source: Draft Cambridgeshire Health Inequalities Strategy (October 2009)

*Figure 1.3 – IMD across Fenland*




Source: FDC IMD 2007 Maps

**What is the catalyst for change?**

1.11 Fenland's location within the designated London-Stansted-Cambridge-Peterborough Growth Area provides the impetus for continued regeneration and growth across the district. This growth is seen as vital to address the quality of life issues identified above through the IMD analysis.

1.12 Although the district remains relatively sparsely populated, Fenland has already undergone significant growth. According to the Office for National Statistics' mid-2008 population estimates, Fenland has a population of approximately 91,600. Population figures in the draft Fenland Core Strategy (Preferred Options 2) highlight that the majority of the district's population is concentrated in the market towns of Wisbech (approx. 20,500), March (approx. 19,000), Whittlesey (approx. 12,500) and Chatteris (approx. 9,500). The Fenland Economic Development Strategy 2007-2027 states that the district's population grew at four times the national average rate in the decade up to 2001. During the period between 2001 and 2005, there was an average increase of 950 residents per annum. The Fenland Economic Development Strategy indicates that this growth has largely been driven by migration from elsewhere in the UK. Nevertheless, migration into Fenland from outside the UK is increasing with some arrivals from Eastern Europe and Portugal.

1.13 The previously adopted East of England Plan (May 2008) required Fenland to accommodate 11,000 net new homes between 2001 and 2021. The draft revision to the East of England Plan (March 2010) retained Fenland's housing delivery target of 11,000 new homes for the plan period 2011-2031 at an annual average rate of 550 dwellings per year, with the option to go to 700 if impact of out-migration and infrastructure was shown to be acceptable. Such housing growth cannot come forward without increases to job opportunities, and the plan suggests 8,600 new jobs will need to be created in Fenland within the same period. With the recent abolition of Regional Spatial Strategies, there is more flexibility, both up and down if a viable case for growth can be made.

*1.14* In line with national and regional policy, the Annual Monitoring Report assumes that majority of new housing growth will continue to be concentrated within, or adjacent to, existing settlements. The market towns of Wisbech, March, Whittlesey and Chatteris are identified as the 'broad locations' for new housing growth. FNPV's Future will play a key role in testing and potentially revising the spatial distribution of growth across the district.

**How will it fit in with what is already happening in the area?**

1.15 The FNPV project will need to identify the broad level of growth the district can accommodate and how this can be brought about in a way that positively affects deprivation and quality of life. There is already a significant amount of activity in this area and the project will need to ensure consistency, particularly two key areas of current intervention:

**The Local Strategy Partnership (LSP)**

1.16 There is already significant work being undertaken towards meeting the goals set out in Fenland's Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS), being co-ordinated across all sectors in Fenland by the LSP. The FNPV project will need to ensure that it establishes a vision, spatial strategy and infrastructure plan that are consistent with the key projects and approaches already being taken forward. However, in some instances, there may be a need to challenge the status quo based on emerging findings.

**Making Cambridgeshire Count (MCC)**

1.17 Cambridgeshire is a pilot area for the Government's Total Place initiative, which aims to improve the delivery of public services by removing or blurring budgets and organisational boundaries to better focus on the end user and improved outcomes. Fenland is at the forefront of this initiative and is currently looking at ways to better co-ordinate, focus and deliver its offer across all public sector organisations. The MCC is a strategy and programme of interventions to improve existing services and as such is not dependant on planned growth. As with the LSP's work, the FNPV project will need to be consistent with the emerging MCC landscape and provide a framework to allow proposed initiatives to evolve.

**The purpose of this report**

1.18 The key consideration throughout the process of planning for growth must be 'what is the community deal?' i.e. how will residents and businesses benefit?

1.19 Stage 1 of the FNPV's Future project is about a creating a vision for sustainable growth that benefits existing residents through improvements to quality of life and attract new residents and jobs to the district.

1.20 This Stage 1 report acts as the evidence base and identification of strengths, weaknesses and assets to be built upon through the FNPV project. This work leads into an emerging draft economic, social and environmental vision, which will inform the spatial options for growth to be considered in Stage 2.

**The structure of this report**

1.21 The report is structured into five parts.

- Part 1 (this section) provides the project and stage 1 overview.
- Part 2 sets out the evidence base for the project and responds to the 'understanding the place' element of the brief. It sets out an assessment of strengths and weaknesses for FNPV to address, responding to the 'identify issues, opportunities and challenges' element of the brief.
- Part 3 sets out the emerging draft vision for Fenland. It also details a series of strategic programme to organise agencies and guide interventions in support the vision. This responds to the 'setting aspirations and priorities for change element of the brief.
- Part 4 sets out the next steps and identifies existing work towards broad locations of growth, and the housing, employment and infrastructure planning work which is the focus of the next stage of work.

**Consultation**

1.22 A number of meetings and workshops have been held in the development of this report. A one day stakeholder workshop was held, with organisations representing all sectors invited to discuss issues and opportunities for the area in the round. Follow up meetings, where requested, were also undertaken to consider more detailed issues and to better understand key strategic projects. Furthermore, a meeting with the projects Partner Steering Group was held to consider the emerging findings and shape the direction of the Stage 1 report. The key messages from these sessions have been included within the report.

# 2. Part 2 – Review and assessment of Fenland's current position

2.1 This section set out a review and assessment of Fenland's position in relation to the five current Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS) themes:

- Build economic and sustainable Fenland communities
- Make sure children and young people have the opportunity to achieve their full potential
- Improve health and social wellbeing
- Safer and stronger communities
- A cleaner and greener district, which everybody can enjoy

2.2 Transport sits across all of the above and as such we have set transport considerations out as a separate section at the end of the part of the report.

2.3 These themes have been used to provide a structure to our initial analysis. Part 3 builds on the findings to set out an emerging vision for Fenland and suggest a number of 'strategic programmes', which could form new cross-cutting themes against which to develop interventions and perhaps organise their deliver.

# Part 2A - Build economic and sustainable Fenland communities

**Baseline & key issues**

**Housing**

2.4 Housing and the economy are the key drivers in developing existing and new sustainable communities. There has been substantial housing and population growth in recent years focused in Chatteris and March along with the villages of Doddington, Wimblington and Manea, all located in the corridor of the Cambridge sub-region. House prices and land values have remained relatively buoyant over recent years (albeit from a low base) due to the growth of Peterborough and Cambridge making Fenland villages attractive to commuters. Further work to assess recent market activity will be undertaken during the next stage of the FNPV to inform viability assessments.

**Affordability**

2.5 Affordability will be critical to achieving sustainable communities in Fenland. The Fenland Housing Strategy 2009-2012 acknowledges that although house prices in the district are relatively low in the context of the wider sub-region, affordability is a key issue. In 2006, average house prices were 5.9 times higher than average wages. Fenland is consequently characterised by a high level of housing need, with the 2009 Cambridgeshire Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) concluding that 527 new affordable homes (84% social rent/16% intermediate) are required per annum to meet housing need in the district. As such, the supply of affordable housing will play an important role within the FNPV project. Current completions are well below identified need. According to Shelter figures[1], an average of 83 new affordable houses was delivered per year between 2006 and 2009.

2.6 There is a demonstrable unmet housing need in the district. Cambridgeshire Strategic Market Assessment highlights that the annual affordable housing requirement currently outstrips the rate of delivery for all types of housing. To sustain delivery of social housing without compromising the viability of housing schemes, the council is currently considering a ‘sliding scale’ approach to affordable housing targets. Such an approach recognises that much of Fenland’s new housing comes forward through smaller schemes, which has previously reduced the rate of delivery of new affordable property. The council commissioned consultants Adams Integra to undertake an Affordable Housing Financial Viability Assessment, which recommended seeking 35% affordable housing on schemes of 100+ dwellings, 30% on schemes over 10+ dwellings and 20% on schemes of 5-9 dwellings. This sliding scale approach seeks to increase the proportion of qualifying sites without undermining deliverability. The Housing Strategy indicates that approximately thirteen percent of housing in the district is classified as social housing. The majority of formerly Council-owned stock was transferred to Roddons Housing Association with work being undertaken to bring all properties up to the government’s Decent Homes standard by 2010/11.

[1] http://housingleaguetable.org.uk/Fenland

2.7 Beyond this strategic approach to the delivery of affordable housing, the council has initiated a variety of projects which respond to the specific housing needs of more vulnerable groups in Fenland. The Housing Strategy highlights the shortage of supported accommodation for young people in the district. It stresses the need for future work to build on the success of the Wisbech Foyer, which opened in 2007 to provide young people with opportunities for education and skills development as well as supported accommodation. To this end, the development of a second Foyer at March is advocated by the Housing Strategy.

2.8 In addition, the Housing Strategy identifies the need to respond better to the housing needs of older people, particularly in the context of the district's ageing population. It sets out a council commitment to work with partners to develop 4 extra care schemes in Fenland by 2016, in response to the identified need to increase such housing provision in the district. Furthermore, the Strategy suggests that helping older people to live safely within their homes through a wider disabled facilities programme would help to address specific needs of an ageing population.

**The private sector**

2.9 The vast majority of the district's housing stock is privately owned. There remain significant housing challenges in the private sector. A stock condition survey conducted in 2008 highlighted that 27.7% of the district's private housing stock (or 10,298 homes) failed to meet the standard. Of private sector homes which were classified in the survey as non decent, 70.2% displayed a category 1 hazard while 45.3% failed on the grounds of thermal comfort. A disproportionate number of non decent properties were rented dwellings, with 38.4% of all private rented accommodation failing to meet Decent Homes criteria. 'Excess cold' was overwhelmingly the most common category 1 hazard encountered during the survey. Although the Council has introduced a variety of initiatives to target the issue, it is apparent that fuel poverty remains a key challenge across Fenland. At the time of the time of the stock condition survey in 2008, 5,032 private sector households were in fuel poverty, which equates to 13.8% of private sector households in Fenland.

2.10 The Council is nevertheless taking an active role in addressing these private sector housing issues. The Housing Strategy sets out a commitment to work to reduce the number of vulnerable households living in private sector accommodation defined as non decent. Between 2004 and 2008, the Council worked to bring approximately 200 homes up to Decent Homes standard. This affects cohesion, with the majority of Housing of Multiple Occupation (HMOs) used by migrant workers. The Council is seeking to shift the delivery of private sector renewal towards a system of loans to replace a largely grant-based approach. The Fenland Housing Strategy highlights that the Council has taken a pro-active approach to tackling fuel poverty in the district. For example, Fenland has attracted considerable investment from the national Warmfront programme, which funds central heating and insulation improvements to increase the warmth and energy and efficiency of vulnerable households.

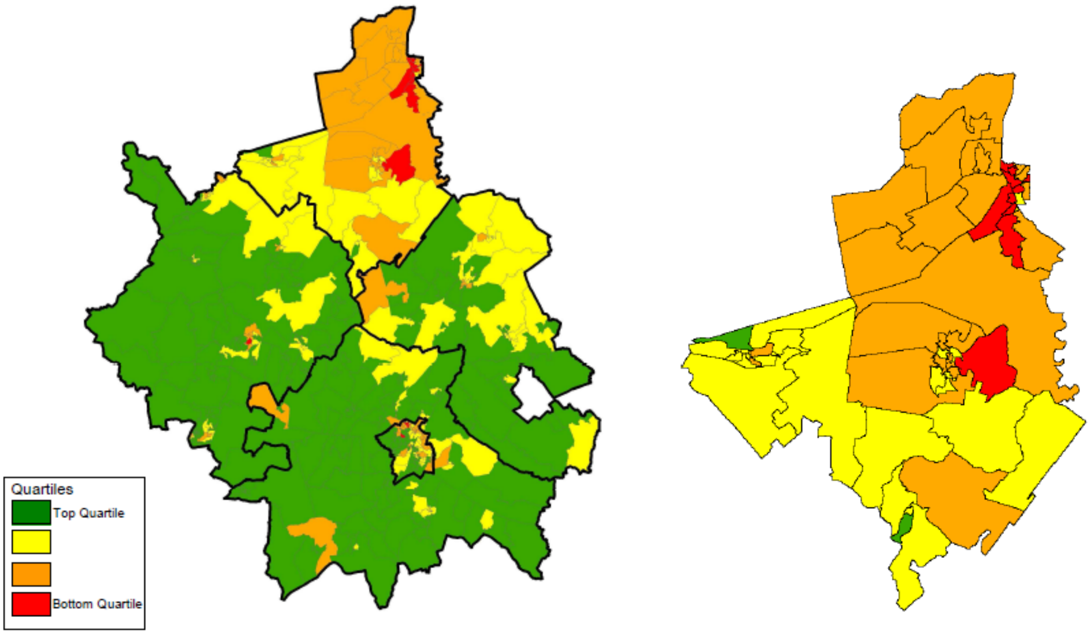
**The Fenland economy**

2.11 The structure of Fenland's economy has changed in recent years, away from its traditional reliance on the land-based sector, where employment has declined due to productivity improvements and new working methods. While this restructuring has taken place growth in employment in the wider economy has not been matched by workforce expansion in Fenland and therefore out-commuting has increased. The "business as usual" projections in suggest that commuting may continue to increase, with negative impacts on local communities particularly in relation to cohesion, environment and health. The baseline analysis below demonstrates that to meet the needs of the growing population, Fenland requires an increased level and range of jobs locally. Furthermore future jobs growth will be in higher skilled occupations, and there is a clear need to improve the skills and qualifications of the resident population.

**Index of Multiple Deprivation**

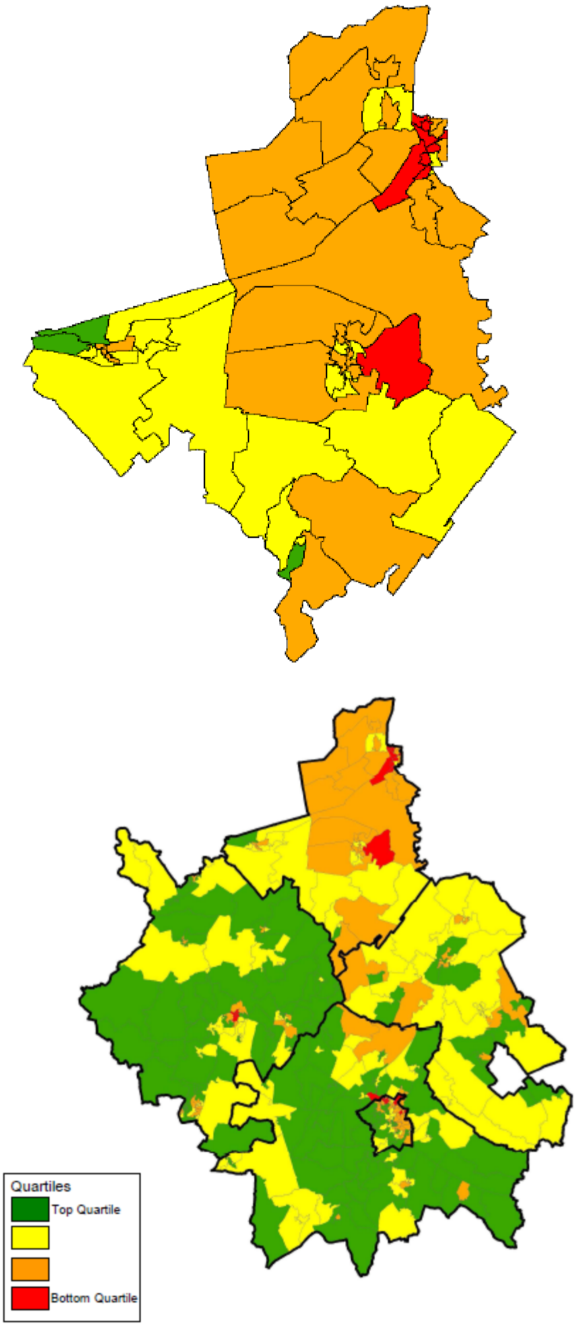
2.12 In terms of economic Figures 2A.1 and 2A.2 illustrate that Fenland is characterised by generally low levels of employment and income compared to the rest of Cambridgeshire, with only two wards in the top quartile for employment and three for income. Nevertheless, it should be noted that these issues are most severe around Wisbech and March.

*Figure 2A.1: Deprivation in Fenland and Cambridgeshire: Employment*




Source: FDC IMD 2007 Maps

*Figure 2A.2: Deprivation in Fenland and Cambridgeshire: Income*




Source: FDC IMD 2007 Maps

**How competitive and resilient is the economy?**

2.13 This report considers the economic trends over the past decade and looks at the structure of the economy and the implications for future performance, growth and strategy. The Fenland economy has undergone a period of impressive growth over the past decade which has been characterised by strong population and employment growth. There are however a number of structural weaknesses in the economy which have the potential to undermine long-term strategies to improve competitive performance. These are:

- a narrow and relatively low value economic base dominating by declining or slow growth sectors
- low occupational structure and lower than average  incomes
- an uncompetitive skills base with too few people with entry level qualifications(NVQ2) and too few with higher level qualifications (NVQ4)
- underperforming market towns and a lack of quality employment space.
- persistent pockets of deprivation and low economic participation
- the relatively poor transport infrastructure within the district

2.14 On the positive side Fenland is blessed with tremendous potential:

- an advantageous location offering proximity to dynamic neighbouring economies
- the high quality heritage and built assets of the market towns with the potential to drive growth across a range of sectors
- an explicit  commitment from stakeholders to excellence in partnership working, strategy delivering growth
- emerging niche sector specialisms in food, logistics, advanced engineering and renewable sectors.
- ongoing investment in education and training through existing strategy and key projects such as BSF

2.15 These issues are considered in detail below.

**The resilience of the Fenland Economy**

2.16 AECOM have developed an index of local economic performance which assesses the local economic base across five domains. The index is applicable to any local authority area and provides an overview of the competitiveness of the local economic base and the extent to which it will be affected by external economic shocks, such as the recent credit crunch and national recession. Given the fragility of the national recovery and the potential implications of severe cuts to government expenditure, the degree to which the local economic base is competitive is in itself of paramount importance. Competitiveness requires a diverse and dynamic economic base that is not over-reliant on a small number of industries or employers and can compete without the requirement for government subsidy. We have a defined the key features of economic resilience as:

- a diverse employment and sectoral base, with acknowledged strengths without excessive levels of dependence on a sub sector or company;
- highly skilled and flexible workforce, including high levels of self employment (people can trade down to lower skilled jobs if necessary, the opposite is not possible);
- an enterprising culture with a high number of businesses and a dynamic start up rate;

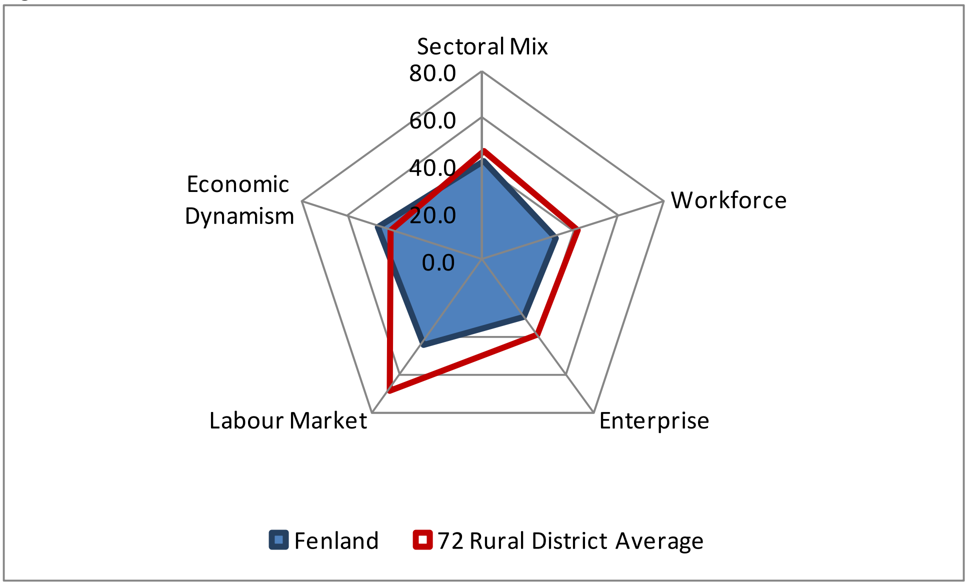
- lower levels of people with no skills, and high participation rates as demonstrated by low levels of worklessness;
- access to other labour markets, to broaden opportunities for local residents

2.17 Resilient economies are not necessarily the fastest growing or highest paid; they are however the most robust in providing sustainable economic growth.

- **Sectoral Mix:** including the degree of employment diversification, employment within traditionally stable economic sectors and employment in knowledge intensive sectors.
- **The Workforce:** focusing on the quality of human capital, the role of migration in smoothing demand for local labour, and the agglomeration effects associated with larger economies and labour markets.
- **Enterprise:** recognising the importance of a dynamic business base that is able to respond to changing economic conditions.
- **Labour Market:** reflecting the extent to which short lived negative shocks may create long term local economic issues.
- **Economic Dynamism:** This interprets levels of population, employment and productivity growth in the 5 years prior to recession.

2.18 In AECOM's index of rural economies (as defined by DEFRA), Fenland is ranked 59th out of 72 (where a rank of 1 is the most resilient and competitive). However, the performance of Fenland under each of the five domains is perhaps of greater importance than the overall score. The figure below illustrates the performance of Fenland against the 72 district average and the following sections provide an overview of each domain. The most striking feature of the Fenland economy is that it underperforms the 72 district average in all of the domains besides Economic Dynamism, suggesting that despite relatively strong recent growth, there are a number of structural feature of Fenland's economy that constrain its competitiveness. These combine such that Fenland is particularly vulnerable to prolonged economic downturn at the national level.

*Figure 2A.3: Fenland's Economic Resilience*




Source: AECOM

**Sectoral Mix Domain**

2.19 Fenland marginally underperforms the 72 district average in the sectoral mix domain. This is due to the proportion of the Fenland workforce employed in declining sectors (25% compared to a 72 district average of 22%). Fenland also has a marginally lower proportion of employees working in counter cyclical sectors and knowledge intensive industries (25% and 33% respectively compared to a 72 district average of 26% and 34%).

2.20 The characteristics of Fenland's employment base are illustrated in the table below. Total employment in each sector is represented by the size of the bubble. The largest sector (wholesale and retail) employs 6,800 people and the smallest included in the graph (Financial Intermediation) employs 400[2]. The sectors positioned above the horizontal axis account for a greater proportion of employees than in Fenland than they do across England and the sectors positioned below the axis employ a lower proportion. The Horizontal axis measures the average annual rate of employment growth between 2003 and 2008.

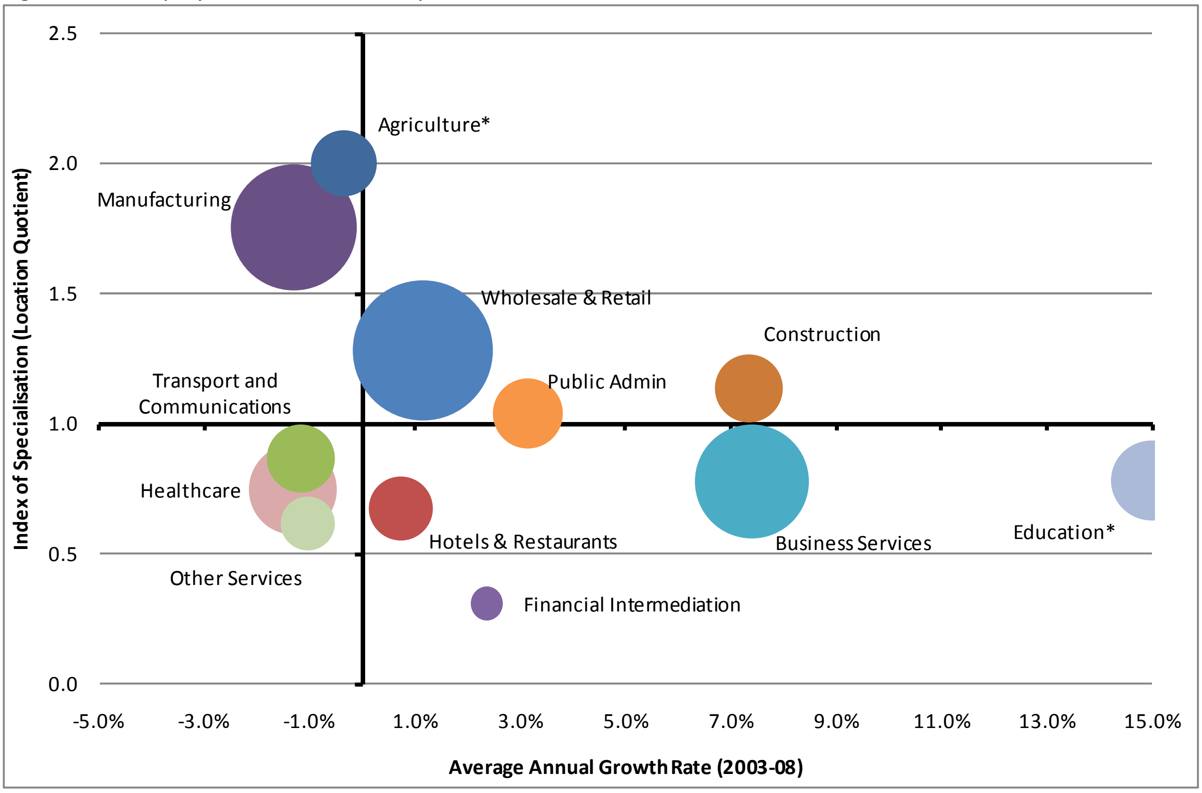
2.21 The graph clearly illustrates that the majority of employment is accounted for by the manufacturing, wholesale and retail, business services, healthcare, and education sectors. Together these sectors account for 70% of total employment. However, three of these sectors experience declining employment between 2003 and 2008 and wholesale and retail experienced very limited growth over the same period.

2.22 Since 2008 it is likely that employment in these sectors will have declined further in line with national trends. Furthermore, healthcare and education are both predominantly public sector employers, and while some budgets may be protected, these will become under increasing strain over the coming years. Furthermore, the significant growth of education is likely to reflect a new institution or reorganisation in the district and is unlikely to be sustained. Conversely, business services, while a large employment sector, is still under-represented compared to the national average and

[2] Fishing, Mining and Quarrying, and Utilities employ zero, or close to zero, people.

there may be potential growth opportunities within this sector. It should be noted also that although manufacturing in its broadest sense might be declining there are some small higher value niches with the manufacturing sector definition that show the potential for growth and these are also evident in Fenland and may warrant future support.

*Figure 2A.4 Employment Growth and Specialisation, 2009*




** Agriculture has a location quotient of 5.5 and Education has an average annual growth rate of 15.6%* Source: Annual Business Inquiry, 2008

2.23 The Fenland Economic Development Strategy 2007-2027 highlights that the legacy of Fenland's traditional function as an agricultural district remains apparent today, with many people employed directly and indirectly in the agri-food sector. Nevertheless, the Economic Development Strategy confirms the chart above in that wholesale/ retail trade is the biggest employment sector in Fenland today, followed by manufacturing. The common theme which unites these sectors is that employment associated with them is typically routinised, low-skilled and low-paid. ONS statistics indicate that in 2008-2009, approximately 31% of people employed in Fenland worked in routine or elementary occupations, compared to 18.2% nationally and 17.8% across the East of England. Conversely, (as shown in the occupational chart below below) workers in Fenland are under-represented in professional and managerial roles. Low weekly and hourly rates of pay are consequently significantly below national and regional averages. According to ONS figures, in 2009 average gross weekly pay in Fenland was £407 compared to £491 nationally and £509 in the East of England.

**Workforce and Labour Market Domains- the stand out trends**

2.24 Fenland underperforms against both the workforce and labour market domains, however its performance is far weaker against the labour market domain. These results can be attributed to the following:

- The proportion of the workforce with higher level skills, is well below the 72 district average.
- The average duration of JSA claimants is greater than the rural average (median duration is 91% of the national average, compared to 78% for all 72 rural districts).
- The evidence does however highlight the higher rate of (international) employment migration into Fenland, which may act as an automatic stabiliser in times of economic shocks.
- Incapacity benefit claimants as a proportion of working age people exceeds the national average
- A large proportion of the Fenland population is unskilled (almost half do not hold NVQ2 and less than 15% hold NVQ level 4).

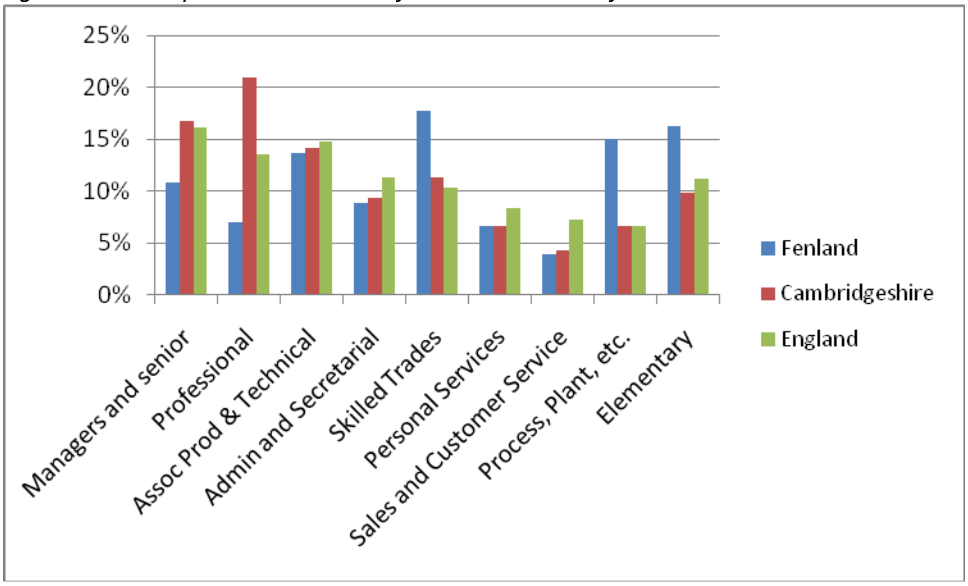
2.25 Fenland's aging population is clearly a major component of the district's high dependency ratio (working to non-working people). However the proportion of economically active and employed people in Fenland is broadly in line with the figures for Cambridgeshire and both areas outperform the national average. It should be noted that , while outperforming the national average, the evidence from the index of rural districts suggests that Fenland underperforms compared to districts with similar levels of rurality. Furthermore, the broader evidence presented in this chapter suggests that the quality of the local employment base is poor. This is perhaps of greater importance to the long term competitiveness of the local economy and considered in greater detail below.

*Figure 2A.5 Economic Participation, September 2009*


Source: Annual Population Survey, September 2009

2.26 In relation to the quality of the local labour force, the graph below clearly demonstrates that Fenland is underrepresented in higher level occupations. Only 32% of the workforce are employed in management, professional, or associated professional occupations, compared to 52% of the workforce of Cambridgeshire and 44% nationally. The strongest occupational sectors are skilled trades, process place and machinery operatives, and elementary occupations, which together account for 49% of the workforce, compared to only 28% for Cambridgeshire and England.

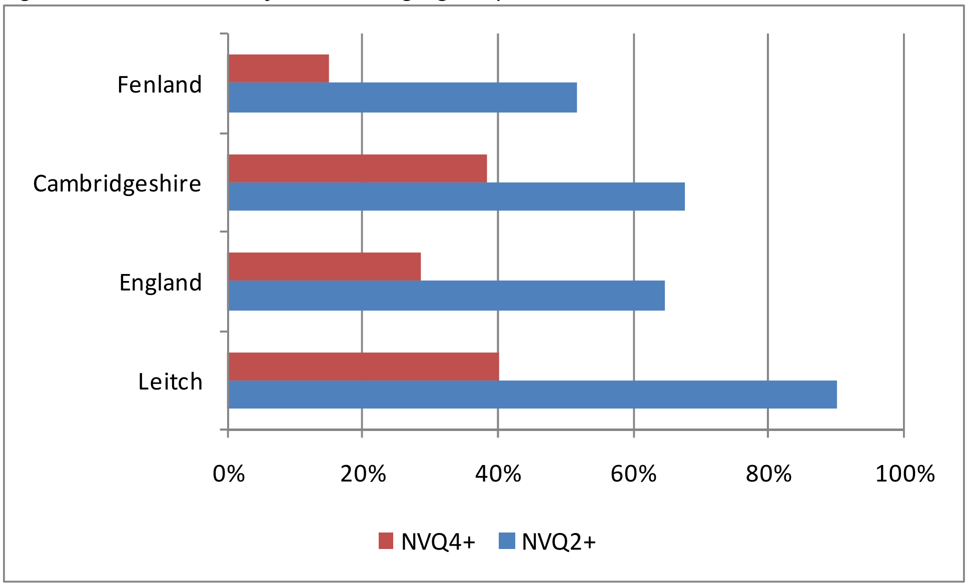
*Figure 2A.6 Occupational Structure of the Resident Workforce*




Source: Annual Population Survey, September 2009

2.27 This pattern of employment is also reflected in the local skills base. The graph below demonstrates that there is a clear skills gap in Fenland compared to Cambridgeshire and England, and most importantly the Leitch targets for 2020, which set assessed skills base necessary for the UK to remain globally competitive by 2020. Almost half of people (48%) do not even hold NVQ2, which is considered the entry level requirement for a competitive workforce, compared to only 32% across Cambridgeshire. The proportion of people holding higher level skills (NVQ4+) also only half the national average (15% compared to 29% nationally and 38% in Cambridgeshire).

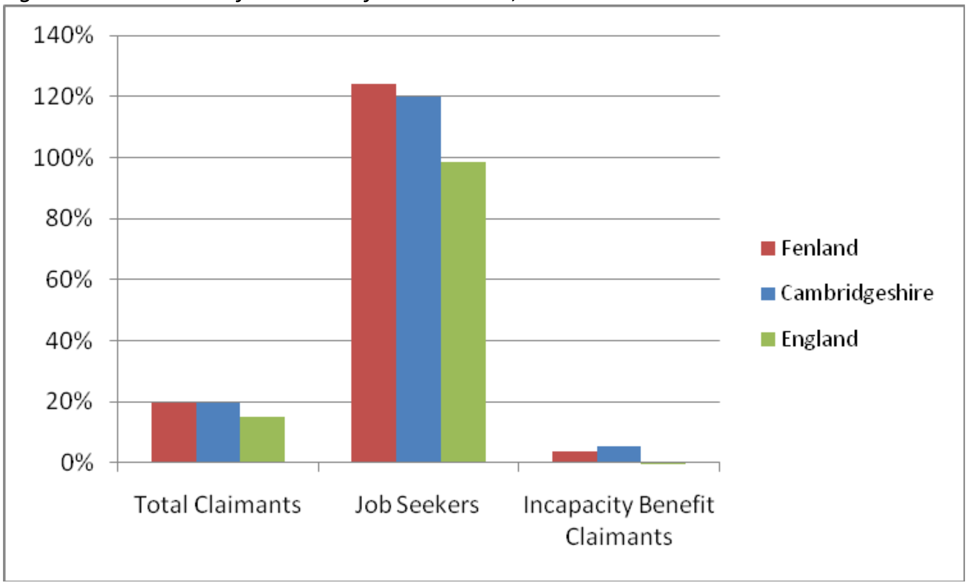
*Figure 2A.7: Skills Base of the Working Age Population, 2008*




Source: Annual Population Survey, December 2009

2.28 The shortage of skills at all levels is one of the major constraints to growth for Fenland and will act as a major barrier to the area benefiting from the spill-over effects of high-tech and knowledge intensive sectors centred on Cambridge. The sectoral mix, occupational structure, and skills base are also likely to be the factors driving the faster than average growth of benefits claimants since 2007. The number of benefits claimants has increased across the country as unemployment has increased in line with the national recession. However the growth of benefit claimants in Fenland exceeds the level of growth that has occurred across Cambridgeshire and far exceeds national trend. Between 2007 and 2009 the number of JSA claimants in Fenland increased by 124%, compared to 120% across Cambridgeshire and 99% nationally. The rate of increase is significant across all areas, but the performance of Fenland relative to national levels reinforces some of the key issues raised above concerning local competitiveness.

*Figure 2A.8: Growth of DWP Benefits Claimants, November 2007-November 2009*




Source: DWP Working Age Client Group, 2009

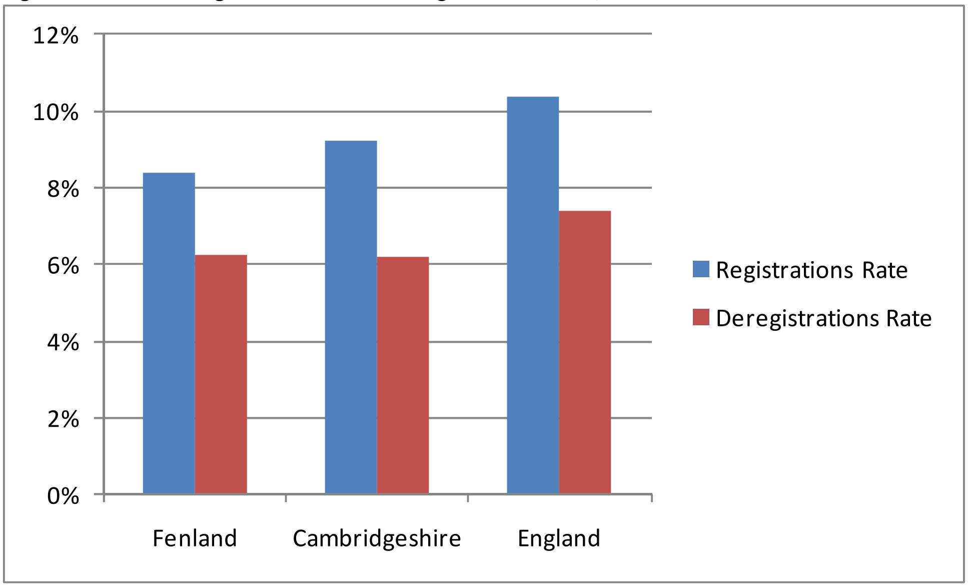
**Enterprise Domain**

2.29 Fenland underperforms against the Enterprise domain, reflecting low rates of self-employment and business density compared to the rural average. However, business registration rates were in line with the 72 rural district average.

2.30 In 2008 there were 60 VAT registered businesses in Fenland per 1,000 working age people, which is broadly in line with the Cambridgeshire figure (62) and above the figure that occurs nationally (55). However, this is expected of rural areas, which tend to have a larger number of smaller businesses and more urban areas. As described above, while Fenland has a greater than average number of VAT registered businesses per 1,00 people, this is still lower than the average in rural areas.

2.31 Furthermore, the registration and deregistration rates suggest that, despite the growth of VAT stocks, Fenland is less dynamic than other areas, with lower rates of VAT registration and de-registration (which can be considered a proxy for business start-up and failure). While a low business turnover may give the impression of a resilient local business base, they often reflect the absence of competitive pressures found in larger economies. Successfully overcoming the local economic issues described in the previous sections would almost certainly increase each of these ratios as more businesses set up or enter the local market, driving up efficiency in the local market place.

*Figure 2A.9: VAT Registration and De-Registration Rate, 2007*



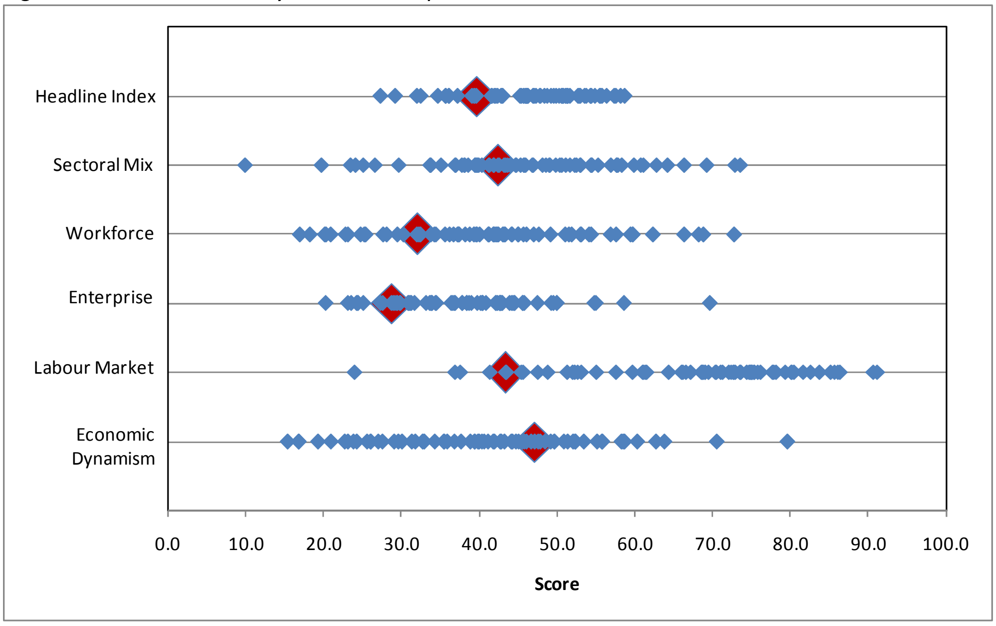

Source: Nomis VAT Registrations Data, 2007

**Economic Dynamism**

2.32 This is the only domain in which Fenland outperforms the 72 rural district average. Between 2003 and 2008 the local area has experienced population growth of 5%[3], employment growth of 10%[4] and wage growth of 8%[5]. However, despite these relatively robust figures, the growth of wages is lower than the rural average (14% over the same period) suggesting that local employment growth may be concentrated in lower value sectors and occupations. The adopted East of England Plan sets a job growth target of 75,000 for Cambridgeshire over the plan period but does not include a specific target for Fenland. Nevertheless, the draft revision to the East of England Plan (March 2010) includes an indicative target of 8,600 net new jobs for Fenland between 2011 and 2031. Fenland's performance on each domain of the index compared to the other 72 rural districts is shown below. Fenland no ranks 59th out of the 72 districts.

[3] Mid-Year Population Estimates
[4] Annual Business Inquiry
[5] Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (2004-09)

*Figure 2A.10: Economic Dynamism comparison*




Source: AECOM

**Setting a realistic job growth trajectory for Fenland**

2.33 As identified above, The Regional Spatial Strategy set a growth targets for Fenland District of 11,000 new homes and 8,600 new jobs for the period 2011 and 2031. These targets have been reviewed in the Cambridge Development Study 2009[6] the conclusion of that report was that the RSS projections were over ambitious and unrealistic given the current recession. As part of our work on the FNPV baseline we have sought to set ambitious but realistic job growth targets which reflect what can be delivered in Fenland over the 20 year timescale but also recognising what would need to be delivered in terms of new jobs in order to realise the economic Vision and objectives which have emerged from the visioning process with stakeholders.

2.34 In setting targets we took into account the existing employment rate and job density ratios in Fenland in relation to a range of comparator areas, (the National Average, the East of England Average and the English Rural District Average) we also considered a range of current forecasts of the impact of the recession on housing completions and job growth/decline. We constructed an employment growth model which took into account population growth forecasts, demographic trends and adjusted for out-commuting. This enabled us to estimate the number of jobs required to achieve the targets set out below.

2.35 From our employment model we can see that in order to maintain the current employment rate as the population grows in line with ONS National Projections, Fenland would have to create an additional 6,966 jobs. Importantly to achieve a rate in line with the Rural District Average which we feel is an ambitious but credible target 8,800 jobs would be required over the same period. It is our view that the RSS targets therefore represent an employment trajectory that is in line with the economic vision for Fenland and that the implications of a lower target would be the relative slippage of the district's economic position in the county and regional economies. It is the role of FNPV to set out the strategy and implementation plan required to deliver this volume of new

6 The Cambridgeshire Development Study Final Report July 2009 SQW, WSP, CE and Pegasus Planning Group

employment (an increased proportion of which will need to be higher skilled jobs) over the next 20 years.

*Table 2A.1: Employment rate comparator*

| | Employment Rate | New Jobs in Fenland | Objective |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Fenland** | 71 | 6,966 | Required to stand still |
| **Cambridge** | 76 | 9,311 | Unachievable |
| **East of England** | 74 | 8,545 | In line with RSS |
| **English Average** | 71 | 7,011 | Not transformational |
| **Rural District Average** | 75 | 8,821 | In line with RSS |
| **RSS Target** | 74.5 | 8,600 | Ambitious but achievable |

Source : AECOM Model.

**The role of migrant labour in Fenland**

2.36 Migrant labour has always played a distinctive role in the Fenland economy at all occupational levels, from temporary and seasonal employment through to skilled and semi skilled and professional occupations. The Fenland Migrant Population Strategy reports that migrant population has increased significantly over the past 5 years and is set to increase in future although partners cannot estimate the precise number of migrant workers at the Fenland level, although anecdotal estimates put the number at between 3 and 4,000 consisting of large range of nationalities but with distinct groups from the Cezch Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia, Sovenia and Portugal. Although some migrant workers fill skilled positions the majority are engaged in low skilled work in land work, food processing, construction, manufacturing, cleaning, hotel and catering. Local companies regard migrant labour as a key part of their business planning.

2.37 This FNPV baseline has already identified the effect that migrant labour can have in some sectors (agriculture, construction, food processing and manufacturing) in 'smoothing out' peaks and troughs in labour demand and serving as a buffer in periods of sharp contraction. However there are some longer-term issues that are relevant to FNPV, for example, migrant workers are often employed below their skill levels and could make a more substantial contribution to the economy. Furthermore migrants with qualifications cannot get these qualifications recognised or validated in this country and therefore cannot maximise their economic contribution, and finally for a plethora of reasons migrant workers face difficulties in accessing skills and training.

**Journey to work patterns**

2.38 There are relatively high levels of the working population out-commuting from the district . The trend of out-commuting in the Fenland District has been explored further by AECOM as part of a regional 'Delivering a Sustainable Transport System' (DaSTS) study to identify areas within the East of England region facing regeneration and peripherality. The study also considered the role of transport in addressing these challenges. The figure below summarises 2001 journey to work data of the resident population in Fenland, highlighting that although levels of out-migration are high, the picture is differentiated across the district. A large proportion of journeys to work from Wisbech and March remain within Fenland. Within Whittlesey and Chatteris, however, more than 50% of these journeys are to destinations outside the district. This is likely to be related to their proximity to the larger employment centres of Peterborough and Cambridge respectively.

*Table 2A.2: Journey to work destination by district*

| Destination District | Wisbech | March | Whittlesey | Chatteris |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Fenland** | 73% | 72% | 40% | 49% |
| **Peterborough** | 6% | 8% | 44% | 4% |
| **Huntingdonshire** | 1% | 5% | 6% | 18% |
| **East Cambridgeshire** | 1% | 2% | 0% | 7% |
| **South Cambridgeshire** | 0% | 2% | 1% | 7% |
| **Cambridgeshire** | 1% | 3% | 1% | 7% |
| **Kings Lynn and West Norfolk** | 10% | 2% | 0% | 1% |
| **Forest Heath** | 1% | 0% | 0% | 0% |
| **South Holland** | 2% | 0% | 0% | 0% |
| **Other** | 4% | 6% | 7% | 6% |

2.39 The patterns of movement are illustrated in the following plans.

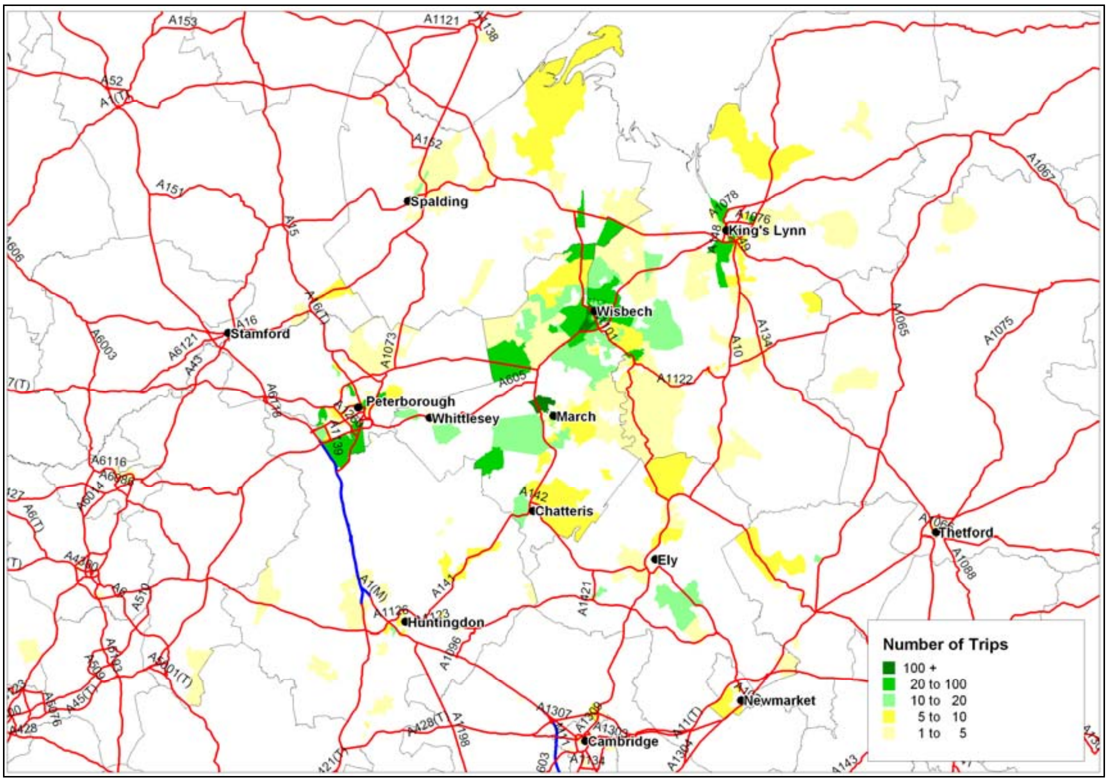


*Figure 2A.11: Wisbech Journey to Work Destinations*

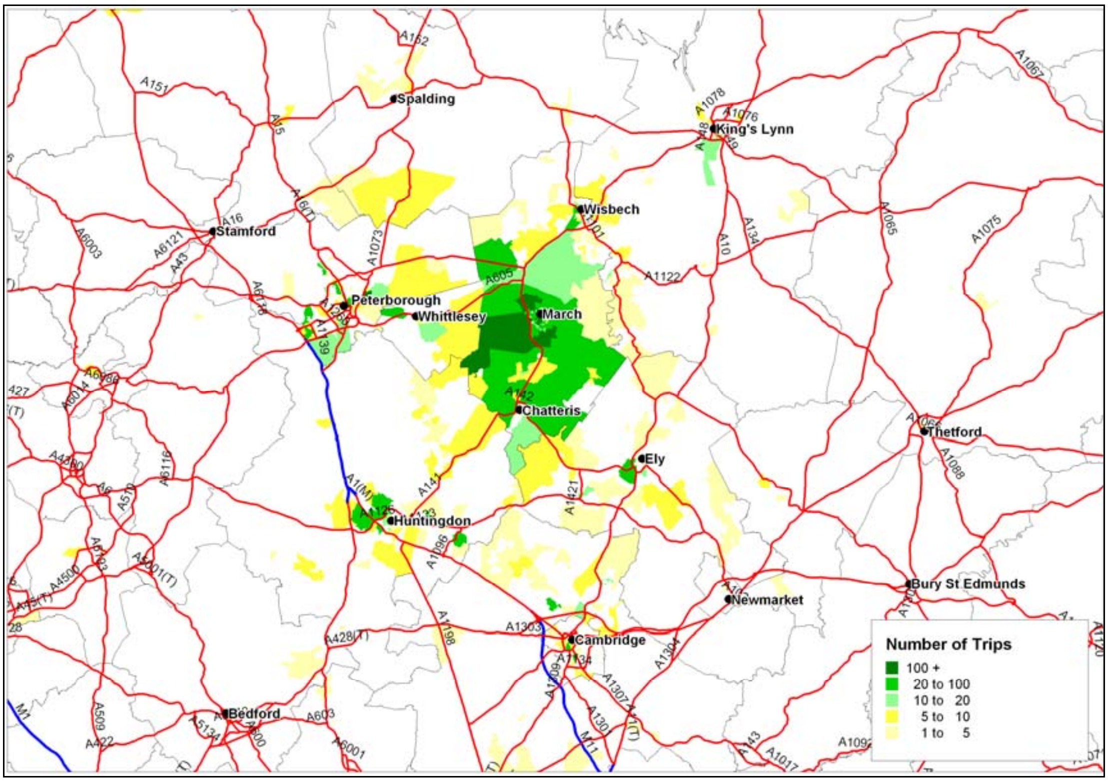



*Figure 2A.12: March Journey to Work Destinations*

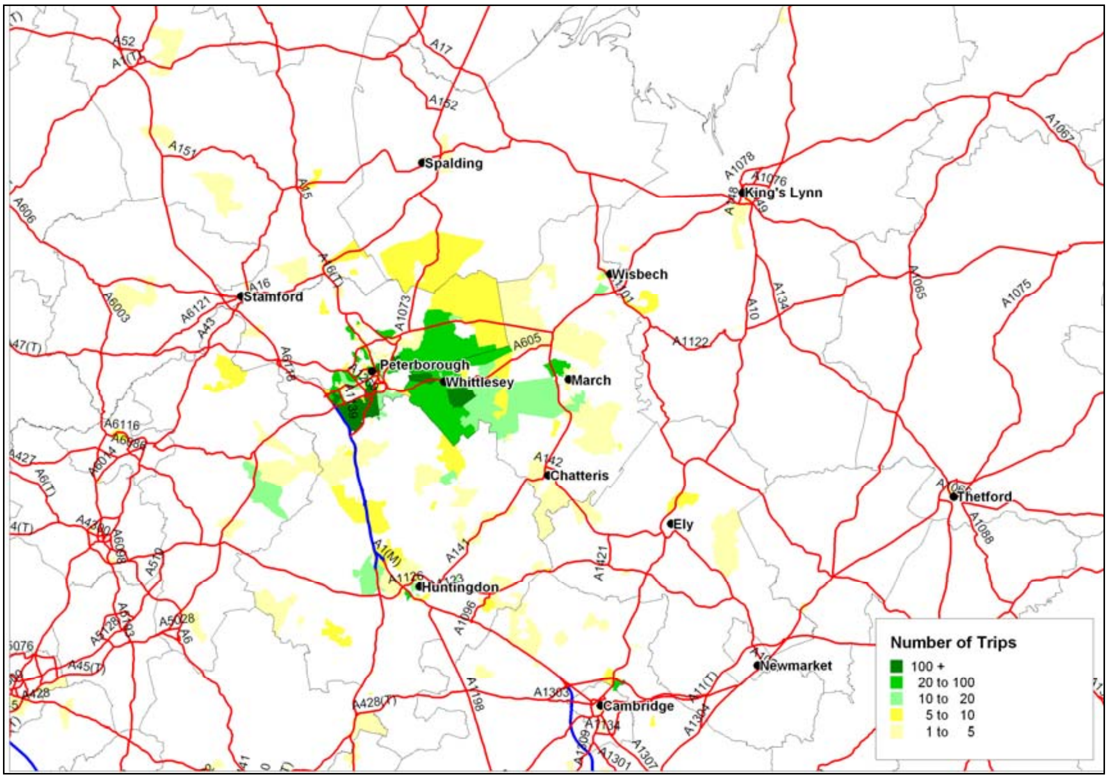



*Figure 2A.13: Whittlesey Journey to Work Destinations*

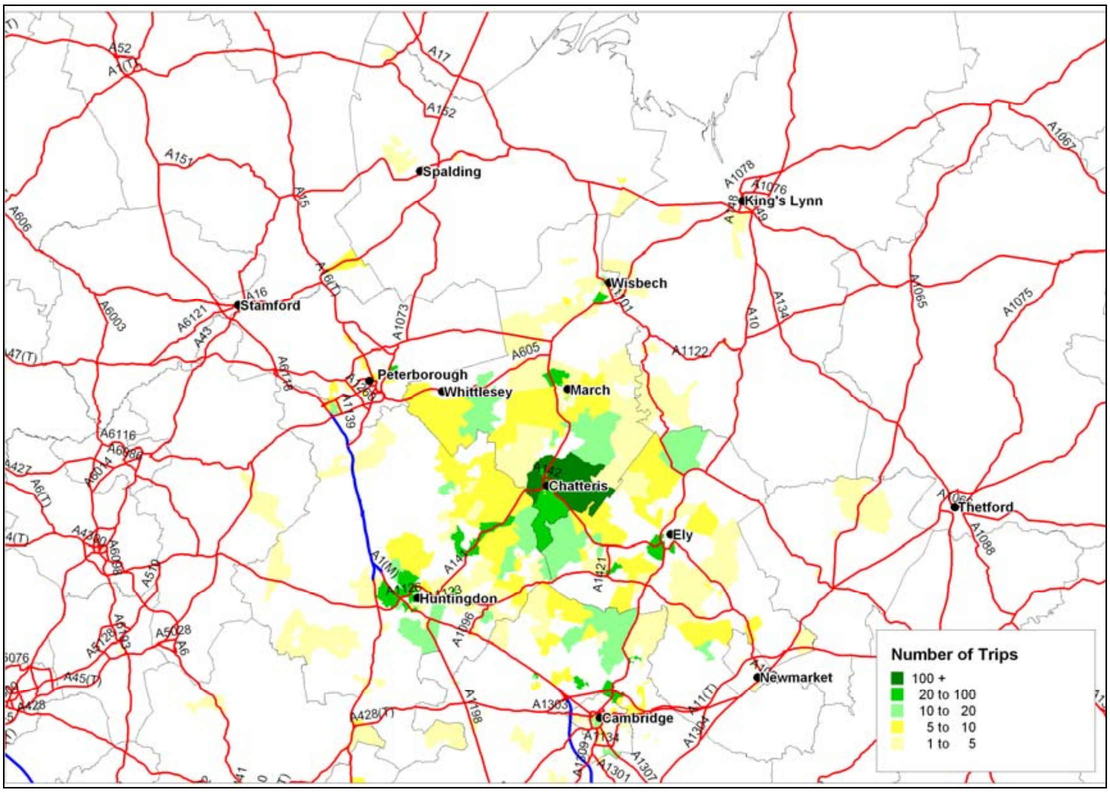


*Figure 2A.14: Chatteris Journey to Work Destinations*

**How FNPV impacts on current strategy and policy**

2.40 The broad strategic thrust of economic policy for Fenland as enshrined in the Economic Development Strategy 2007-2027, the Cambridge Sub-Regional Economic Strategy 2009-2012 and the Regional Economic Strategy is consistent with addressing the underlying economic challenges identified in the FNPV baseline. There is an emphasis on creating more local employment and strengthening key sectors which is essentially sound. In addition the Regional Economic Strategy also identifies the need to support sectors central to the Fenland economy-food, agriculture, bio-renewables and higher value manufacturing.

2.41 Whilst existing strategy appears relevant and is a clear and appropriate response to the scale and nature of the economic challenges, it should be noted that many of these documents no longer carry the strategic influence that they did previously given the change in central government and a new approach to planning policy and regeneration. Our approach however is to incorporate elements of previous strategy where we feel it to be relevant and appropriate and to strengthen and adjust it where necessary for FNPV.

2.42 The Fenland Economic Development Partnership's Vision, is that by 2027 the district will be a business location of choice offering a greater range of employment opportunities for its local community fundamental in raising performance against quality of life indicators for the district. Fenland's Economic Development Strategy identifies a number of key sectors where opportunities exist to build on existing strengths or diversify the district's employment offer.

2.43 As identified in this FNPV baseline, the district is currently characterised by a comparatively narrow economic structure and employment profile. While broadening this economic base is critical as employment in agriculture and manufacturing continues to decline, these sectors will nonetheless continue to play an important role in Fenland's economy. Both the Greater Cambridge SRES 2009 – 2012 and the Fenland Economic Development Strategy 2007 - 2027 highlight the importance of building on strengths in existing sectors-FNPV will provide more direction on how this should be achieved.

2.44 Manufacturing remains one of the most important sectors in the sub-regional economy. The SRES states that in 2007, 73,500 people were employed in manufacturing across Greater Cambridge. The Fenland Economic Development Strategy confirms that manufacturing, like agricultural activity, still employs a disproportionate number of people in the district compared to the national and regional average. Despite ongoing decline in manufacturing, Fenland's Economic Development Strategy points out that the sector remains an important component of Fenland's economic future. In particular, it is suggested that Fenland should seek to explore opportunities in high technology manufacturing and advanced engineering. In the 'Opportunities' section of its SWOT analysis, the Greater Cambridge SRES states that Fenland's existing manufacturing strength, combined with the district's proximity to high tech and biotech clusters in Cambridge make the district well placed to encourage higher value manufacturing activities. The ability of the district to attract investment in these sectors will depend crucially on efforts to improve Fenland's skills base. FNPV prioritises this aspect of the economic development challenge.

2.45 The Regional Economic Strategy acknowledges that agriculture, food and drink remain an economic priority in the East of England and these sectors will continue to be the lifeblood of the rural communities of Fenland. The Fenland Economic Development Strategy 2007 -2027 highlights that 90,000 people in the East of England alone are employed in the industry, generating £2.9 billion per annum. Population growth in the East of England, combined with increasing demand for regional produce mean there are significant opportunities in the food and drink sector which Fenland should seek to exploit. Again this challenge should be fully embraced with the FNPV approach.

2.46 The Greater Cambridge SRES states that while agriculture will remain an important source of employment across the sub-region, numbers employed in the sector are likely to decrease as intensification and productivity continue to increase. As such, rural diversification into sectors such as bio-renewables will become increasingly important. EEDA's Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE), funded by the European Commission and the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) is designed to bring about economic diversification in the East of England. The RDPE is delivered through 'Local Action Groups' which play a key role in identifying and funding projects which meet local priorities and needs. Fenland falls within the 'Fens Adventurers' Local Action Group, which is identified in the Greater Cambridge SRES as having a key role in delivering rural diversification in the district. The Fens Adventurers Rural Development Programme (FARDP) is administered by Cambridgeshire Acre in partnership with Cambridgeshire County Council.

**Retail**

2.47 The most recent Fenland District Retail Study Update July 2009 identified Wisbech and March as having the greatest scope and potential for further retail and leisure expansion. Recent performance has been weak but these towns offer the greatest potential to combine regeneration, and 'place making' with retail and leisure development to create a more significant offer. In terms of Wisbech, the indicators of retail performance suggest that the Town Centre has declined since the previous study, having fallen from 382nd in 2004 to 511th in 2008. A relatively limited retail offer with a particular weakness in fashion retail which is at the low value end of the market and the dearth of quality food and drink outlets are seen as a cause of this decline. The report identified a problem with long-term vacant units in the town centre and the poor quality of some of the public realm around the bus station and the market place. The prime Zone A rents have shown some improvement and footfall remains stable and the retail study advocates that the town should be supported and protected as a retail centre given the pressure the town has faced for additional out-of-centre retail development over recent years. FNPV wholeheartedly supports this principle which is central to our spatial framework.

2.48 In March the performance has remained strong (despite some slippage in the national rankings) which is attributed to the pleasant environment, lack of anti-social behaviour and strong footfall. Convenience retail is strong but there is room for improvement in comparison retail and given current operator interest in March there is potential to extend provision in a way which will bolster the town's vitality, and strengthen its offer in a high quality historic setting. Again the Retail Study stresses the importance of embracing the strong 'town centres first' message of PPS6 when considering the most appropriate locations for retail, office and leisure development in the town. This is an aspiration which is in full alignment with the place making agenda advocated by FNPV which seeks to generate and capture wealth and prosperity for the people of Fenland through strong and vibrant town centres within high quality environments.

2.49 Whittlesey and Chatteris are relatively small centres which fulfil dual roles as tourism and local service centres quite well. Both are viable, pleasant and attractive centres which would benefit from small scale environmental improvements and some refurbishment of shop frontages to halt decline in some areas.

2.50 The retail report reinforces the FNPV theme of quality food and drink provision by citing the urgent need of higher quality restaurants, cafes and pub/bars in Wisbech and March. Small scale multi-plex/independent cinema and bingo provision are also cited as appropriate commercial and leisure opportunities which if pursued and encouraged would strengthen the overall offer and performance of the two larger market towns.

**Tourism and the visitor economy**

2.51 The Fenland Economic Development Strategy 2007-2027 suggests that tourism remains under-developed in the district, highlighting that tourism-related employment currently accounts for only 5% of employment. There is significant potential to better exploit natural and cultural assets to increase visitor numbers in Fenland. Its location approximately 2 hours from both London and the Midlands provide an real opportunity to pursue outdoor tourist pursuits such as fishing and walking. In addition to direct job creation, increasing visitor numbers would have significant multiplier effects, with existing businesses benefitting from increased trade and spending. The market towns clearly have a major role to play in terms of developing a higher quality, and much a more comprehensive and varied visitor economy which can capture more value for the district. FNPV is an important opportunity to emphasise the importance the visitor economy and can reinforce this in a holistic way by putting the sector at the heart of an overall Vision which emphasises place making, sector support, skills development and strengthening the market towns.

**Existing planned regeneration projects**

2.52 A number of key projects identified in the 2007 Economic Development Sstrategy still remain highly relevant today. Due to changing economic circumstances stances some will take longer to deliver than originally envisaged but as a package they would be central in realising Fenland's economic growth and employment aspirations and the spatial component of FNPV. The key projects that will form part of FNPV are:

- Relocation of College of West Anglia to March (or improvements to Wisbech campus as now proposed)
- Making Assets Count programme in Wisbech Masterplanning employment areas and Town Centres in Fenland
- Infrastructure bids to improve shortage of serviced land and small/medium units for enterprise and innovation
- Building Schools for the Future in Fenland's secondaryschools
- Nene Waterfront regeneration in Wisbech

**FNPV - an emerging economic strategy**

2.53 The existing economic strategy prepared in 2007 goes some way towards identifying the key socio-economic challenges facing Fenland and identifies a series of 'transformational stepping stones' to help drive progress. This approach was reinforced by regional and sub-regional policy.

2.54 Whilst endorsing the broad approach it is clear that going forward the economic vision needs to be more holistic and fully integrated with other ambitions to achieve population and housing growth. Perhaps of paramount importance is that economic aspirations for Fenland inextricably linked with the need to raise skills levels, improve educational performance and an overall focus on increasing social and economic mobility. Our emerging Vision for Fenland is driven by the desire to achieve a resilient more balanced economy and one which places **significant and explicit emphasis on equipping the people of Fenland to take advantage of opportunities and economic growth both within the district and farther afield**, whilst creating more jobs in key locations and improving the economic performance of the market towns.

**Weaknesses that FNPV can address**

2.55 The evidence base points to a poor skills base, low occupational profile and low workforce skills. FNPV must therefore set out to improving the economic and social mobility of residents by supporting efforts to improve skills at every level including adult and workforce skills. The aim should be to create a 'learning district' where all existing and new learning infrastructure can be 'stretched ' to create a culture of learning particularly amongst disengaged adults and the current workforce. Learning should extend to all communities within Fenland including disengaged adults and migrant workers.

2.56 The baseline illustrates that Fenland has an employment rate which is lower than the County and East of England average and it has a job-density ratio which is one of the lowest in the country. Rates of out-commuting are extremely high due to a lack of jobs in the District. Fenland also has a narrow economic base.

2.57 FNPV will set out a framework for driving up investment and creating local jobs by creating new accessible and distinctive employment locations across the District. There is an opportunity to create a broad range of business accommodation products to support a move towards a higher value and more diversified business base. This would include town centre and river front accommodation for sectors with growth trajectories such as business services, Creative, IT and renewables. New locations for logistics, distribution and R&D will also be considered in other locations. The aim is to accommodate broad based sector growth locally and reduce the dependence on out-commuting over time.

2.58 Currently the economic vitality of the market towns is on the decline; they are slipping down the national retail rankings, and have a limited food/drink, cultural and leisure offer. In March and Wisbech in particular urgent action is required to halt further decline. Currently the market towns are not capturing income from affluent residents who are currently working and shopping outside the area. A place making approach (from a strong historic form base) which seeks to strengthen the town centres, and increase demand for their offer in its broadest sense will be crucial to FNPV. The market towns should be economic drivers for the district and FNPV proposals embrace the broad recommendations outlined in the recent Retail Study which advocates growth and development of the retail and leisure offer in March and Wisbech, whilst making small scale refurbishments and environmental improvements in Chatteris and Whittlesey.

2.59 Fenland does not currently provide the right housing offer to underpin the sustainable communities. It is essential that the housing offer reinforces this vision by providing both decent and affordable homes. FNPV will need to provide a basis against which a sustainable flow of affordable homes can come forward, balanced with the need for key pieces of infrastructure. Furthermore, it is equally important that homes are built that attract economically mobile people whether they work in the district or elsewhere given the external economic 'pulls'. A critical mass of higher income residents will also generate demand for better services and reinforce efforts to strengthen the market towns. FNPV should help ensure that the opportunities associated with building new homes and related infrastructure benefit existing communities. Projects such as the SmartLIFE demonstration house build projects in March and Chatteris, should be used to encourage existing and new housing partners to build using Modern Methods of Construction and encourage local skills development through agreements with developments.

2.60 Moreover, existing housing stock, especially private, is a key issue. FNPV will provide the framework for focusing on issues such as fuel poverty. A long-term vision to up-skill residents in retrofitting existing stock to support reduced energy costs through environmentally sustainably technologies could be a key part of this approach.

**Strengths that FNPV can build on**

2.61 Fenland possesses some mature and well established clusters of industries in the related areas of food, drink, manufacturing and distribution amongst others. There may be employment decline in some of these sectors but others niche areas are strong and will continue to support jobs. Similarly Fenland is well placed to take advantage of new and emerging clusters where there is potential for employment growth. FNPV offers the opportunity to take a step back and take a fresh look at Fenlands industrial structure, and identify where intervention or support might be made more effective. In order to do this we have structured the sectors below.

| Existing Mature Clusters | Potential Emerging Clusters |
|---|---|
| • Agri-food cluster<br>• Food/production/processing/distribution/cold storage and related manufacturing and packaging<br>• Food related distribution, wholesaling and retail<br>• Food related business and professional support services<br>• Specialist engineering and manufacturing (metal components manufacture, equipment manufacturing, electrical engineering, rail engineering, marine engineering)<br>• The Logistics cluster (port, rail, off-road freight, transport, large wholesale, warehousing and distribution) | • Renewable energy (wind, wave, bio-fuels)<br>• Environmental Services (emissions control, water management and treatment, management of energy resources)<br>• High quality food retail/education |
| **Potential for growth (economic forecasts)** | **Potential for modest growth (economic forecasts)** |
| • Business Services (R&D, accountancy, recruitment, professional services, IT services, financial services, security, office support services)<br>• Health and care sectors/care for elderly<br>• Logistics and Distribution | • Construction (sustainable construction specialism)<br>• Transport and communications<br>• Education<br>• Retail and Leisure<br>• Hotels, restaurants, catering, hospitality<br>• High tech manufacturing<br>• Creative Industries |

2.62 The role of FNPV is to ensure that the supply of business accommodation, skills and expertise is targeted at the right areas to be effective for each of these sectors whether they are part of a well established cluster or a new emerging sector.

2.63 The high quality built environment and heritage assets in Fenland's market towns are a key asset that should be built on using quality place making to maximise their role as economic drivers. High quality waterfront locations have excellent potential for leisure, culture and new service sector employment, while attractive town centre or riverside eating and retail opportunities could make a genuinely high quality and distinctive visitor experience. Wisbech and March in particular are identified as areas for retail and leisure development and expansion and this in turn would be further supported by employment and residential expansion in the towns. FNPV will set out a distinct economic role and contribution for each of the Market Towns.

2.64 Given the prominent role that migrant labour plays in the Fenland economy there is a clear opportunity capture a bigger economic contribution and to that extent FNPV should support aspirations to utilise underused skills of the migrant population, support appropriate aspirations for career development and facilitate qualifications recognition and skills development.

**SWOT Analysis – Build economic and sustainable Fenland communities**

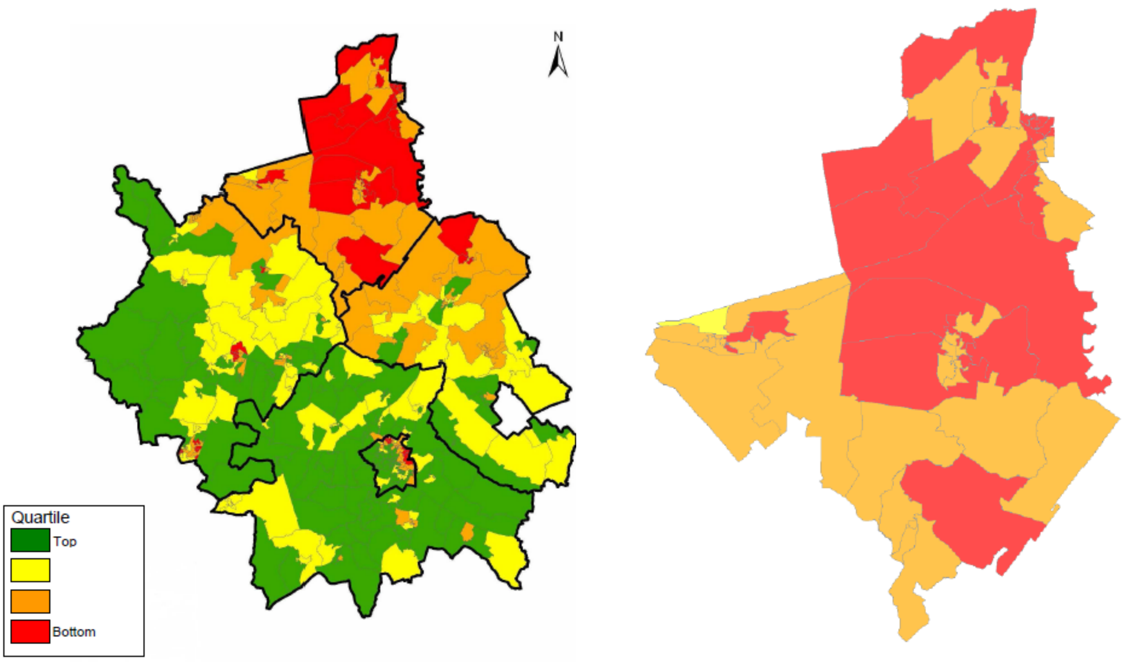
| Strengths | Weaknesses |
|---|---|
| • Market Towns with distinctive heritage assets<br>• Well developed stakeholder partnerships with a commitment to growth<br>• Sector specialisms in agriculture, food, manufacturing, and logistics.<br>• Investment in Schools through BSF<br>• Good early learning infrastructure | • Poor skills base<br>• Low rates of enterprise<br>• Narrow economic base<br>• Low occupational profile and lower than average incomes<br>• High numbers employed in declining sectors<br>• Underperforming market towns<br>• Peripherality and isolation in some areas<br>• Persistently high levels of deprivation in some areas<br>• Aging population<br>• Poor health which leads to poor economic participation and productivity amongst some groups<br>• Public transport to employment for people without a car |
| **Opportunities** | **Threats** |
| • Underdeveloped business services sector with potential to grow in employment terms<br>• Market Towns will the potential to capture significant visitor spend and income<br>• High quality environment with potential to create higher value business locations<br>• Exciting potential in the food and drink and renewables sector for economic growth and development<br>• Proximity to other growth locations Cambridge and Peterborough etc.<br>• CCC Making Assets Count programme<br>• New Localism and the Big Society- innovative approaches through MCC<br>• Infrastructure Planning to support economic growth | • More dynamic neighbouring locations competing for investment and jobs<br>• Coalition monetary policy and extreme fiscal tightening<br>• Abolition of EEDA and Business Link<br>• Difficulty in delivering Nene Waterfront and other 'transformational stepping stones'. |

# Part 2B - Make sure children and young people have the opportunity to achieve their full potential

**Baseline & key issues**

2.65 The Joint Strategic needs assessment for Cambridgeshire (JSNA, 2008) describes a detailed pattern of underachievement linked to deprivation in Fenland. Clearly children from lower socio-economic groups are immediately disadvantaged in health, development and lifestyle and are falling behind children from other areas by the age of three. The Indices of Multiple Deprivation data from 2007 shows educational deprivation in Cambridgeshire. Fenland stands out as an area of high educational deprivation, with all four market towns performing poorly.

*Figure 2B.1: Deprivation in Cambridgeshire and Fenland: Education*




Source: FDC IMD 2007 Maps

**Early years**

2.66 Children's centres support all families with children under five. They aim to bring together the following services to improve access and take up and ultimately positively affect the life chances of children across the district:

- health services
- families support services
- family activities information
- early years education / child care
- employment and training advice

2.67 All 40 Children's Centres across Cambridgeshire are now open. There are currently 6 centres in Fenland:

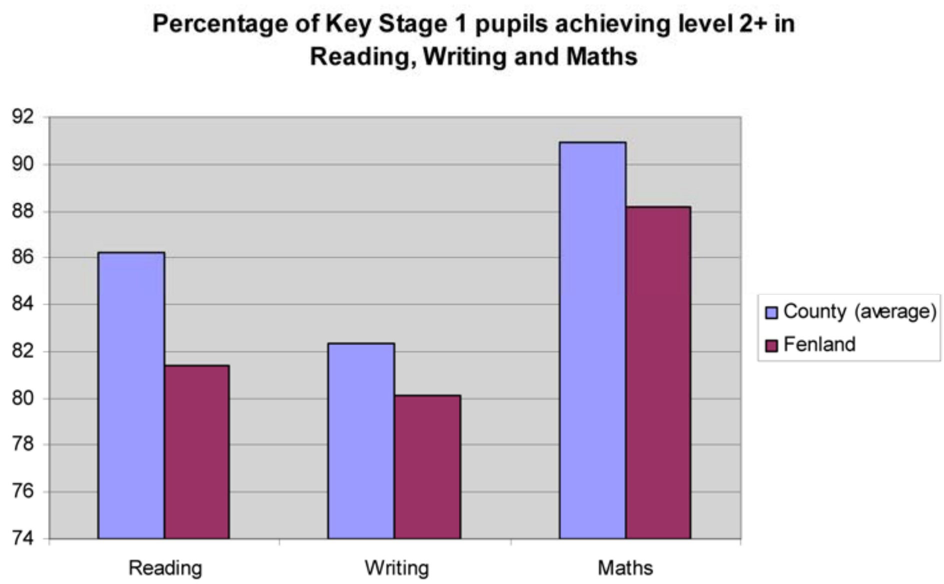
- Chatteris and Villages
- March and District **(located with Cavalry Primary School)**
- Murrow and District (Wisbech) **(located in Murrow Primary School)**
- Oasis Children's Centre, Wisbech
- Whittlesey **(located with New Road Primary School)**
- Wisbech South **(located in Nene Infant & Nursery School)**

2.68 There is no real quantitative evidence of their success. However, anecdotally through the stakeholder workshop, these centres are providing a valuable early intervention and a platform for different providers, including job centre plus and other PCT services to engage with parent and young children.

**Primary and secondary level attainment**

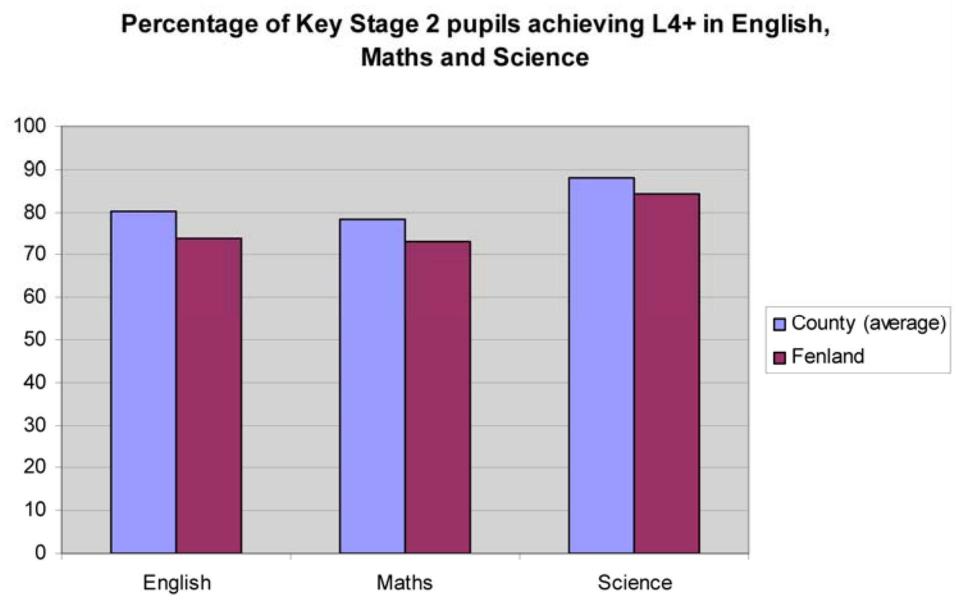
2.69 At foundation stage Fenland's performance is only slightly behind the County average and in line with national performance. However, the gap in achievement levels between Fenland and the rest of the County is evident from KS1 and KS2. At the FNPV stakeholder meeting in July 2010 a culture of underachievement was cited as being the root cause of this phenomenon. This culture has also been identified by teachers in local schools and parents are widely thought to contribute to the prevailing low aspiration of children in the District. The emerging performance gap at KS1 is shown in the figure below.

*Figure 2B.2 Percentage of KS1 pupils achieving level 2+ in Reading, Writing and Maths*




Source: Joint Review of Educational Attainment 2010

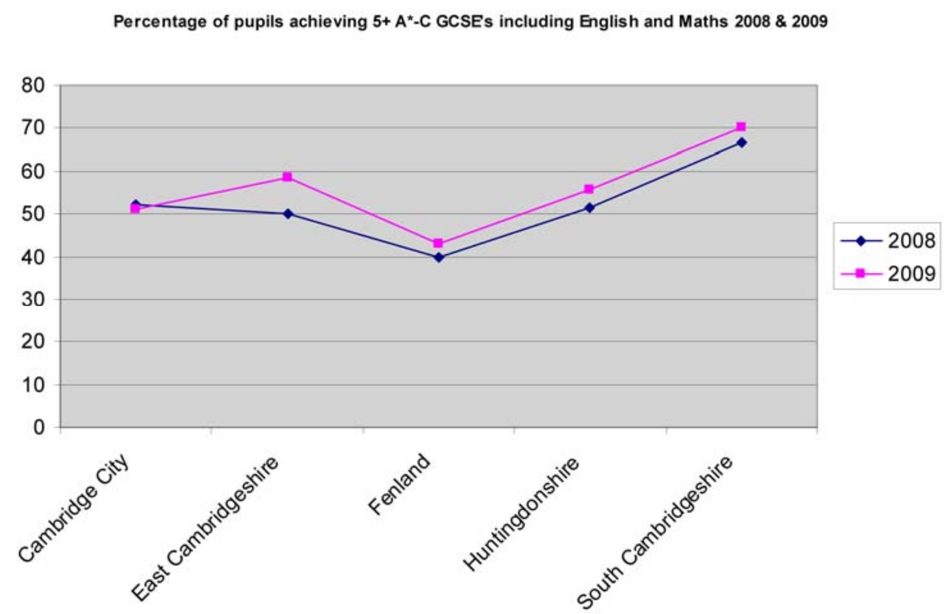
*Figures 2B.3 Percentage of Key Stage pupils achieving L4+ in English, Maths and Science*




Source: Joint Review of Educational Attainment 2010

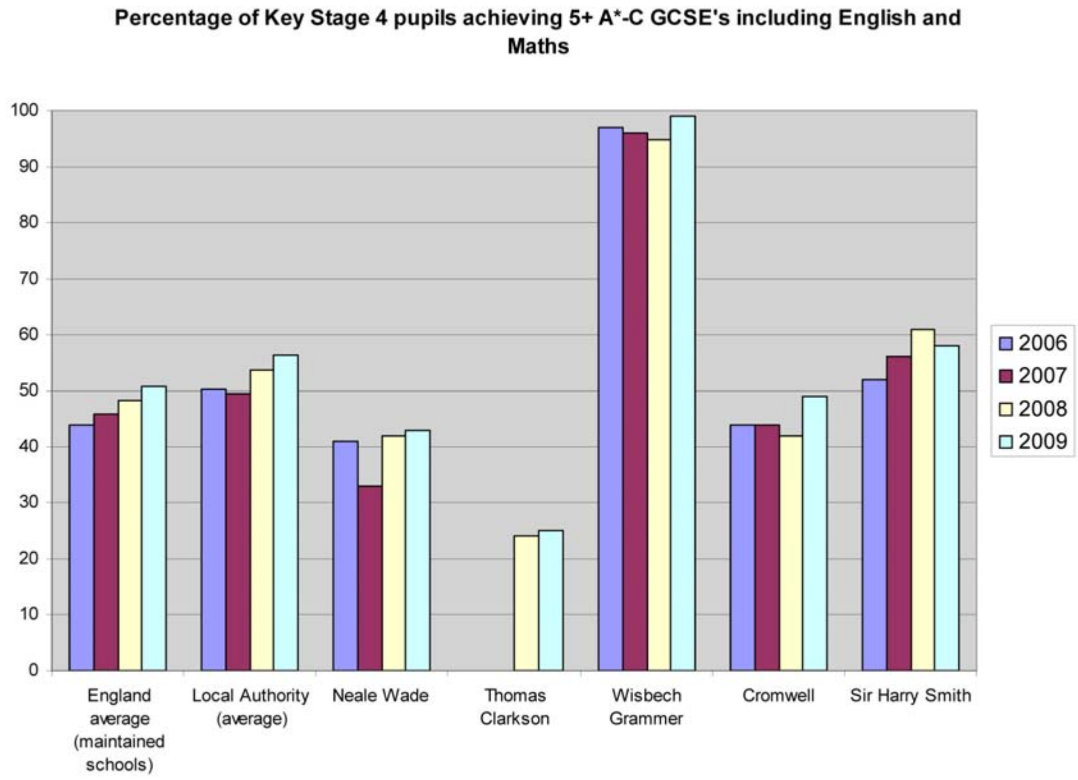
2.70 The gap widens as we progress through secondary school which results in significantly poorer achievement for Fenland pupils at GCSE level. The gap in performance between secondary schools in Fenland and the England average and the Local Authority average for 5+ GCSE A-C results are shown on the next page. It can be seen clearly here that the impressive improvement in performance over the past year has been mirrored in the rest of the Country.

*Figures 2B.4 Percentage of pupils achieving 5+ A*-C GCSEs including English and Maths 2008-2009*




Source: Joint Review of Educational Attainment 2010

*Figure 2B.5 Percentage of Key Stage 4 pupils achieving 5+ A*-C GCSEs including English and Maths*




Source: Joint Review of Educational Attainment 2010

2.71 The implications and outcomes associated with poor achievement at Key Stages 1 and 1 and at GCSE, which can be clearly seen in Fenland, are lower proportions of young people not staying in school or lower proportions not taking advanced education above the age of 16. The sustainable economic and communities section of this report highlights the high proportion of adults with no or low qualifications and the high proportion of NEETs (people not in education, employment or training).

**Building Schools for the Future**

2.72 In Cambridgeshire, the Fenland secondary and special schools and the Fenland Junction Pupil Referral Unit will be the first to benefit from BSF. The following Fenland schools will benefit from first phase of BSF investments are:

2.73 **Cromwell Community College, Chatteris** - Increase from 11-16 to 11-18 offer. The general condition of the buildings is good. The projected increase in pupil numbers reflects an increase in post-16 provision to be offered by the college in the future. Our plans take account of the Town Council's intention to provide significant new community facilities, including a multi-use games area (jointly funded with the Football Foundation), fitness suite and, hopefully, a swimming pool. Some of these may be constructed alongside the BSF project.

2.74 **Neale-Wade Community College, March** (planning application submitted Jan. 2010) - Most of the buildings are in fair condition. A significant proportion of new build will be required as part of the modernisation of the school.

2.75 **Sir Harry Smith Community College, Whittlesey** - A significant increase in accommodation is required to meet BB77 standards and to provide for a further increase in pupil numbers.

2.76 **Thomas Clarkson Community College, Wisbech** (planning application submitted Jan. 2010) - A significant proportion of new build will be required as part of the modernisation of the school. The projected increase in pupil numbers reflects a significant increase in post-16 provision to be offered by the college in the future. Thomas Clarkson Community College is the only PFI School in Fenland and is one of two sample schools for the purposes of the BSF procurement process

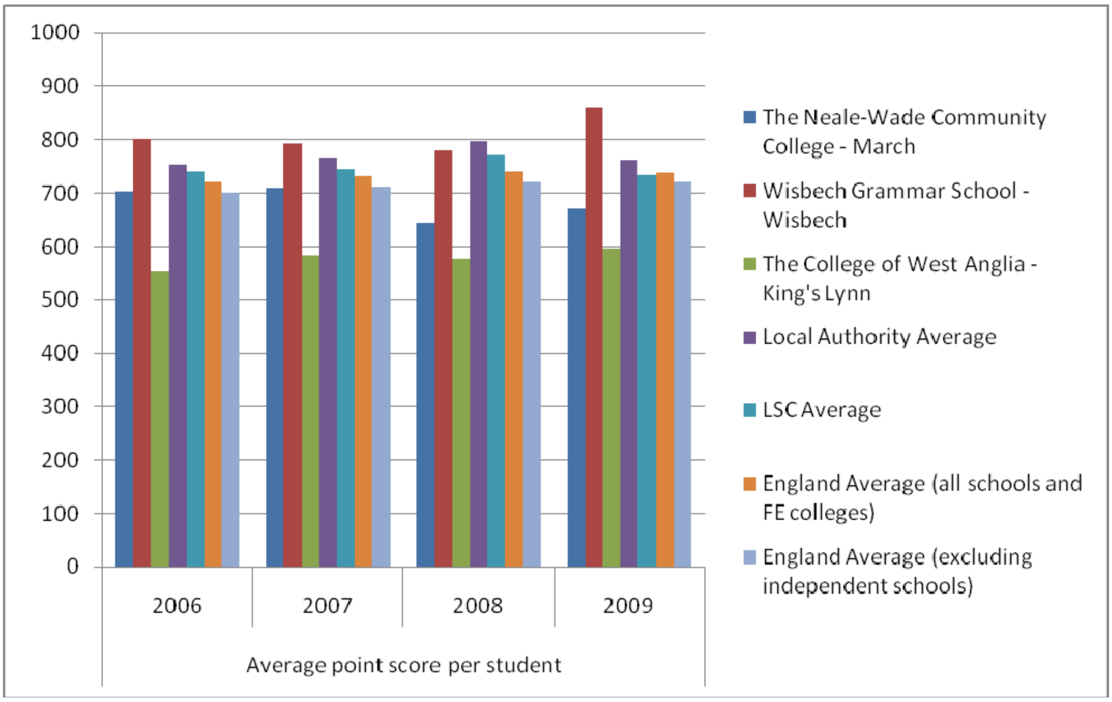
2.77 BSF is also being used to fund improvements to **Meadowgate Special School, Wisbech and the Fenland** Junction **Pupil Referral Unit, March.** A new building on an alternative site is the preferred outcome for the future of Fenland Junction.

**Further Education**

2.78 FE provision is provided through sixth-form facilities at The Neale-Wade Community College, March and Wisbech Grammar School, with the BSF plans discussed above bringing forward provision at Thomas Clarkson Community College, Wisbech and Cromwell Community College. Furthermore, West Anglia College provides a wider FE function for the population from its Wisbech campus.

2.79 As can be seen in Figure 2B.6, West Anglia College scores well below average, when compared to the other colleges. It should be noted this includes the Kings Lynn main facility. West Anglia College were due to move to a new campus in March. However, LSC funding was withdrawn due to over programming of resources. Current plans are to improve their current facility in Wisbech, with financial support from Fenland District Council and the Cambridgeshire County Council.

*Figure 2B.6 Average points score NVQ (equivalent) 4 & 5*




Source: Department for Education and Skills 2010

**Strengths that FNPV can build on**

2.80 Education is absolutely vital to the FNPV agenda. There are three key elements to this:

- Education attainment has a direct link to an uplift in skills to support economic growth and investment
- School performance is critical in attracting new families to the area
- Lifelong learning can have significant quality of life benefits for residents and has impacts on health, confidence, motivation and participation

**Early interventions**

2.81 At the stakeholder consultation workshop, a key message was the need for services to work together better. Children's Centres are now established in each of the market towns in Fenland. Children Centre managers highlight the potential to use the facilities to provide more services across public sector agencies. Getting agencies to work together to identify key points where early intervention by a multi-disciplinary team could benefit residents and improve health and other social outcomes will require a better understanding and mapping of how users access services and also of how one service could be used to support improvements to outcomes for another service.

**Building Schools for the Future**

2.82 Plans to use the significant capital investment of BSF to raise aspirations and interests of pupils by integrating the design, development and construction of facilities into school curriculums should provide the blue print for other key pieces of new education provision that will be required to support further growth. Furthermore, the model for provision of wider community uses should place the schools at the heart of the community, helping to break down barriers both for children and their parents or carers.

**Weaknesses that FNPV can address**

2.83 From the evidence examined and from discussions with stakeholders, it is clear that a huge amount has been done over recent years to improve education attainment in Fenland schools. As a result of this there have been some notable achievements in recent years including in 2009[7]:

- from 2009 the biggest improvement in results in the County in pupils achieving Level 2+ in Key Stage 1 Mathematics; and
- an increase of 2 percentage points in pupils achieving Level 2+ in Key Stage 2 Reading.

2.84 These improvements however must be viewed against a backdrop of poor educational achievement in Fenland overall. Fenland consistently achieves poorer results than the county and national averages at every stage, and furthermore, **the gap gets wider as we move through the educational system**.

2.85 Poor attitudes to education and education are complex and are linked to income levels, health and employment and as such require comprehensive solutions. It is clear that whilst additional interventions, based in schools, intended to drive up performance and attainment levels are important, they will never be enough to reverse the fortunes of underachieving and low aspiration communities over the long-term. Intervention within school needs to be reinforced by the overall efforts to tackle deprivation and social and economic mobility within those communities most affected by multiple-deprivation.

2.86 It is clear that partners, through the JSNA, have identified and acknowledged the cause and nature issues highlighted in this report. Population growth if accompanied by the appropriate social infrastructure and neighbourhood regeneration can also help in this regard in fostering more positive attitudes to the worlds of education and employment.

2.87 The current strategic emphasis as enshrined in the Big Plan 2 2009-2012 focuses on the following:

- Improving outcomes for 0-7 year olds and 11-19 year olds.
- Narrowing the attainment gaps for vulnerable groups (inc in deprived areas)
- Reducing the number of NEETS
- Increasing access to play space

[7] Fenland District Council and Cambridgeshire County Council Joint Review of Educational Attainment 2010.

- Improving teacher retention

2.88 These priorities are fully consistent with our evidence base and should not change in principle in Fenland until the outcomes of the current review of educational attainment in Fenland report in December 2010. The Joint Review of Educational Attainment is critical and its remit is not limited to attainment but also looks at:

- Added value school performance
- Health and aspirations of young people
- Evaluation of Early Years Foundation Stage education
- The role and potential of extended schools
- Maximising the impact of Building Schools for the Future
- Re-thinking 16-19 education and training in the context of the recent transfer of responsibility back to the Cambridgeshire County Council
- The spatial impact of attainment on each market town
- Understanding the role and potential of the **locality teams** and youth work in general
- Wider issues of teacher retention and the role of parents.

2.89 For FNPV therefore, it is the links between attainment and issues of deprivation, housing, health and wider factors around community cohesion that are most important. It is these linkages that we would seek to influence through the wider vision and spatial options.

**Parental and young people's aspiration**

2.90 Two critical factors identified in the SJNA 2008 as central to attainment are parental support, along with the prevailing attitudes of people within a young person's local community. Again, in the FNPV stakeholders workshop these two factors were highlighted as major weaknesses in some Fenland communities and in particular those areas of concentrated deprivation shown in the IMD mapping.

2.91 A key message was the need to go direct to children and young people when raising aspirations. The successful 'Community House' scheme in Waterlees shows that creating places for young people, where they can relax and feel comfortable within their communities provides a solid backdrop for intervention that can raise awareness of opportunities and aspirations to get the skills necessary to progress.

**Teacher retention**

2.92 Teacher retention is identified within the Fenland Sustainable Community Strategy as a major issue. This was confirmed at the stakeholder workshop. A combination of poor school attainment and the challenging teaching environment is some schools, plus the geographic location of Fenland were all cited.

2.93 FNPV should be able to help address these challenges at a strategic (albeit long-term) scale by using growth to help improve opportunities and make more attractive places across the district. However, it should also be able to provide support at a more immediate and practical level, by providing a framework the brand Fenland to the outside world. This should go further than just branding to attract teachers. It should be used by all public sector agencies as a shared approach to recruitment, 'selling' both the undoubted attractions of Fenland, but also positioning the challenges in a way that appeal to the type of people the district needs. The branding strategy should go well beyond recruitment and into areas such as tourism, culture and inward investment.

**Extended schools**

2.94 Extended schools could be a key part of supporting the emerging vision for FNPV. Services can be provided through the voluntary, private and public sector offering access to a range of activities which will support and motivate children to achieve their full potential. Their focus includes providing:

Quality Childcare

- high quality 'wraparound' childcare for primary age pupils,
- either on the school site or signposted to local providers;
- 'a safe place to be' after school for secondary age pupils

Out of school activities

- a varied menu of activities to be on offer such as homework clubs and study support, sport (at least two hours a week beyond the school day for those who want it), music tuition, dance and drama, arts and crafts, special interest clubs

Parenting support

- Including information sessions for parents at key transition points, parenting programmes and family learning sessions to allow children to learn with their parents

Easier access to a wider range of services

- to provide support at an early stage for children and young people with additional needs such as behavioural, emotional, health or other difficulties.

Community access to school facilities

- to enable greater community use of school facilities such as ICT suites, sports and arts facilities, and access to adult learning opportunities.

2.95 Positive impacts can include better mental and physical health and wider positive social outcomes for vulnerable children and young people, along with improved motivation, self-confidence, and behaviour, attitudes to learning, attendance and achievement of pupils.

2.96 This type of activity accords with the emerging aspirations for FNPV and could form a key part of improving attainment while linking in with wider strategic and community level objectives. The key challenge will be working with schools, the voluntary and private sectors to deliver services, especially given the current resource constraints. However, there is a real opportunity to build on emerging agendas in relation to localism and the 'Big Society' to secure funding and/or technical support.

**Further Education**

2.97 FE will be a vital part of the economic development strategy that will emerge from the FNPV work. Up-skilling the existing population, responding to the needs of existing and new industries will be critical in responding the emerging vision. FNPV will need to provide the evidence base to support the strategic direction of FE provision in Fenland, across West Anglia College, potentially other FE providers and the community colleges. Consideration should be given to focusing courses towards agreed shared for Fenland. As Fenland's economy grows, building on relationships with the business community will be essential in creating a workforce that is responsive the industry needs. Furthermore, thinking about how FE provision can be delivered on campus as well as within communities will also be critical.

**SWOT Analysis – Make sure children and young people have the opportunity to achieve their full potential**

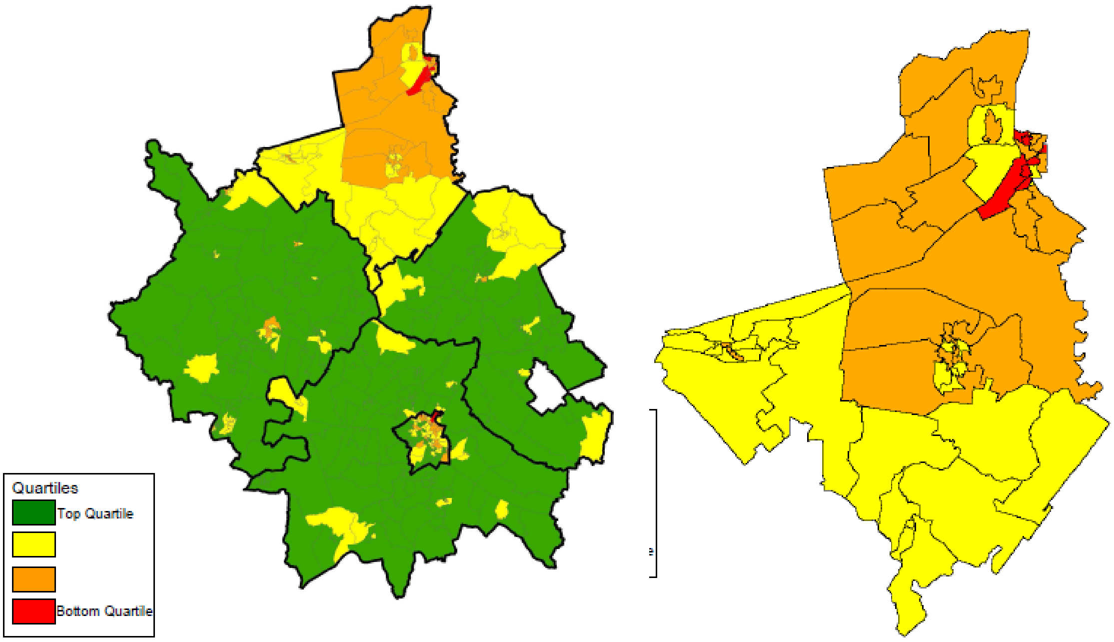
| Strengths | Weaknesses |
|---|---|
| • Strong joint policy response to educational attainment issues<br>• Excellent data sharing between relevant partners<br>• Good early years provision<br>• BSF Programme<br>• Big improvement in GCSE performance 2008-2009 | • Poor skills base<br>• Low rates of enterprise<br>• Narrow economic base<br>• A gap in educational attainment between Fenland and the County at every level<br>• Persistent levels of multiple-deprivation in some areas undermining educational attainment<br>• A culture of underachievement and low aspirations in some communities<br>• Parents reinforcing the culture of underachievement<br>• Difficulties in teacher retention |
| **Opportunities** | **Threats** |
| • Joint review is an opportunity to tackle education attainment in a comprehensive manner<br>• Opportunities to link growth with new learning infrastructure<br>• Extend learning provision in existing and refurbished schools<br>• Local skills provision and training through BSF programme<br>• Review and tailor the delivery of 16-19 education as its now in CCC hands<br>• Join-up services on an area basis to tackle the education challenges | • Cuts in education funding<br>• Cuts or delays to BSF programme<br>• Failure to tackle deprivation and deliver economic growth<br>• Losing out to other locations in attracting good teachers<br>• A transient population with poor attainment |

# Part 2C - Improve health and social wellbeing

**Baseline & key issues**

2.98 Health is a key indicator in the determination of the Index of Multiple Deprivation. Figure 2C.1, which maps the Health domain of IMD, indicates that Fenland is disproportionately affected by poor health compared to the rest of Cambridgeshire. It also suggests within Fenland, there are spatial inequalities in terms of health outcomes with issues focussed in Wisbech and the north of the district.

*Figure 2C.1: Deprivation in Cambridgeshire and Fenland: Health*




Source: FDC IMD 2007 Maps

2.99 The Draft Cambridgeshire Health Inequalities Strategy (October 2009) sets out the following strategic ambitions:

- To decrease the health inequalities and poverty found in the most socio-economically deprived areas in Cambridgeshire.
- To decrease access inequalities that impact on health and well being.
- To decrease the health inequalities experienced by vulnerable groups that exist within the Cambridgeshire population.
- To prevent the creation of new health inequalities.

2.100 This strategy responds to the October 2008 Joint Strategic Needs Assessment JSNA for Cambridgeshire provides a comprehensive overview of demographics, health needs and health inequalities across the county. The Assessment provides a more detailed picture of the specific health issues in Fenland.

**Life Expectancy**

2.101 Variations in life expectancy across Cambridgeshire closely mirror socio-economic circumstances. Specifically, life expectancy for both males and females is lowest in Fenland and highest in South Cambridgeshire. Although at an aggregate level, life expectancy exceeds the national average, female life expectancy in Fenland was significantly below the national average during the period 2004-06. The north of Fenland and east of Cambridge City had higher rates of people reporting that they had a limiting long term Illness in the 2001 census.

**Mortality and Morbidity**

2.102 Amongst the working age (16-64) population, the JSNA highlights that Fenland has a mortality rate which is statistically significantly higher than the Cambridgeshire average, but not the national average. Nevertheless, Fenland has a statistically significantly higher mortality rate from all circulatory diseases compared to the England and Wales rate. The 2009 Cambridgeshire Health Profile, produced by the Eastern Region Public Health Observatory (ERPHO), highlights that of districts in Cambridgeshire, Fenland has the highest rate of early deaths linked to cancer, heart disease / stroke, as well as deaths linked to smoking. In addition, rates of diabetes diagnosis are above the national and county average.

2.103 The 2009 Cambridgeshire Health Profile provides a picture of various risk factors which may underpin these health outcomes. Specifically, it indicates that obesity rates are higher in Fenland than all other districts, with 28.8% classified as obese compared to 24.2% across the county. Of the 123 wards in Cambridgeshire, Fenland had the top 18 wards with highest estimated prevalence of obese adults. In particular, Waterlees ward has the highest proportion of obese adults at 35%.

2.104 The JSNA also highlights that healthy eating and exercise rates among the adult population are lower in Fenland than any other district in Cambridgeshire. In terms of the consumption of five or more portions of fruit and vegetables a day, there is significant variation across wards in Cambridgeshire. Compared to the national average of just under a quarter (23.7%), it is estimated that Newnham in Cambridge City had the highest consumption rate (39.5%), whilst Waterlees in Fenland has the lowest at 11.9%. The Fenland Active Leisure Strategy (January 2010) indicates that only 17.4% of Fenland residents take part in moderate intensity exercise for 30 minutes 3 times a week, compared with a Cambridgeshire average of 21.7%. The JSNA also highlights that within Cambridgeshire, Fenland, along with North East of Cambridge, parts of Huntingdonshire and East Cambridgeshire have the highest estimated prevalence of smoking. Of the five wards with highest prevalence of smoking across Cambridgeshire, two are in Fenland. With an estimated smoking rate of 40%, the ward of Waterlees in Fenland has the highest prevalence of smoking in county, whilst Kingsmoor has an estimated rate of 36%.

**Children and Young People**

2.105 The JSNA reports that on average, health outcomes for children in Cambridgeshire are generally good. The children and young people at risk of not achieving their potential are:

- Children and young people with lifestyle issues, eg obesity, smoking, sexual health.
- Children and young people from areas of deprivation.
- Children and young people in families where the adults have problems.
- Vulnerable children and young people, e.g. those at risk of abuse, those with disabilities, those with mental health problems.

2.106 In the case of Fenland, the incidence of deprivation across the district is a key determinant of health outcomes. Fenland has the highest proportion of children living in poverty of all districts in Cambridgeshire, with particular concentrations in the north of the district. The JSNA states that "poverty has an adverse effect on the health, development and lifestyles of children". In particular, the Assessment stresses that children and young people living in the most deprived of wards in Cambridgeshire on average are:

- more likely to have a low birth-weight, which can be associated with other health problems;
- more likely to have poor educational achievement, which is associated with poorer lifetime health and economic achievement;
- more likely to be admitted to hospital as an emergency, particularly for respiratory or gastrointestinal illness.

2.107 The 2009 Cambridgeshire Health Profile highlights that the rate of physical activity among children in Fenland is below both the national and county average. At 11.5% compared to the county average of 8.8%, child obesity rates are higher in Fenland than any other district in Cambridgeshire. In general, Cambridgeshire has low levels of teenage conceptions compared to the national data. However, Fenland has a significantly high rate of conceptions compared to the Cambridgeshire average among females under 18 years old.

2.108 As indicated above, levels of education are typically associated with health and well being outcomes. The JSNA highlights significant inter-district variation in terms of educational achievement across Cambridgeshire. In 2006, less than half of pupils (46.7%) in Fenland attained five or more GCSE grades A*-C, compared to the county average of 61% and South Cambs, where 70% pupils achieved five or more GCSE grades A*-C.

**Older People**

2.109 Of Local Authorities within Cambridgeshire, Fenland has the highest proportion of older people with 19% of residents aged over 65. The JSNA state that older people make up 72% of social services clients. As such, the ageing population structure will increase demand for accessible health, healthcare and social services that contribute to their health. Fuel poverty is identified in the Assessment as an issue which disproportionately affects older people across the county.

**Other Vulnerable Groups**

2.110 In addition to young people and older people, the JSNA identifies inequalities amongst the following vulnerable groups:

- Disabled people
- Travellers
- Migrant populations
- Homeless people
- Prisoners/Refugees/Immigrant populations

2.111 The Draft Cambridgeshire Travellers Health Strategy (September 2007) highlights that 32% of the East of England's Traveller and Gypsy population are located within Cambridgeshire. It identifies a series of health issues which disproportionately affect Traveller communities, including angina, asthma, mental health problems and infant mortality. Rates of smoking (57%) are also higher among Travellers while rates of GP registration are low.

2.112 In addition, the JSNA also highlights other factors which may contribute to poor health outcomes among Traveller communities, including poor nutrition, lack of secure accommodation and low educational attainment. In addition, various cultural and practical factors underpin the relatively low-take up of primary health care. The FNPV's Future work will need to explore how growth can improve outcomes.

**Access**

2.113 Fenland's relative isolation and limited transport network may have key implications for health outcomes, particularly within the context of an ageing population. At the time of the 2001 census, amongst Local Authorities within Cambridgeshire, Cambridge City had the highest proportion of households without access to a car or van. This may be less of an issue within such an urban area due to public transport provision and the proximity to key services and facilities. Approximately one in five households (19%) in Fenland did not have access to a car or a van.

2.114 The Health and Well Being Sub-Partnership of the LSP is aiming to improve access to services, specifically primary healthcare by public and community transport for Fenland residents especially those living in the rural areas. As part of this project, a GIS database is being developed to review access to healthcare by public transport, which will be useful identifying areas that are within 400metres of a public transport services that link to healthcare facilities, and where this is not the case for potential growth locations making sure alternative travel options are provided such as community car schemes to ensure access to healthcare.

**Leisure and Healthy Lifestyles**

2.115 The Fenland Active Leisure Strategy (2010) proposes developing leisure services in Fenland around four priority themes:

- *More people, more active, more often*
- *Providing a sustainable service*
- *Delivering more together*
- *Providing good value*

2.116 To this end, in 2009 Sport England using the Facility Planning Model (FPM) and Active Place Power (APP) tools, conducted a review of current and future demand of sport facilities in Fenland. This analysis concluded that:

- There are sufficient sports halls
- There is sufficient swimming pool water space
- There is slightly lower provision of fitness stations and a further 47 stations would bring provision up to the average for the region.
- Provision of indoor bowls facilities should be considered as local provision meets demand.
- Existing provision of synthetic turf pitches is adequate.
- There is a deficit of a 4 lane athletics track in Fenland.
- There is a deficit of a 4 court, indoor tennis centre in Fenland.

2.117 Based on Fenland's population growth projections, Sport England's work recommends that consideration should be given to the provision of the following future facility requirements in the period up to 2026:

- 5 court sports hall (included within proposed COWA development)
- An increase of about 130 fitness stations on current provision.
- An additional small indoor bowls centre.
- 5 lane athletics track.
- 4 court indoor tennis centre.
- The model identified capacity for an additional 1/3 of a 25m, 4 lane, swimming pool is required up to 2026

**Strengths that FNPV can build on**

**Active leisure**

2.118 The Active Leisure Strategy is a key part of Fenland's current approach to improving health outcomes. The FNPV work will need to explore options for providing new leisure facilities in the district, including additional options for the George Campbell Leisure Centre, through the FNPV process

2.119 The strategy points out that community sport is flourishing in Fenland and proposes working with partners to develop a model of leisure centres and community colleges acting as sports hubs, with other activities available in community settings, such as village halls, reducing the need to travel and increasing accessibility and participation within the community. As part of FNPV, the vision will need to embrace this current area of work. While physical provision of facilities is an important part of the story, a key next step must be to increase access to open space across the district and within the towns to further promote healthier lifestyles. This could also include access to the waterways and potentially better use of the Wisbech port and Nene Riverside development for sport and leisure pursuits.

2.120 The design and integration of new communities and developments that will be required to deliver proposed growth will also need to provide access and facilities both formally, but also informally. Growth should help contribute to walking and cycling networks across the district.

**Weaknesses that FNPV can address**

**Healthy eating**

2.121 While significant work is being done to affect obesity, the problem appears deep rooted and will require a farther reaching approach. Fenland District Council has put in place a variety of programmes to address both adult and childhood obesity. The MEND programme, for example, is a free, multidisciplinary programme for obese and overweight children and their families. FDC's Leisure team provides a variety of services and programmes designed to address adult obesity, including the GP Referral Scheme, free swimming for over 60s and the Healthy Walks programme. FDC's Environmental Health team deliver nutrition training for local businesses to promote healthier food outlets. In addition to the council, Cambridgeshire Acre, the Ormiston Trust and Fenland Links also provide a variety of projects aimed at reducing levels of obesity in adults and children.

2.122 In terms of future service developments, the Health Improvement Strategy identifies a number of projects which could further help to address childhood obesity. These include encouraging lunchbox clubs, awareness campaigns, healthy cooking courses for parents, promoting walking buses, increasing awareness/use of G2G cards and working with FDC Leisure Services to create more opportunities for active play for under 4s. A number of potential strategies for addressing adult obesity include the delivery of new allotments, possible planning policy around the location of fast foods, the Physical Activity Directory, the Physical Activity Time Campaign as well as the Workplace Healthy Walks Campaign.

2.123 While these activities are important and should make a real difference, concern was expressed during the stakeholder workshop that such is the financial realities of access to cheap, largely unhealthy food these interventions are likely to have limited impact. However, Fenland sits within one of the most productive food areas of the country. While already contributing to the economy through employment, there is an opportunity to exploit the area more; key to this must be improving access to cheap healthy food and an understanding of its benefits by embedding skills and a better understanding of food. Furthermore, opportunities to work with local supermarkets and producers to promote and celebrate local Fenland produce should form another part of the approach. Stakeholder consultation highlighted opportunities for public sector organisations operating across Fenland to agree a percentage figure for use of Fenland produce. This would act as a powerful first step both to stimulate producer interest in directing food locally and as a marketing exercise to build up interest through example in the local populations.

**Access to services**

2.124 While work is being undertaken to better align provision of health services to public transport (bus) routes, it is clear from the initial work that current access levels to many parts of each of the market towns and many of the villages is poor, in terms of proximity of health provision to bus stops. The ultimate aim of the current study by the Health and Well Being Sub-Partnership is to influence and amend bus routes. This will have a positive effect in towns. However, consultation with stakeholders has highlighted that many villages suffer from isolation. As such, the infrastructure planning work as part of the FNPV project will need to consider improving access for those in villages across

Fenland, either through transport interventions, or by bringing services to communities. Working across public and third sector organisations to consolidate so called ‘hubs’, in a way that increases both access and the benefits of co-location of services will also need to be a key consideration.

**Poverty and area based deprivation**

2.125 Clearly poverty and area based deprivation is a major issue for part of Fenland, and as the evidence set out above indicates, there is a clear link between this and health outcomes, especially for young people. As part of the Making Cambridgeshire Count (MCC) Fenland is running a ‘Place Pilot’ project to investigate overlaps in service provision between public sector services to better align services to communities needs in areas of deprivation. The study will identify the opportunities to maintain and improve services, whilst potentially reducing spend. It will include developing a resource mapping methodology that can be transferred geographically, developing understanding with front line officers and managers, and service users/communities, and using their expertise and experience to propose opportunities for working differently to achieve better outcomes. FNPV must support such work and a more user focused approach to service delivery.

2.126 The council’s proactive approach to economic development will be vital to reducing deprivation, through increasing employment opportunities and employment prospects. As such, skills development (highlighted in earlier chapters) will form a critical part of long-term reduction in health inequalities, by giving people opportunity to access well paid employment.

**SWOT Analysis – Improve health and social wellbeing**

| Strengths | Weaknesses |
|---|---|
| • Active leisure programme<br>• Proximity to fresh produce<br>• Low levels of air pollution<br>• Existing accessible waterways, footpaths and cycleways | • Poor educational attainment<br>• Pockets of deprivation<br>• High numbers of NEETs<br>• Poor access / relatively low car ownership<br>• Low levels of exercise and activity<br>• Poor diet<br>• Incidence of adult and childhood obesity<br>• High rates of smoking<br>• Poor integration between health facilities & public transport network<br>High levels of road traffic accidents/fatalities |
| **Opportunities** | **Threats** |
| • Insulation of new housing and decent homes programme help to address fuel poverty<br>• Encouraging healthy eating<br>• Creating high quality, useable open spaces<br>  o Country Parks<br>  o Waterways as multifunctional spaces<br>  o Town parks<br>• Mobile health services<br>• Consolidated range of services into co-location hubs<br>• Improved cycle and walking links<br>BSF – improved education links to health outcomes | • Economic downturn could lead to increased deprivation/health inequalities<br>• Cost and access to healthy produce<br>• GP referral scheme could lead to unequal assess across district<br>• Increasing dependency ratio<br>• Reduction in bus services to rural communities<br>• Private housing lacks investment to improve insulation and fuel poverty |

# Part 2D - Safer and stronger communities

**Baseline & key issues**

2.127 Community cohesion is an important area, which FNPV will need to address. It appears to manifest itself in poor relations between communities of different backgrounds. The Fenland Management Information Guide (Q4 - 2010) sets out that in 2008 (latest available figures) only 61.9% of Fenland residents thought that people from different backgrounds get along well together in their local area. This compares to the national average of 75% and 79% of respondents in Cambridgeshire. Against this indicator, Fenland ranks 340$^{th}$ of 353 authorities in the survey, highlighting the extent to which lack of community cohesion is an issue in the district. The five least satisfied wards in Fenland are all in the east of Wisbech:

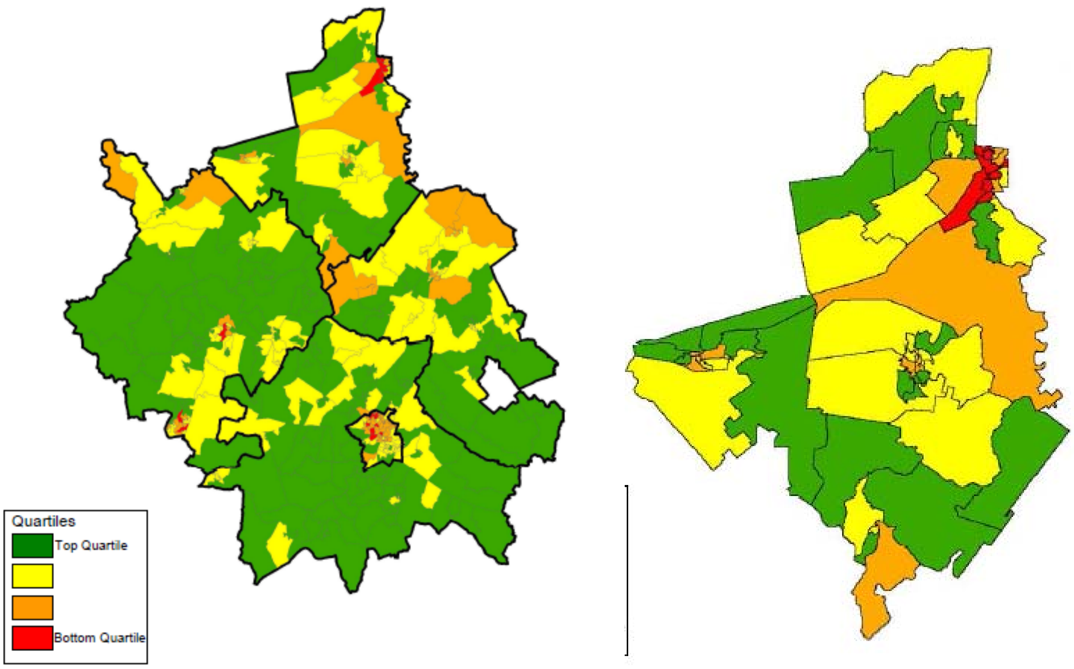
- Kirkgate (26.7%)
- Staithe (28.6%)
- Hill (34.8%)
- Waterlees (38.1%)
- Clarkson (42.1%)

2.128 There is an extremely wide variation within Fenland in terms of the perception of community relations between people from different backgrounds. Fenland performs better in terms of the proportion of people who feel they belong to their immediate neighbourhood (National Indicator 2). The district's score of 58.1% is broadly comparable to the national (56.7%) and county (58.6%) averages. 38.1% of Fenland respondents felt that people in their area *do not* treat each other with respect and dignity. This is above both the national and Cambridgeshire averages of 33.4% and 24% respectively. Nationally Fenland ranks 288$^{th}$ out of 353 authorities.

2.129 The lack of cohesion in some areas can be attributed in part to the number of migrant communities in the district. The East of England Development Agency (EEDA) states that East Anglia has the highest number of migrant workers in England, around 90,000. The Fenland Migrant Population Strategy 2007-2010 states that migrant workers and their families represented the largest single group of new arrivals into Fenland in the three years prior to the Strategy's publication. Nevertheless, the Strategy highlights the difficulties in accurately estimating migrant numbers at all spatial scales. At the time of the Strategy's publication, the worker registration scheme stated that 3,355 people from the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia have registered with them as living in the Fenland area since May 2004. This excludes the considerable population of Portuguese and other nationalities in the district, as well as people who may work, but not live in Fenland. EEDA suggest the country's largest population of Estonians live in Fenland. There is also a large gypsies and traveller community in Fenland, who face significant barriers in terms of integration and access to services.

2.130 Employment and housing are key issues for migrant populations, along with skills, access to health provision and crime. The Migrant Population Strategy sets out these issues, but a clear theme throughout the document is the need for better co-ordination of services and provision to meet the different needs of each population group in the area.

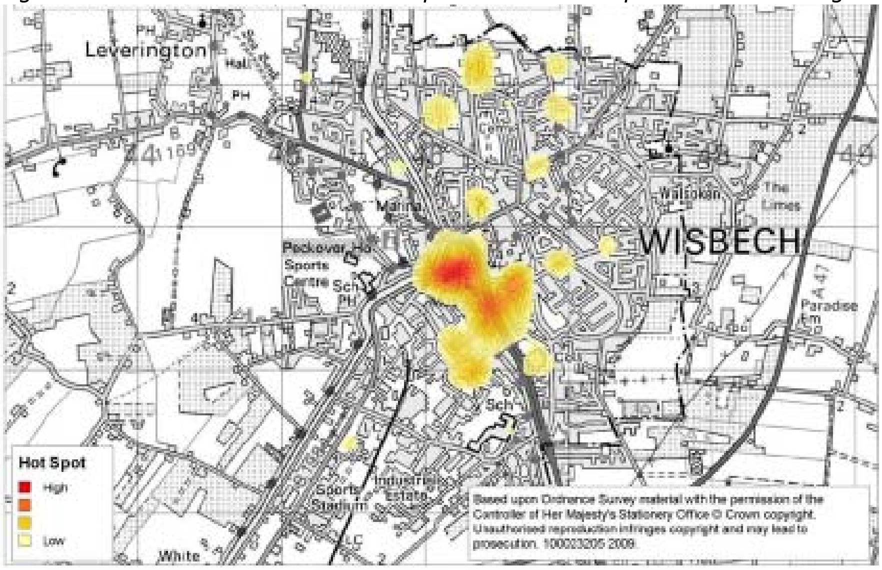
*Figure 2D.1: Deprivation in Cambridgeshire and Fenland: Crime*




Source: FDC IMD 2007 Maps

2.131 The Fenland Community Safety Partnership's 2009 Strategic Assessment provides a more detailed picture of crime patterns across the district. Anti-social behaviour is identified as a particular problem in Fenland both in terms of public perception and recorded incidents. The Place Survey 2008 (National Indicator 17) found that 20.1% of Fenland residents felt that anti-social behaviour was a problem in their area compared to 12.6% in Cambridgeshire. 'Hotspot' analysis illustrated in Figure 2D.2 highlights that Medworth and Clarkson wards in Wisbech had the highest rates of anti-social behaviour in Fenland, followed by St Mary's ward in Whittlesey.

*Figure 2D.2: Anti-Social Behaviour Hotspots in Wisbech September 2008 – August 2009*




Source: Fenland Community Safety Partnership Strategic Assessment (2009)

2.132 The Assessment identifies links between some aspects of anti-social behaviour and alcohol related violent crime. Patterns of violent crime are highly concentrated in terms of time and space, being focussed primarily in town centres at weekends. Medworth ward accounts for the largest number of violent offences (207) in Fenland, the boundaries of which cover Wisbech Town Centre.

2.133 The Community Safety Partnership's work provides a comparison of violent crime incidents in the main town centres of Fenland over a two year period.

**Table 2D.1: Incidence of Violent Crime in Fenland's Town Centres**

| Town Centre | Violent crime incidents Sept07-Aug08 | Violent crime incidents Sept08-Aug09 | Change |
|---|---|---|---|
| Chatteris | 27 | 8 | -19 |
| March | 42 | 59 | +17 |
| Whittlesey | 16 | 17 | +1 |
| Wisbech | 153 | 147 | -6 |

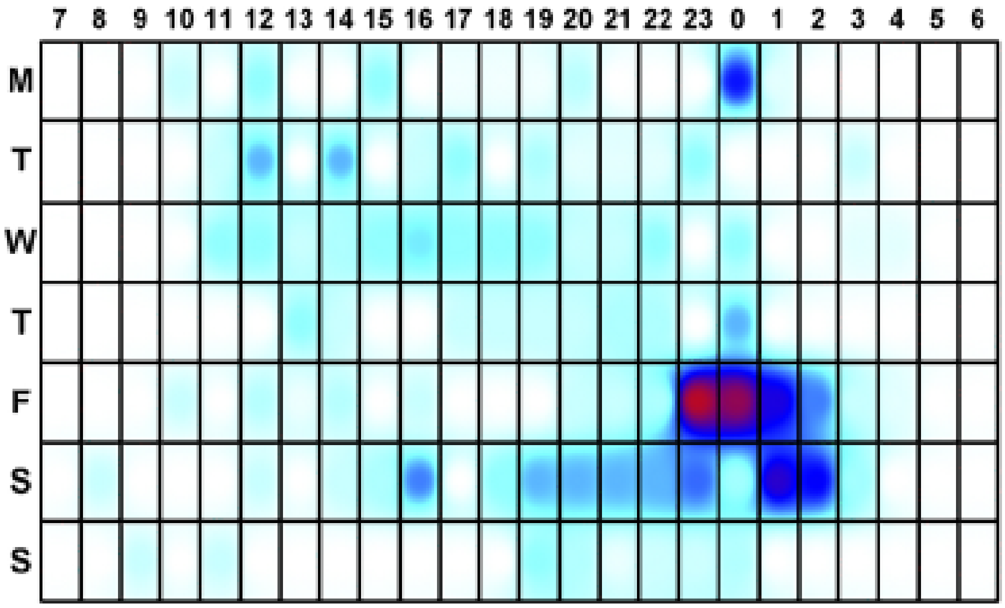
Source: Fenland Community Safety Partnership Strategic Assessment (2009)

2.134 Analysis underpinning the Strategic Assessment suggests that violent crime is a particular problem at weekends, in particular:

- Friday nights from 10pm to 3am
- Saturday nights between 11pm and 3am

2.135 This temporal distribution of violent crime is found in Wisbech Town Centre, as illustrated in Figure 2D.4, which shows a strong peak in violent crime between 11pm and 2am on Fridays.

*Figure 2D.4: Timing of violent crime in Wisbech Town Centre*




Source: Fenland Community Safety Partnership Strategic Assessment (2009)

2.136 In addition to violent crime, the Community Safety Partnership's work highlights that in the 12 month period covered by the Strategic Assessment, recorded domestic violence increased by 18%. With 17.9 incidents per 1,000 of the population, Fenland had the highest rate of domestic violence among districts in Cambridgeshire.

2.137 During the 12 month period ending July 2009, there were 34 incidents of Arson in the Waterlees ward of Wisbech. There were 35 incidents in March North, 18 of which were at Whitemoor Prison. In addition, there were 34 arson incidents in Elm and Christchurch ward, although it is acknowledged that this covers a significantly larger area than both Waterlees and March North. The Assessment suggests that the Waterlees figure reflects a longer term pattern of recurring arson in the ward, highlighting that between August 2006 and July 2009, there were 91 incidents of arson. As such, the Strategic Assessment recommends that Arson, particularly in Waterlees should be addressed as part of the objective of reducing anti-social behaviour and criminal damage.

**Strengths that FNPV can build on**

2.138 The Fenland Community Safety Partnership Strategic Assessment (2009) highlights that during the 12 months between July 2008 and August 2009, total crime was reduced by 3.7%. There were particularly encouraging results in terms of vehicle crime and criminal damage, which fell by 18.6% and 14.7% respectively. Nevertheless, the Assessment highlights that there have been increases in shoplifting (+36%), violent crime (+5.7%) and dwelling burglary (+12.9%). Based on the findings of the Strategic Assessment, the Safer Fenland Partnership set out a series of recommendations based around four priority themes which are outlined below.

- Anti-Social Behaviour & Criminal damage
- Violent Crime & Domestic abuse

- Serious Acquisitive crime
- Community Cohesion

2.139 In addition, the Strategic Assessment recognises the concentration of crime-related issues in Wisbech and recommends that the partnership should consider how these could be tied together into a 'single action plan'.

2.140 The stakeholder consultation workshop confirmed the view that crime was falling in Fenland. Moreover, that many of the issues that present themselves in the district's towns, are typical of market towns across the country. However, FNPV has a key role to play in setting a framework to support the positive in roads into crime reduction and address problem areas.

2.141 The baseline evidence points towards many of the serious issues of ASB and criminal activity occurring in the town centres. A key focus for FNPV will need to be these areas, providing the vision and framework for further work to consider how best to provide a more appropriate mix of uses that diversify the evening and night economy. Employment and housing growth will also need to be brought forward in a way that establish strong spatial connections to the town centre and other key focus points, to enable them to feel the economic and social benefits of a diversification and population growth. Understanding the implications of growth in terms of impacts on each town's retail, food and drink and cultural offer is likely to require masterplan's and/or town centre management strategies. Such work should also focus on promoting assets in the town centre such as heritage and cultural diversity to help foster a sense of civic pride and reduce levels of arson and acts of vandalism.

2.142 How the police engage with other services and in turn with the local community was another area discussed at the stakeholder consultation. Sharing locations with other providers, such as housing or healthcare partners, could be good way of being more public focused. Moreover, working with partners to share and promote activity could help to raise the profile and standing of all organisations. The need to prioritise scarce resources will also require better links with partner organisations, such as social services, schools and housing colleagues. Rural issues, such as speeding, litter and parking violations will need to form a key part of this prioritisation exercise.

**Weaknesses that FNPV can address**

2.143 Cohesion is key issue in Fenland. While it manifests itself in terms of differences between those of different backgrounds, the planned growth could exacerbate differences along age and socio-economic lines as well.

2.144 Education, both in terms of its ability to breed tolerance and the need for all communities to benefit from better skills and access to higher end employment opportunities is vital. The FNPV work will need to consider how best growth can affect educational attainment across the District to support all communities.

2.145 The Migrant Population Strategy recognises the council's role in promoting greater community cohesion through equal access to its services and through informed and accurate information on migration issues. Through the establishment of a timetabled action plan with measurable performance outcomes, the council has taken an active role in ensuring services are fit-for-purpose in the context of an increasingly diverse community. Specifically, the actions are designed to promote equal access to services, reduce exploitation, avoid marginalisation and improve the ability of people from different backgrounds to effectively navigate organisational structures. By promoting better integration of new communities in the Fens, the strategy seeks to promote greater tolerance and reduce community tensions. In doing so, the strategy aims to harness utilise the contribution that migrant communities can make to the economic and cultural diversity.

2.146 FNPV has a key role to play in helping to deliver against the strategic goals and actions in the strategy. By encouraging services to work closer together and identify shared working arrangements, communities will be able to better access a wider range of services and at the appropriate point to meet their needs. Understanding the key areas where social infrastructure that support services can be better aligned through the planned growth is an important part of the FNPV work. School provision being used for wider community uses will need to part of this mix.

2.147 Furthermore, the FNPV project must also provide a basis for which the Council and its partners can help engender a wider sense of civic pride across the district. Celebrating diversity will be key to this, both in terms of festival and events, such as food festivals, initiatives and in terms of physical improvements to the built environment. Using the regeneration of the market towns, to promote the range of cultures within Fenland, through public art or by creating high quality places where people can meet and interact will also be an important part of the story.

2.148 Open space and the provision of both informal and formal sports facilities is another area where Fenland currently falls down and where growth can be guided to provide quality spaces for communities to relax and interact. Communities need space to breathe and opening up the countryside to walkers, cyclists and other outdoor pursuits will need to an important benefit of planned growth. Furthermore, organised sport is a great way to get people together, events such as a ‘Tour of Fenland’, to get all part of the community on their bikes and using the cycle network would have health and cohesion benefits.

**SWOT Analysis – Safer and Stronger Communities**

| Strengths | Weaknesses |
|---|---|
| • Rates of crime in line with or below the national average across much of the district<br>• Migration brings skills to the workforce to boost productivity | • High perceptions of crime and ASB<br>• Pockets of crime / ASB, Wisbech in particular<br>• Low levels of community cohesion, particularly in areas of Wisbech<br>High population turnover |
| **Opportunities** | **Threats** |
| • Cultural diversity<br>• Community festivals to enhance cohesion<br>• Closer working between services<br>• Big Society agenda – third sector involvement, boost civic pride<br>• Masterplan town centres to provide better mix of uses<br>• Establish distinctive places - leads to increased civic pride<br>• Better and more open spaces and community centres to allow communities to integrate | • Economic downturn could exacerbate community tensions<br>• Fear of crime<br>• Rural isolation can breed fear of crime<br>• Press coverage leads to continued poor reputation<br>• Low aspiration of community and especially parents<br>• Licensing and late night economy without other town centre interventions |

# Part 2E - A cleaner and greener district, which everybody can enjoy

2.149 Fenland's natural environment contains a number of assets which need to be conserved and enhanced. It also offers a range of opportunities to provide multiple social and economic benefits for local communities. This section highlights the key environmental issues arising in Fenland, sets out the ambition for the future environment and looks at key current initiatives before discussing the opportunities to deliver the aspirations through growth.

**Baseline & key issues**

**Shortage of Accessible Natural Greenspace**

2.150 Fenland's Draft Public Open Space Strategy (2009) and Draft Natural Greenspaces Study (2008) highlight the shortage of accessible natural greenspace. The deficiency occurs across the district, but particularly acute in Chatteris and Wisbech where there is no accessible greenspace to meet Natural England's ANGSt requirements. March does not have coverage to the south and there is limited access for the rural settlements. By contrast Whittlesey has near complete coverage, but with an unequal distribution of this open space, less accessible for residents in the north part of the town.

2.151 Most sites that are accessible are also small scale, generally under 2ha. The capacity for these sites to accommodate visitors is therefore also pressured. There is a discernable need for provision of larger, strategic greenspace to be provided. The Draft Cambridgeshire Green Infrastructure Strategy (2010) reflects this, identifying areas of search for Country Parks in Chatteris, Wisbech and March. These are outlined in more detail below.

2.152 The Open Space Strategy also highlights a need for additional Parks and Gardens. The shortage is focused in the suburbs of Wisbech, which require an additional 8.5ha to meet provision standards, and Whittlesey (4.6ha) and Chatteris (4.0ha). There is also a deficiency across some of the smaller settlements. Although satisfaction surveys have been broadly positive (Parks & Green Spaces Strategy 2008 – 2013) and two of the District's greenspaces, St Peter's Church Gardens and Wisbech Park, have been awarded Green Flag status, there is nevertheless a need to maintain and improve the quality and provision of accessible open space. Figure xx shows the deficiency to in access to greenspace as defined by ANGSt.

**Built Heritage**

2.153 Fenland has an important built heritage, with around 650 listed buildings across the district. There are also ten character areas demonstrating the importance of the built heritage in shaping character. There is however concern that there has been some deterioration in the quality of these buildings and areas as they become vacant and/or become expensive to maintain and upkeep. Ensuring that all buildings, but particularly those of high quality and with heritage value are made good use of will play an important role in reinvigorating vitality, reinforcing sense of place and maintaining these important buildings.

2.154 Conservation Area Appraisals were produced in 2008 for the four main towns which detail the key element of the character, appraises condition and set out management priorities.

- Chatteris – The character derives from the ancient settlement pattern with linear main street and narrow alleys. Although there are a couple of grand buildings, the character does not come from grand statements but in the details in grain and scale. Although Chatteris is generally well maintained and tidy, with most building in good condition, there are some completely derelict buildings which 'create a poor impression'.
- March – The Conservation areas comprises of the 17th century town centre. The built up core has high architectural and historic interest, as well as the important amenity of a highly attractive riverside. The centre is considered to be in good order with the grain, scale and character maintained. There are a few exceptions, but these are not exhaustive.
- Whittlesey – The Oxford clay underlying the town contributes to the character through the building materials, not only in the form of red-yellow gault brick but also unfired mud walls. There are a number of important public buildings, including two parish churches. In many streets there are, however, 'empty or derelict plots and properties that need a firm campaign to encourage restoration and conversion into viable uses'.
- Wisbech – 'The Wisbech conservation area reflects the historic core of the town stretching out from the Market Place, The Crescent area and the Old Market Place to include North and South Brinks of the River Nene, and Norfolk Street'. Although North Brink is especially well-maintained the 'general condition of the conservation area is sometimes poor'.

2.155 The character and heritage within the market towns and other listed buildings and structures across the district should form the basis from which the areas distinctiveness is developed.

**Public Realm**

2.156 Fenland's Street Ahead priorities exist to create an attractive and sustainable environment for the whole community to enjoy in order to build community pride and ownership through improving the local environment and making Fenland a cleaner, greener and safer place to live, work and visit. The objectives are fivefold:

- Maintain current levels of waste, recycling & cleansing
- Enhance the local environment
- Delivering community projects that improve the streetscene
- Conserve natural resources
- Promote a Safer Fenland
- Improving open spaces in Fenland

2.157 Fenland's Annual Report explains that 'community organisations are now taking the lead with the support of Fenland in organising their own Street Pride activities to improve the local environment. This year, 115 events took place right across the district with 1785 hours contributed by volunteers. To celebrate this success, the first Annual Street Pride Awards were launched to celebrate the contribution of volunteers. The success of the Street Pride scheme has led to an extension project called School Pride where local schools are now participating in improving the local environment. Launched in September 2008, 1325 pupils have been involved in 49 events, contributing 191 hours of their own time to improve the local area.

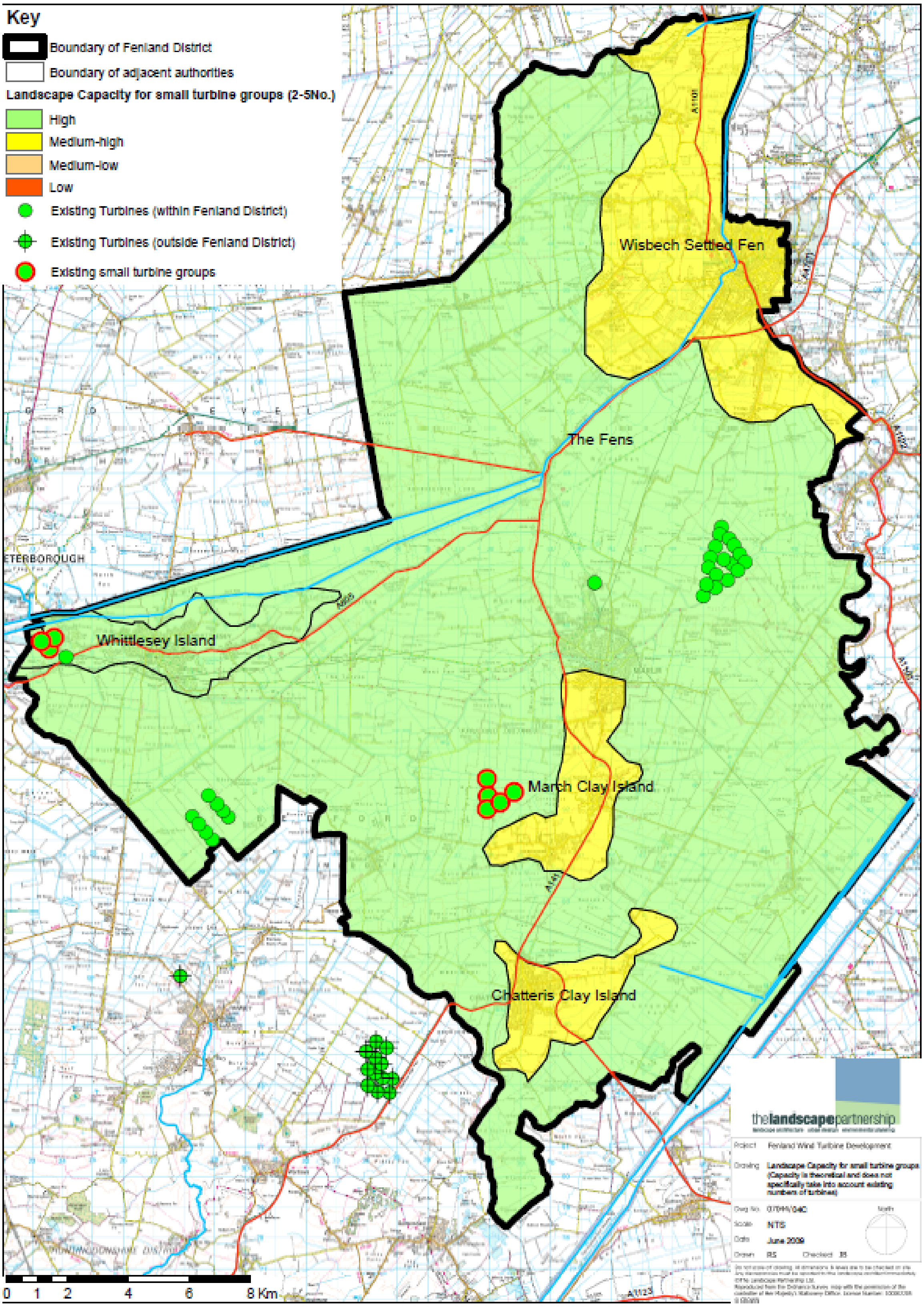
**High Renewable Energy Resources**

2.158 Fenland has an excellent wind resource and has already witnessed the development of eight schemes with 35 large (1MW+) turbines and 8 smaller turbines with an installed capacity of 72MW (AMR 2008-09). This could generate as much as 189,216 MWh per annum, equivalent to about 44% of the district's current electricity demand[8] and saving 80,000 tonnes of CO2e.

2.159 The Wind Turbine Development Policy Guidance (2009) for Fenland took a landscape and visual sensitivity approach to determining capacity. It concludes that many parts of the districts may be approaching or have exceeded the capacity to accommodate more turbines without adversely affecting the landscape in visual or cumulative terms. There may be additional capacity for more turbines (small scale and in particular areas as shown in Figure 2E.1) and these would need to be carefully considered against a range of criteria.. There is also medium-high capacity for larger wind farms across most of the district although once other restrictions have been applied, opportunity areas become more constrained.

[8] Middle Layer Super Output Area (MLSOA) electricity estimates 2008 (DECC 2010)

*Figure 2E.1: Landscape and visual sensitivity to small groups of wind turbines*



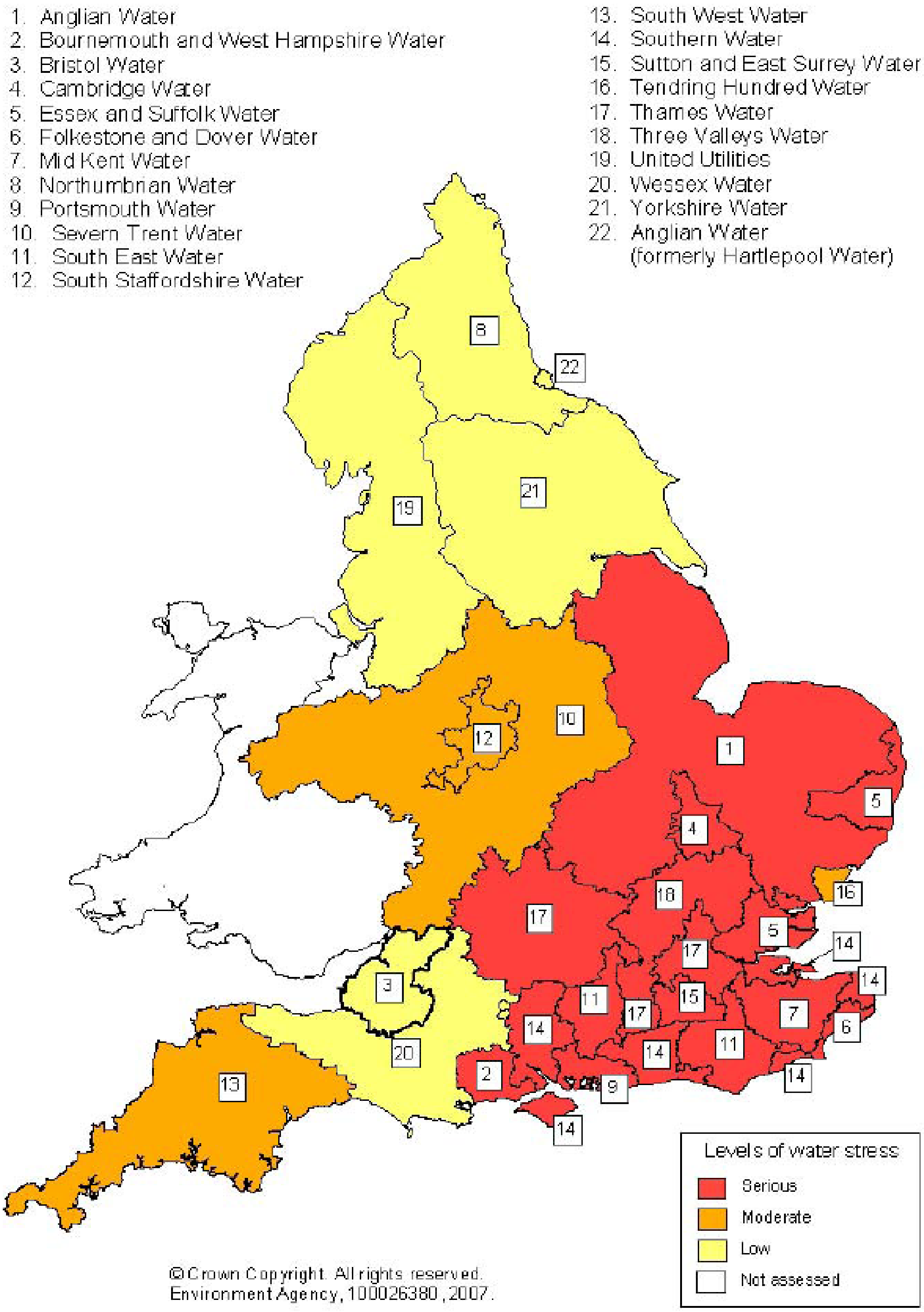
2.160 There is significant potential for Fenland to become even more resource efficient through wind development. To date, wind development has tended to be driven by commercial development. Greater community benefit in financial and cohesion terms could be derived from different delivery mechanisms such as community ownership schemes or ESCos.

**Serious Water Stress**

2.161 Water resources in Fenland are operated by Anglian Water. The northern area around Wisbech is supplied by water resources in the Fenland water resource zone while the southern half of Fenland, including March, Whittlesey, and Chatteris is supplied by surface water resources in the Ruthamford water resource zone. These areas are identified by the Environment Agency as Seriously Stressed (see figure 2E.5). The Water Cycle Study and Strategic Flood Risk Assessment Scoping Report (2009) for Fenland highlights that there will be a water deficit in these areas which will be exacerbated by growth.

2.162 The East Cambridgeshire and Fenland Outline Water Cycle Study, reports, however, that Anglian Water Services believes that additional infrastructure requirements needed to maintain supply would be minimal, and focus on aliviating bottlenecks in the distribution system. They have also developed a strategy of demand management, including water efficiency measures within households, metering, leakage reduction, rainwater harvesting and grey water recycling there will be pressure for additional resources from growth and agriculture. The study also highlights that capacity to deal with waste water and thus water quality, is a potential problem with a number of Waste Water Treatment Works requiring updating

Figure 2E.2: Environment Agency assessment of water sensitivity



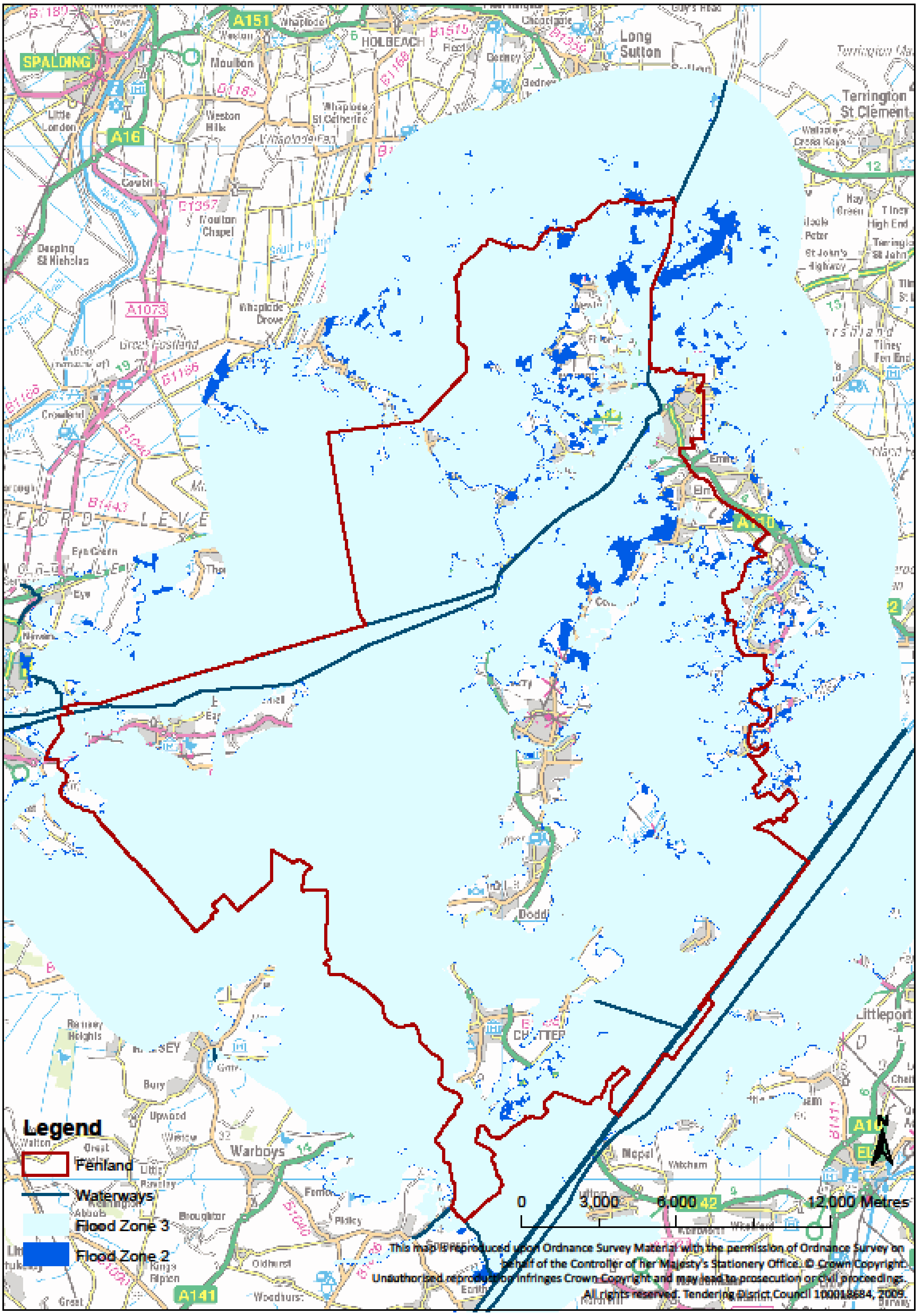
**Widespread Flood Risk**

2.163 Significant areas of Fenland are at risk of fluvial and/or tidal flooding. As highlighted in Figure 2E.6, the Environment Agency have categorised the vast majority of Fenland District as falling within Flood Risk Zone 3. Despite this, there are a number of potential sites that could be considered for development outside these areas, situated on islands of higher land around the existing settlements. There are also some areas of lower risk in Flood Zones 2. Development considerations would need to follow the 'sequential test' of considering lower risk areas before justifying development on areas that are of higher risk.

2.164 Also development of uses defined as highly or more vulnerable in PPS25, including housing, is generally not permitted in Flood Zones 2 and 3. However, PPS25 also introduces the 'Exception Test' which establishes the principles that vulnerable development types may be acceptable within high flood risk zones in certain exceptional circumstances. Through the application of the Exception Test, vulnerable land uses may be permitted if the developer:

- Can demonstrate that the development provides wider sustainability benefits to the community that outweigh flood risk;
- Locates development on previously-developed land or, if it is not on previously developed land, that there are no reasonable alternative sites on developable previously-developed land; and
- Prepares a Flood Risk Assessment which demonstrates that the development will be safe, without increasing flood risk elsewhere, and, where possible, will reduce overall flood risk.

*2E.6: Flood risk*




2.165 Within these areas development should seek to reduce the overall level of flood risk though the layout of SuDS. There is also likely to be significant areas at risk from surface water flooding during flood events. Flooding is likely to be exacerbated by climate change. Two strategic Flood Risk Assessments are currently being prepared which will provide a greater level of understanding of the challenges that flood risk presents. A district wide SFRA1 will be developed by mid July 2010, and more detailed work through and SRFA2 will be done for the area West of Wisbech.

2.166 The Water Cycle Study highlights SuDS ‘will be key to controlling flood risk at source in the development areas’. As much of the district lies on a layer of impermeable bedrock SuDS techniques that incorporate surface water storage attenuation will be needed. In addition, through the Flood and Water Management Act 2010 there is no automatic connection to sewer. As such developers will have to demonstrate attenuation and treatment water on site to the national standards. These standards are yet to be defined but are likely to come into effects in 2011. SuDS will be integral to demonstrating compliance to these standards.

**Sensitive areas of ecological and archaeological interest**

2.167 There are two sites in Fenland of international importance, Ouse Washes and Nene Washes with RAMSAR, SPA and SAC designations for their importance for wildfowl – particularly the bewick swan. These sites area also recognised through the national SSSI designation SSSI, along with Bassenhally Pit. There are also 31 County Wildlife Sites in the District.

2.168 Despite the important sites, overall, biodiversity levels in the district are low, particularly in the southern part where trees and hedgerow coverage is sparse. There are also a complex network of drainage ditches, which are likely to be important for invertebrates. Peat is also prevalent in the district, which, along with its ecological interest, contains significant preserved / archaeological heritage. The peat is at risk from shrinkage and development, however.

2.169 Fenland District Council has signed up as a Breathing Places District and has been working in partnership with the BBC to help wildlife across the district. Several projects have been undertaken with community involvement including tree planting and creating mini-beast homes and nature trails across the district.

**Climate Change**

2.170 Sea levels in the area are predicated to rise by about 1.0m, and river flows to increase by 20% in the next 100 years. This obviously has serious implications for a district that is currently at or below sea level. How this could be addressed should be a major consideration of the study.

2.171 The UK Climate Projections 09 set out regional probability base analysis of climate change impacts based on three emissions scenarios. Taking the medium emission scenarios, by 2050 the East of England is likely to experience:

- The mean temperature will increase by 2.2°C in winter;
- In summer the mean temperature is likely to rise by 2.5°, but with mean daily maximum temperature peaking 3.4°C higher than now;
- Although the amount of annual rainfall is likely to remain static, summers are likely to be considerably drier with 17% less rain;

- In contrast, winter precipitation will be harder with an increase in rainfall by around 14%.

2.172 Increased temperatures can put a strain on transport infrastructure, healthcare (particularly for the elderly) and building operations. Changes in precipitation are likely to lead to long dry summers which, again, can decay physical infrastructure, exacerbate already strained water resources and damage biodiversity. By contrast, heavier winter rains may lead to additional problems with surface water drainage and pollution along with increased flood risk.

**Air Quality**

2.173 Air Quality Management Areas have been designated due to incidences of higher than acceptable air pollution in Wisbech (sulphur dioxide and nitrogen dioxide) and Whittlesey (sulphur dioxide) As such, congestion in these areas should be considered through the FNPV work.

**Recycling**

2.174 Despite improvements in composting and recycling, the rate of waste production is still rising. However, the council, has been at the forefront of best practice for domestic recycling, and March has become a mini hub for commercial recycling.

2.175 Getting It Sorted is a three stream waste and recycling scheme. It has been successful in increasing recycling and composting rates in the district, with Fenland residents recycling over half of all domestic waste. The Beacon status accredited scheme has led to a reduction in the amount of waste that is placed at landfill sites and has been endorsed by local residents.

**Economic benefits**

2.176 The Greater Cambridge SRES indicates that the sub region is well-placed to capitalise on opportunities in clean technologies, stating that 'The low carbon economy is likely to be a significant source of future business opportunities, both in improving the efficiency of existing processes and through the development of new low-carbon products'. The RES recognises that there is potential to be at 'leading the UK in sustainable energy production' and acknowledges that this could help develop, diversify and enhance the skills set.

2.177 There may be other natural resource opportunities, biomass and agriculture for example that will grow and continue (respectively) to play a role in the local economy. In addition restricted water resources necessitate the need for water efficiency to be maximised and reducing waste remains a priority.

2.178 To date Fenland's activities have focused on climate change mitigation (reducing green house gas emissions) rather than adaptation. The Green Business Club supports small and medium sized businesses to assess energy use and waste production to help identify cost effective strategies to reduce both.

**Strengths that FNPV can build on**

**Potential to be a Leader in Renewable Energy**

2.179 Windspeeds across Fenland are high enough to make the district ideal for harnessing wind energy, and consequently there have been several wind farm developments with several more proposed. Although feasible, there are a number of other constraints, such as noise, landscape and visual impact that need to be mitigated in order to make best use of this resource. Fenland's Wind Turbine Development Policy Guidance does however indicate that there remains significant potential across the district, particularly for single or small groups of turbines. However, sufficient political and community will also need to be in place to fully realise the potential of wind power in the district. FNPV has the opportunity to provide a framework to support such interventions. If achieved, this could bring significant social and economic benefit to local communities.

2.180 To date, the majority of wind development has been undertaken by private energy companies. This means that energy profits are taken out of the district. There is however a number of different delivery vehicle models, ranging from fully public, through partnerships between public, private and community sectors to fully private. An end to rules banning local authorities from selling renewable energy is also set to end, paving the way for locally run Energy Service Companies (ESCos) to deliver cheaper and more secure energy, with the profits returned to benefit the community. This could form an important part of delivering sustainable growth and increase opportunities through the FNPV project.

2.181 There are also plans to establish Community Energy Funds alongside targets for zero-carbon homes in 2016. Developers would be expected to pay into the fund where they are unable to meet carbon reduction targets on development sites. This would allow for the pooling of funds to invest in community renewable schemes to offset development emissions. Cambridgeshire Horizons have already commissioned a study into the potential for a carbon offset mechanism for Cambridgeshire. The will assess the viability of pooling funds from development where opportunities to install renewable or reduce carbon emission sufficiently through efficiency measure in order to invest in community-scale projects that clearly demonstrating emissions reduction in the local area, such as small scale wind development.

2.182 There are an increasing number of community owned (or part community owed) renewable energy schemes, such as Westmill Wind Farm Co-operative in Oxfordshire. These schemes not only provide cheaper, locally generated energy, but also provide dividends back to local community members. Fenland could adopt a similar approach, allowing communities created, or affected by new development part ownership in new local wind energy schemes. Community pay-back would help build the case for new energy development and reinforce the connection between local supply and demand.

**Managing Flood Risk**

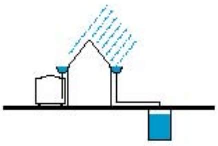
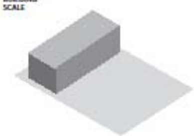
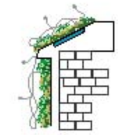
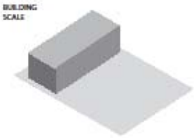
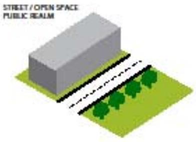
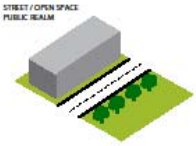
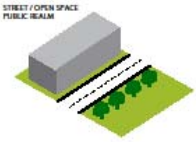
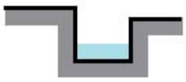
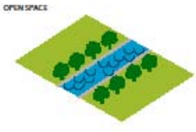
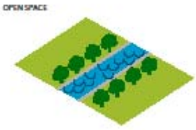
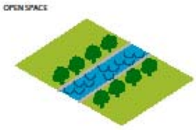
2.183 Fenland are currently improving their understanding of flood risk through an update of the level 1 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment in light of revised climate change impact predictions. They also benefit from the water management expertise of the Middle Level Commissioners and the Internal Drainage Boards. Discussion with the Middle Levels have suggested that, although widespread, flood risk is manageable and is potentially the case of overtopping causing land saturation rather than being under significant amounts of water. There are, therefore, potentially areas within Flood Zone 3 where flood risk could be relived though land raising, which, providing appropriate additional flood plains were identified, could raise areas out of Flood Zone 3. The SFRA for West of Wisbech, currently being tendered for by FDC, should provide some indication of the possibility for this in that specific area, for other areas such information will not be available.

2.184 In considering development opportunities, the Environment Agency will expect the sequential and exceptions tests to be adhered to. The implications for the FNPV of this would be that areas of lower risk would need to be considered for development before higher risk areas. For higher risk areas to be acceptable, the Environment Agency would need to be convinced that lower risk areas cannot deliver development that is consistent with 'wider sustainability considerations' though the 'exception test'. FNPV will need to demonstrate where growth will have the most impact and establish the regeneration case to support this. While flooding is an important consideration, there is an opportunity, within the parameters of the study, to explore the benefit of some options within Flood Zone 3. The engagement of the Environment Agency will be key. Cases such as the Western Growth Corridor (Lincoln) which is also in Flood Zone 3 will require further analysis.

2.185 In addition to the widespread flood risk, through Flood and Water Management Act 2010 there is no automatic connection to sewer. As such, development will be expected to deliver innovative SuDS solutions that limit risk sufficiently to satisfy the Environment Agency's requirements. There are a range of SuDS solutions, as outlined in the figure below, however due to underlying impermeable bedrock, surface solutions are likely to be the most effective. Given Fenland's long association with managing water resources, there is a great opportunity to become leaders again in water sensitive design.

*Figure 2E.7: Sustainable Drainage Systems*

## SUSTAINABLE DRAINAGE SYSTEMS (SuDS)

| | DESCRIPTION: | SCALE: | LAND TAKE: | BENEFITS: |
|---|---|---|---|---|
|  RAINWATER HARVESTING | Rainwater is collected from the roof of a building and stored in an overground or underground tank for treatment and reuse within the plot. | BUILDING SCALE  | WATER STORAGE (UNDERGROUND OR ABOVE GROUND) | FILTRATION, ATTENUATION |
|  GREEN ROOFS / WALLS | Soil and plant material is attached to the roof or walls of a building to create a living surface. Water is stored in the soil layer and absorbed by vegetation. | BUILDING SCALE  | BUILDING INTEGRATED | ECOLOGY AND BIODIVERSITY, ATTENUATION |
|  SWALE / FILTER STRIPS | Shallow depressions designed to convey and filter water. These can be 'wet' where water gathers above the surface, or 'dry' where water gathers in a gravel layer beneath. Surface can be vegetated. Can be lined or unlined to allow infiltration. Often used alongside roadways. | STREET / OPEN SPACE PUBLIC REALM  | 2-5 % DRAINAGE AREA 2-3 METRES WIDE | ECOLOGY AND BIODIVERSITY, FILTRATION |
|  PERMEABLE PAVING | Paving which allows water to soak through. Can be in the form of paving blocks with gaps between solid blocks or porous paving where water filters through the block itself. Water can be stored in the sub-base beneath or allowed to infiltrate into ground below. | STREET / OPEN SPACE PUBLIC REALM  | 5% DRAINAGE AREA | FILTRATION, ATTENUATION |
|  BIORETENTION | A vegetated area with gravel and sand layers below designed to channel water vertically to filter and cleanse. Water can infiltrate ground below or drain to a perforated pipe. | STREET / OPEN SPACE PUBLIC REALM  | 1-4 % DRAINAGE AREA | ECOLOGY AND BIODIVERSITY, FILTRATION, ATTENUATION |
|  HARDSCAPE STORAGE | Hardscape water features can be used to store run-off. These can be integrated into public realm areas with a more urban character. | OPEN SPACE  | 3-5 % DRAINAGE AREA | ECOLOGY AND BIODIVERSITY, FILTRATION, ATTENUATION |
|  WETLAND | Wetlands are shallow vegetated water bodies with a varying water level. Specially selected plant species are used to filter water. Water flows horizontally and is gradually treated before being discharged. | OPEN SPACE  | 5-15% DRAINAGE AREA | ECOLOGY AND BIODIVERSITY, FILTRATION, ATTENUATION |
|  POND | Ponds can be used to store water. 'Wet' ponds have a constant body of water and run-off is additional, while 'dry' ponds are empty during periods without rainfall. Ponds can be designed to allow infiltration to ground or to store water for a period of time then discharge. | OPEN SPACE  | 3-5 % DRAINAGE AREA (RETENTION POND) 5-15% DRAINAGE AREA (INFILTRATION POND) | ECOLOGY AND BIODIVERSITY, FILTRATION, ATTENUATION |

## Weaknesses that FNPV can address

### Utilising Green Infrastructure

2.186 Green infrastructure is more than providing a certain quota of green space. There are a wide range of options (street trees, SuDS, green roofs) for green infrastructure which will be dependent on location and function required. It is important that in masterplanning, these requirements are considered early to maximise opportunities for delivering multiple benefits. FNPV must enshrine this approach and explore opportunities at a strategic level to maximise the potential to promote green infrastructure for wider benefits. Natural ecosystems services are likely to provide the some of the most effective and resilient strategies to adapting to climate change. Providing green infrastructure that maximises the use of these natural systems will not only reduce vulnerability but may help to meet other objectives, including greenspace provision and support healthy lifestyles.

2.187 The Draft Cambridgeshire Green Infrastructure Strategy (2010) sets out an analysis of a series of theme based opportunities for green infrastructure across the county. The study identifies four countywide investment programmes, based around biodiversity, sustainable movement, climate change mitigation and adaptation and economic investment, as well as a series of location specific projects. This includes promoting the development of three country parks, one each at Chatteris, March and Wisbech. In addition to addressing identified deficiencies in open space provision, these areas could also contribute to wider biodiversity aims and could deliver other green infrastructure benefits such as water management and cleansing, mitigating urban heat and community cohesion.

2.188 Investing in three new country parks would be extremely costly, and although should remain an aspiration for further consideration within the FNPV project, greater benefit may be achieved by investing in improving access into the high quality countryside across the district. By working with landowners, including farmers and British Waterways to creating attractive, safe and functional cycling and walking routes – potentially with facilities and play equipment en-route – people will be encouraged to make better use of Fenlands unique environmental assets with health, transport and tourism benefits. The Countryside Recreation Network, which is made up of representatives from the main environmental bodies, has examples and provides support on improving countryside recreation.

2.189 Fenland District Council, in association with Roddens Housing Association are already supporting the 'Love Fenland' campaign to promote Fenland's existing environmental assets, open space, countryside and bridleways/walking/cycling network with the aim of enhancing community pride and involvement in community activities; accessibility to local green space and increased satisfaction with the district as a place to live.

2.190 The Green Infrastructure Strategy also identifies two further projects that will have benefits within Fenland:

- The Fens Waterway Link – enhance river navigation to connect Lincoln, Peterborough and Ely as well as King's Lynn, Denver, March, Ramsey Huntingdon and Cambridge.

- Great Oues Wetland – Runs along the boundary of the district. Designed to improve the linkage of wetland sites between Fen Drayton and Welney into one major site to facilitate major habitat restoration and public access.

**Building performance – water and energy**

2.191 Improved building performance is an important factor in creating sustainable development. The popularity in policy making of voluntary schemes such as the Code for Sustainable Homes and BEEAM is testament to this. Central to both of these schemes, and particularly relevant in the Fenland context, is energy and water efficiency.

2.192 Energy performance is not only important for reducing carbon emissions, but is crucial in improving thermal efficiency to reduce incidences of fuel poverty as highlighted in the section on housing above.

2.193 Despite Anglian Water Services assurance at maintaining supply with minimal infrastructure, water resources in the East of England remain stressed with low rainfall. Further extraction of water resources is likely to be seriously detrimental to water resources, further deteriorating already poor water quality, damaging ecological resources and causing navigation problems. This is likely to be exacerbated by hotter dryer summers occurring due to climate change.

2.194 These challenges will require the development of a skilled sustainable construction sector which, with the growth anticipated, offers a great opportunity for Fenland to capitalise on this market sector.

2.195 To have the greatest impact, sustainability benefits should not be confined to new development. Regeneration objectives should maximise potential to extend into existing communities though retrofitting and offsetting schemes. The Community Energy Fund and/or Cambridgeshire Carbon Offest Fund outlined above could provide the funding mechanism for improving energy efficiency within existing buildings. More wholesale change could be delivered though the development of Combined Heat and Power and/or district heating networks initiated through new development but extended into existing communities. Similar opportunities should be explored for collecting and storing grey and rainwater to reduce demand on potable water supplies.

**Built heritage**

2.196 Fenland is fortunate in having considerable built heritage. There are examples of high quality buildings, often with heritage value across the Fenland and its main towns, but in particular Wisbech. The character that this resource supports offers great potential to be a part of tourism strategies. There are however incidences of declining quality, abandonment and need for maintenance. Opportunities should be explored to bring these building back into use and afford the protection they require.

Masterplanning for regeneration and new development also needs to be sensitive to these important areas, respecting and actively reinforcing the character. The benefits in terms of tourism should be significant. To maximise the potential economic benefit, the towns will need to improve their food and accommodation offers as well as other cultural and outdoor activities to provide a complete visitor experience.

**SWOT Analysis – Cleaner, Greener District**

| Strengths | Weaknesses |
|---|---|
| • Existing strength in renewable energy (wind) generation<br>• Deeping St Nicholas 'Fenland Green Energy Co-operative'<br>• Heritage offer<br>• Unique Fens landscape | • Shortage of accessible open space<br>Flood risk to new and existing settlements |
| **Opportunities** | **Threats** |
| • Creating high quality, useable open spaces – Country Parks<br>• Waterways as multifunctional spaces<br>• Renewable energy generation<br>o Community schemes<br>o Link to economic growth<br>o Wind and biomass<br>• New development – opportunity to introduce energy, waste, water efficiency standards and district heating | • Flood risk – delivery constraints / costs<br>• Climate change – increasing flood risk<br>• Water stress – delivery constraint<br>• Impact of energy / waste / water efficiency ambitions on housing deliverability<br>• Reduction in resources to bridge funding gaps associated with ambitions<br>• Competition from other areas in energy sector (e.g. Lowestoft & Great Yarmouth) |

# Part 2F - Transport

2.197 While elements of transport are included within Part 2A of this report, as transport is a key part of understanding Fenland and informs all of the SCS themes, it has been included here as a separate section.

**Baseline & key issues**

2.198 One of the key issues in the Fenland District is that a significant proportion of the working population out-commute to other areas for work as the recent growth in housing throughout Fenland has not been matched with an increase in employment opportunities. These commuter patterns along with a heavy reliance on the private car contribute to a large volume of traffic on key routes within the district, including the A1101, A141 and A142. High levels of HGV traffic within the district affects the environmental sustainability of Fenland, particular routes affected are the A1101, A142 and the A47.

2.199 The patterns of internal movement between the four main centres means that the transport demand on these towns is therefore greatest, as is the demand for capacity on the A47 (T) and the A141, and this will act as a constraint to development on these corridors unless there are high quality sustainable transport alternatives in place to minimise additional vehicle trips from new sites. Wisbech also suffers from localised congestion in the town centre due to all the main vehicle approaches converging on one junction (A1101 / B198 roundabout), and new infrastructure should focus on delivering attractive sustainable alternatives for local trips (under 5km) to minimise additional pressure on the local network.

2.200 Car dependence is high due to the rural nature of the district and access to public transport from villages and between towns tends to be difficult. A key issue with the limited public transport network is access to employment for people who do not have a car. Wisbech and March have a half hourly service and March to Whittlesey and March to Chatteris are hourly. However, other journeys between towns are more dificult. To get from Whittlesey to Wisbech you would have to change bus at Peterborough or March. There is only 1 service per day between Whittlesey and Chatteris. Wisbech to Chatteris requires a change of bus at March. Evening bus services are poor with services after 6pm very limited, this could potentially limit sustainable development opportunities outside the four main centres. The fact that 20% of Fenlands households do not have access to a car increases the need for good public transport links for future developments. Fenland is served by rail from three stations in March, Whittlesey and Manea. Services from March provide good links to Cambridge, Peterborough, Ely and London. However, services from Whittlesey and Manea are infrequent providing limited connections.

2.201 Fenland has a number of community car schemes and dial a ride services in operation. Dial a ride services operate three outbound and three return services a day, these services are appropriate for day time uses but not commuting uses. Weekly shopping services also operate further afield to King’s Lynn and Peterborough, there is also a monthly service to Stamford. These services do help complement the existing public transport network, however they do not provide services for commuting.

2.202 The environmental sustainability of Fenland is limited by poor public transport serving rural areas as well as barriers to walking and cycling. There is no clear strategy for an overall walking and cycling network across the district and the full extent of the existing walking and cycling network across the district is unknown. Within Fenland there are gaps in the pedestrian and cycle networks that need to be addressed, and all of these factors contribute to a heavy reliance on the car within the district. The delivery of new infrastructure aimed towards providing good quality local connections within towns to encourage a greater proportion of trips under 2 and 5km by walking and cycling respectively.

2.203 Fenland has high accident rates on its roads, pedestrian and cycle accidents are particularly high in March and Wisbech. Wisbech has the highest level of car accidents within Cambridgeshire. High accident rates in the district are associated with the large proportion of the population living within rural areas on single carriageway routes.

**Strategic direction & projects**

2.204 The Long-Term Transport Strategy (LTTS) is the overarching transport strategy for Cambridgeshire that will underpin the LTPs and the wider programme for improvements. The single overarching aim of the LTTS is to provide a transport system that supports economic growth, enabling development to take place in a sustainable way up to 2021. The strategy develops specific proposals in the form of Area Transport Strategies for: rural areas; strategic corridors; market towns and their hinterlands and Cambridge. Market Town Transport Strategies (MTTS) have been developed for March and Wisbech, the Chatteris transport strategy has just been completed with Whittlesey programmed to come on stream later this year. The transport strategies are consistent with the LTP in that they provide a five year programme of transport improvements for each market town and its surrounding area. The Market Town Transport Strategies are being utilised to secure developer contributions for transport infrastructure in the market towns, including proposals for smarter choices, walking and cycling, public transport, demand and asset management. The headline transport aims and strategic aspirations for Fenland conveyed in the LTTS, LTP, Core Strategy and Development Policies Preferred Options 2 and the MTTS's have been considered under the five themes of the Fenland Sustainable Community Strategy.

**Build economic and sustainable Fenland communities**

- The single overarching aim of the LTTS is to provide a transport system that supports economic growth;
- Market towns are to cater for large proportions of expected growth in the county, and serve their rural surroundings;
- New highway schemes will be needed to provide access to new development areas;
- Applications which would exceed the capacity of local networks should be refused.
- Consider the movement of freight by road, rail and the port at Wisbech;
- MTTS's aim to provide for growth through the provision of integrated and sustainable transport networks; and
- MTTS's recognise the need to create strong public transport connections within and between the market towns and to the larger cities and towns, as well as to railheads in order to encourage growth.
- LTTS aims to secure additional funding for transport infrastructure; and
- Improving accessibility to and within Fenland will encourage more investment.

**Make sure children and young people have the opportunity to achieve their full potential & Improve health and social wellbeing**

- Accessibility by public transport in the more rural areas of the county is an issue.
- Wider objectives of the MTTS's are to reduce social inclusion and enhance community development through dial a ride and community car schemes in order to reach those away from the public transport network, and also to provide for the mobility impaired for whom public transport is not a viable option.

**Safer and Stronger Communities**

- The road safety of pedestrians and cyclists is also deemed important in order to encourage as an alternative to the car and road safety schemes will need to be designed to protect potentially vulnerable road users;
- Making safe, efficient and convenient use of existing transport networks including walking, cycling, public transport and roads; and
- Road safety is recognised as an issue within the market towns, the MTTS's therefore see it fundamental to improve road safety, particularly for pedestrians and cyclists.

**A cleaner and greener district, which everybody can enjoy**

- The LTTS enabling development to take place in a sustainable way;
- Accessibility by public transport in the more rural areas of the county is an issue. This will be combated by more flexible public transport and use of community car schemes and these will act as feeders getting people onto the main transport network;
- Road space will be managed to provide an attractive environment for walking and cycling in each town;
- There will be a need for a small number of highway schemes to enable better management of traffic in the towns;
- Development proposals should be located near to existing services and facilities for local needs taking account of the scale of the development and the settlement as the key to the success of reducing the need to travel is the potential for accessing goods and services for every day needs within local communities;
- Providing an appropriate network of walking and cycling routes;
- MTTS's aim to promote and encourage walking and cycling within the market towns; and
- MTTS's recognise the need to accommodate the private car, the focus of the strategies is to promote public transport and improve public transport infrastructure in order to reduce car traffic.

**Wisbech Area Transport Study**

A transport model has been developed for Fenland District Council (FDC), to provide traffic forecasts for the future land use planning of Wisbech and its surrounding area and therefore inform the Local Development Framework (LDF).

2.205 The scope of the Wisbech Area Transport Study (WATS) was to provide a transport model (Base Year (2008) and three Forecast Years (2016, 2021 and 2026)) for FDC to inform their LDF for Wisbech, including a range of scenarios for the implementation of transport infrastructure schemes against growth options.

2.206 *The Wisbech Transport Study Traffic Forecasting Report, Atkins Transport Planning, October 2009* assesses a set of Do Minimum (DM) models for each forecast year, and these models include committed developments and background growth but do not include any LDF Developments, therefore indicating what will happen if Wisbech is left to grow without any major investment. A number of tests scenarios have been assessed for LDF development in Wisbech, taking into account size, location, nature and phasing of the developments and associated infrastructure. This work will inform the assessment of the spatial options in stage 2 of the FNPV project. Further work to assess public transport as well as private vehicle impact is also underway.

**Fenland Strategic Partnership**

2.207 As part of the Fenland Strategic Partnership Community Strategy Action Plan, FBC (Fenland Transport and Access Group) are engaged in a number of projects.

2.208 The public transport infrastructure project is a pilot scheme being rolled out across two Parish Councils aiming to:

- Record and monitor bus infrastructure; and
- Ensure that the right infrastructure is in place i.e. shelters, signs, flags etc.

2.209 This scheme will provide more information available on bus routes / services and up to date maps and recording systems which will can used to highlight 'public transport hotspots' in terms of accessibility and potential opportunities for growth.

Some of the key aims of the Community Rail Partnership (CRP) project in relation to growth include:

- Provide better interchange between buses, walking, cycling and car parks at stations
- Influence DfT policy – more trains
- Cleaner and more inviting stations and trains

2.210 The business plan and funding bid will identify proposed rail schemes targeted for implementation through the CRP, and significant improvements such as new access / routes to stations and increased frequency of trains stopping at Fenland stations could unlock sites for growth.

2.211 The Children and Young People's Partnership project is exploring transport options to ensure that there is better accessibility to services, facilities and leisure opportunities for children and young people, and the implementation of measures such as a minibus group hire service specifically for children and young people, enabling them to make journeys at evenings and weekends that would not be possible now would potentially make some existing communities into more attractive areas to locate new family housing.

**Bus / Community Transport Provision**

2.212 Norfolk Green has recently introduced new bus services and improvements to existing bus services within the Fenland district. The table below shows the changes and improvements that have been made by Norfolk Green to the services since April 2010.

2.213 These improvements to bus services in the district not only strengthen public transport within the main market towns, but also strengthen public transport to areas previously considered less accessible such as Wimblington, Manea and Benwick. These new bus services could help to make areas outside of the market towns more attractive locations for additional development.

Table 2F.1: Norfolk Green Bus Improvements (since April 2010)

| Service | Change |
|---|---|
| 46 | Now 7 days a week;<br>Better connections to other services;<br>56 and 46 now combine to provide buses every 30 minutes between March and Wisbech. |
| 50 | Service 50 and 55 merged, route now provided from Long Sutton to Wisbech. |
| 56 | Extended beyond March to Wimblington then on to Benwick or Manea;<br>56 and 46 now combine to provide buses every 30 minutes between March and Wisbech. |
| 60 | Later buses back to Wisbech (Monday – Friday). |
| 63 | Slight timing changes to provide better connections between services. |
| 66 | Afternoon service is improved, with buses every 30 minutes, and on Mondays to Fridays a later last bus at 1735. |

2.214 Beyond the main public transport corridors connecting the market towns there is also a strong community transport network on the ground. Fenland Association for Community Transport (FACT) with its Dial-a-Ride alternative, and community car schemes enhance the accessibility of the more remote rural communities.

2.215 FACT runs daily, weekly and monthly bus services to multiple locations within and beyond Fenland to provide communities with access to amenities, and depending on the destinations these are weekly or monthly services that member's need to book in advance

.

2.216 There are a number of community car schemes for those with mobility difficulties, where there is no public transport coverage. These services must be booked 24 hours in advance and costs vary from service to service. Many of the community car schemes focus on improving access to healthcare services.

**Weaknesses that FNPV can address**

2.217 In terms of transport strategies, the MTTS's for March and Wisbech are due to be updated, Chatteris MTTS has only recently been adopted with nothing in place for Whittlesey, which leaves a transport policy gap relating to infrastructure funding and provision. FNPV will be able to provide high level advice on potential transport improvements that could subsequently be tested through upcoming studies.

2.218 District wide transport weaknesses point to poor public transport and cycle facilities, which means there is significant reliance on the private car for transport for short commuting trips (under 5km) within and into the main market towns. FNPV will need to direct growth towards areas where more sustainable transport modes can better integrate with the towns.

2.219 There is limited provision of off-street cycle routes in the main market towns and accidents involving cyclists is a major safety concern and an apparent infrastructure deficiency. Detail masterplans could provide opportunities to integrate such provision as part of wider transport measures.

2.220 A significant proportion of the working population out-commute to other areas for work as the recent growth in housing throughout Fenland has not been matched with an increase in employment opportunities. Identifying more employment opportunities within the market town's should help to address this trend.

2.221 There are also a number of local transport issues specific to the market towns. In Wisbech, the five arm roundabout at the A1101 at the Freedom Bridge in the middle of town suffers significant congestion issues as most local and through traffic has to pass through this pinch point in the network, and the lack of bus priority measures in Wisbech on the main corridors effects the quality / reliability of services. A new Western Relief Road could help facilitate development on the western edge of Wisbech and improve congestion in the town centre at the Freedom Bridge roundabout junction.

2.222 The level crossing along the B1101 into March creates local congestion problems, which are exacerbated by HGV traffic routing through the town to access the main industrial areas to the north. The March Area Transport Study (MATS) will be used to test future growth scenarios in March to inform the LDF, which will be ongoing during the FNPV Study. If available, any initial outputs from tests scenarios being assessed for LDF development in March could be used to inform the appraisal of growth scenarios, and emerging AECOM spatial development scenarios with suggested infrastructure improvements could also be tested using a future transport model. Similarly, the future Whittlesey MTTS and the Whittlesey Transport desktop study will provide direction in terms of infrastructure requirements and funding sources.

2.223 Whittlesey Railway Stations offer infrequent services, while it, along with March Station, is located away from the town centres with poor onward connection options for linked journeys. The level crossing at Whittlesey also contributes to the disconnect between the commercial area to the south of the town and the centre. Development and transport improvements should seek to address, where possible, these issues.

**Strengths that FNPV can build on**

2.224 The transport improvements within Chatteris set out in the MTTS are geared towards improving travel within the town, which would support housing development at infill sites in the town and inside the A142 to the south and east, with improved connections to the north of Chatteris to the employment area.

*2.225* With the right quality infrastructure the relatively flat topography of Fenland should be advantageous for safe cycling. There are some reasonable bus links to the rural hinterland of Fenland, particularly from Wisbech and March including Guyhirn, Wisbech

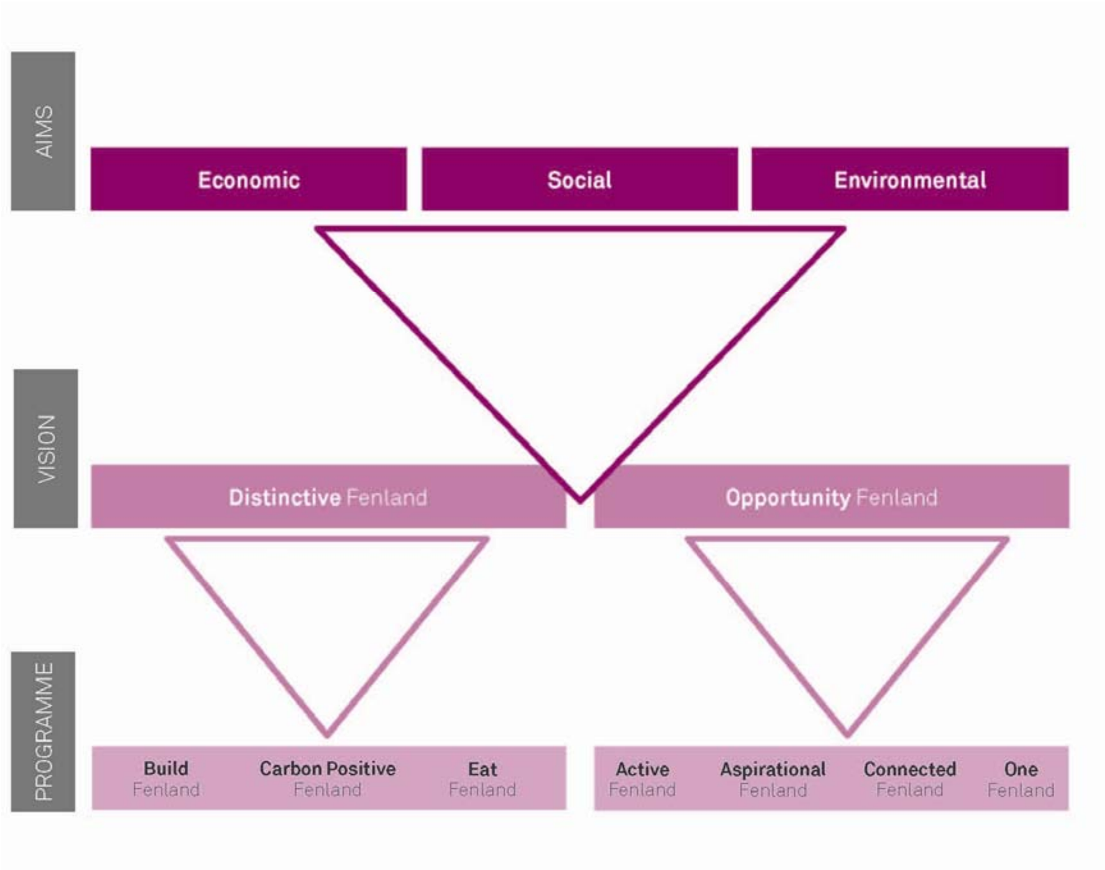
St Mary's and Wimblington. There are potential opportunities for bus lanes on key road corridors into Wisbech such as Churchill Road to improve journey times, and these could also be used by cyclists. There is a strong community transport network on the ground in Fenland in addition to the normal bus services, which enhance the accessibility of the more remote rural communities. There is a local train network from Peterborough serving the market towns of March and Whittlesey providing access to the strategic East Coast Mainline, which with more regular services and better onward connections from the market towns could make a positive impact in terms of rail mode share. The good links to the strategic road network from Wisbech (A47 runs to Kings Lynn and Peterborough) provide additional options for retail and employment opportunities. The ongoing implementation of the Industrial Link Road in March to connect the four industrial / trading estates to the north of the town will provide direct access from the A141 to take HGV traffic off the local town centre roads.

# 3. Part 3 - The vision

3.1 This visioning stage is designed to help us set the overall direction for the district. The ultimate aim is that the resulting vision will guide investment, projects and programmes in Fenland, so that all partner resources and effort pulls in the same direction around a shared set of priorities.

3.2 To this end, the vision has been set up to provide an organisational framework against which Fenland District Council and all its partner agencies and stakeholders can drive improvements to the economy and the quality of life of Fenland's residents. The framework is structure by:

- An overall approach – setting out the need for multi-agency and sector working
- A vision – setting out the aspiration for the future role of Fenland
- Strategic programmes - setting out the key themes against which interventions will be delivered




**The overarching aims**

3.3 FNPV aims to create a holistic **economic, social and environmental** strategy for Fenland, both in terms of a spatial and thematic approach. However, FNPV is also about breaking down traditional themes and providing a framework against which organisations can work together in a multi-sector and multi-agency way. This vision and strategic programme support this goal.

**The vision**

3.4 The emerging vision is designed to sit above a series of 'strategic programmes'. It seeks to capture the key objectives of the FNPV project at the highest level. It allows for flexibility as strategic programme are amended in response to changes in the nature of the challenge and policy agendas shift.

> **The vision**
>
> 'Fenland's future success will be based on creating distinctive places and improved opportunities for all. This will be achieved through a 'can do' culture, where those who live or work in the district are encouraged to desire a better standard of living.
>
> Fenland will aspire to be a resource efficient district with resident communities benefiting from its ambitious and comprehensive approach to renewable power and energy efficiency. Fenland's strength in agriculture and food production will be harnessed to drive up new employment, encouraging healthy lifestyles and form the basis of an exciting new visitor economy. A radical multi-partner approach to education and skills development will create a new 'learning district' raising aspirations and creating a culture of achievement. Distinctive market towns will become vibrant hubs of commercial activity and capture economic value and investment from throughout the region and beyond.

**The strategic programmes… taking the vision forward**

3.5 The strategic programmes have been developed from the Stage 1 analysis of the FNPV project can exploit identified strengths and address weaknesses.

3.6 They are ordered Distinctive Fenland and Opportunity Fenland, under which 7 strategic programme sit. These programmes will be developed through the remaining stages of the FNPV project, with clear targets set to measure progress. Each programme will have a number of projects set out. These will form the basis of an action plan, with lead agencies and delivery partners identified.

3.7 A series of case studies, set out under the headings of each of the Strategic Programme is set out in Appendix 1.

**Distinct Fenland – growth as a vehicle for exploiting Fenland's assets and potential**

**Build Fenland** – It is important that proposed initiatives build a coherent, marketable identity for Fenland as a whole, but also recognising that the different roles of communities and settlements across the district. Fenland, must grasp the opportunities to enhance the quality and economic vibrancy of the market towns as distinctive rural capitals and the need for complementary roles. The key aim being the creation of sustainable local communities founded on quality of place.

Furthermore, growth must benefit local companies and the local labour market. Fenland is therefore well placed to develop more sustainable building practices and pioneer best practice in this area. The prospect of wide spread flood risk and water stress will require growth in Fenland to come forward in innovative ways. This presents a great opportunity for Fenland to capitalise by developing a construction sector skilled in sustainable technologies.

**Resource efficient Fenland** – Fenland should position itself as a resource efficient district. In addition to the obvious climate change mitigation benefits, there is the potential to bring far greater economic and social benefits to Fenland. Renewable energy can provide low and secure energy that reduces fuel poverty and can attract investment. Involving the community, both residential and business in authority led or partnership ESCos could drive a development of a new industrial sector that could capitalise on the technological advancements being made in neighbouring authorises and would bring dividends to participants. This is likely to involve wind, district heating and hydro energy generation. Benefits from water efficiency and use of materials should also be promoted.

**Eat Fenland** – Food is central to the land management, economy, health and well-being of Fenland. There are significant opportunities to make it do more. Capitalising on supply chains, the possibility of linking production with local consumption ('localising the food economy') would help tackle health deficiencies, stimulate a local food culture, create a distinctive visitor 'offer' and evening economy. Placing food at the heart of education could help up-skill the workforce in preparing for 21st century agriculture, food preparation and hospitality and improve the health of current and future generations.

**Opportunity Fenland – growth as a catalyst for reducing inequalities of opportunity**

**Active Fenland** – Increasing economic activity across Fenland, moving people off benefits and into employment, either directly, or through education and training, will be a key part of a successful strategy to enhance people's opportunities. This requires an active and healthy population, for which more informal and formal sports facilities and programmes, along with better access to quality open space and outdoor pursuits will be vital. It also means healthier lifestyles, such as improved eating habits and more walking and cycling to get around. Support for older people and those in isolated areas to be both economically and physically active will also be important to well-being and reduced dependency.

**Aspirational Fenland** –Raising aspirations and fostering positive attitudes around learning and skills is essential for the future well-being and prosperity of people in Fenland. Partners need to tackle the prevailing culture of low aspiration from early years onwards working with children, young people and parents. Improving economic and social mobility through better educational attainment, skills and workforce training will be crucial for not just for the community but for the competitive performance of the economy. People have to have something to aspire to, and the availability of locally based employment is an important pull factor in encouraging participation in education, training or employment. How Fenland brands and markets itself to the outside world could also positively influence how it attracts investment and talent to the district, playing on the areas strengths and opportunities to provide a consistent message about Fenland across all sectors and agencies.

**One Fenland –** There are a large number of public sector organisations working in Fenland. To better focus these services towards the public, improve delivery and reduce costs a new approach to their organisation is required. This responds to the Government's Total Place agenda, which looks at more joined up delivery of services, procurement and assets across the public sector. Cambridgeshire, including Fenland, is a pilot for this scheme through the Making Cambridgeshire Count programme. A focus on governance, sharing budgets across service providers to achieve longer-term shared outputs and providing focused hubs for the public to access a wide range of different services will all be important elements of this approach. The Making Assets Count programme can provide genuine opportunity for stimulus that must ensure physical, economic and social opportunities are fully realised through such investment.

**Connected Fenland -** Improving connections will be vital to reducing inequalities. The rural nature of Fenland means that isolation will be an ever present challenge to accessibility. Enabling movement around, in and out of the district will be key to unlocking potential. Opportunities to improve public transport services and opening up strategic cycling and walking networks will be important factors in getting people to and from services and employment.

# 4. Part 4 - The next steps – spatial options for growth and infrastructure planning

**Moving forwards to Stage 2**

| |
|---|
| The brief sets out two aims for Stage 2<br><br>To provide an understanding of the potential for growth and the options for accommodating future potential growth and development<br><br>and;<br><br>To provide an understanding of the implications and impacts of accommodating alternative growth scenarios |

4.1 The FNPV project brief was clear in the need to establish a vision for the district ahead of the detailed consideration of spatial options for growth. As the spatial options emerge, they will need to be informed and checked against the emerging vision. It is our view that while the consultant team have developed one before the other, the economic, social and environmental vision and spatial options will run in parallel, both informing the third stage of the project, the action plan of interventions, that partners will be asked to sign up to. This spatial options stage will include assessing the likely infrastructure requirement of options, which will be used as a tool for helping to assess where growth should be directed.

**The Role of Fenland's Market Towns**

4.2 To better understand how the four key towns can and should grow in the future, their role must be clearly understood. This will be explored in more detail in Stage 2, where a character analysis will be undertaken to inform growth option.

4.3 The key areas where the market towns should contribute to an uplift in the quality of life for Fenland's residents are:

1. **Locations for housing growth** there is an opportunity to create successful and desirable housing locations close to the existing town centres which will help to support a more diverse range of services and create a more viable offer.
2. **Employment locations** – driving productivity and addressing local worklessness and deprivation. Market towns are the natural focal points for employment growth being well connected and offering the potential for creating a critical mass of activity as part of an overall masterplanning and place making approach.
3. **Capturing spend and income** by delivering a more competitive offer which will offset the high degree of leakage we currently see in the Fenland economy
4. **Amenity and distinctiveness**, the market towns are Fenland's shop window and as such are the most important opportunity to attract investment and new population.
5. **Learning centres**, in a 'learning district' market towns should provide a focal point for the learning infrastructure, ups-killing and promoting social mobility

6. **Service centres,** the town's will need to continue to provide the main focus points for public, voluntary and private sector services. Growth should be used to focus on improving this offer for existing residents and making it more attractive for future ones.

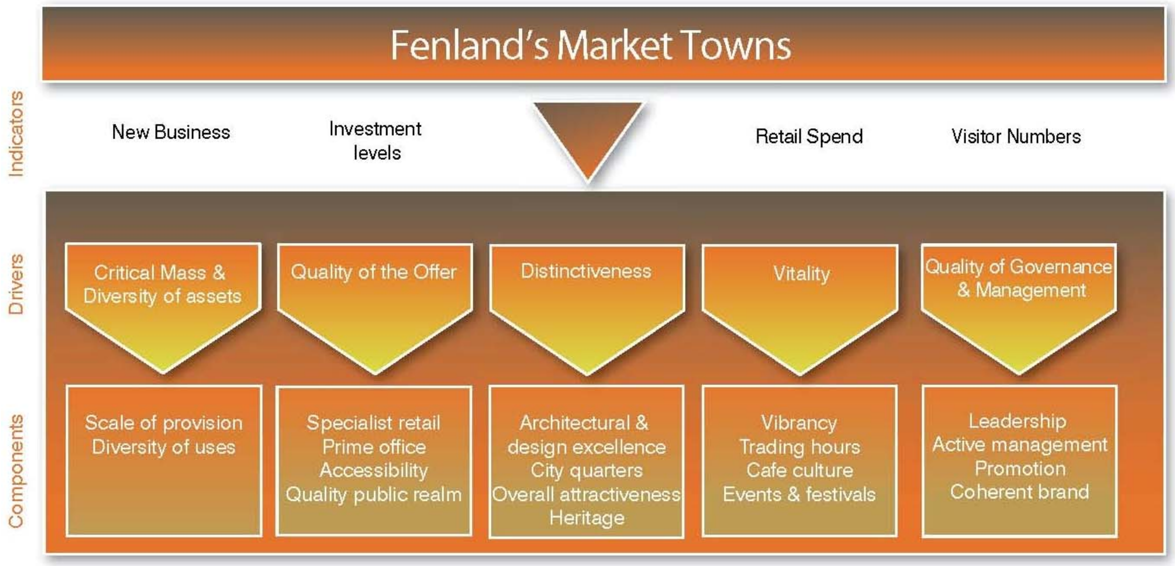
4.4 The following table is not intended to be an exhaustive list of all characteristics and attributes of each market town in Fenland rather it summarises the key roles that each town could play in a successful and diversified Fenland economy.

| | |
|---|---|
| **Wisbech- a regeneration led approach** (20,000 population and a catchment population of 60,000) | We advocate a strong regeneration and place making focus making full use of high profile regeneration sites on riverfront for new leisure and professional and business services businesses and the high quality heritage assets as a setting for high quality food/drink cultural, retail and visitor accommodation offer. It is this step change in the role of Wisbech that will provide the foundation for housing and employment growth that challenges environmental constraints to enable the realisation of the towns' full potential.<br><br>A natural focus for employment Wisbech is the largest town in the district and a trading centre for the whole area. A key location for the food processing and logistics/storage/wholsale cluster the approach here should be multi-sector as there is the clear potential to accommodate a range of business space types.<br><br>Wisbech also demonstrates more need in terms of persistent pockets of worklessness and economic inactivity in local neighbourhoods. The expansion of the towns' employment base is a central objective in tackling this issue.<br><br>The most recent retail study highlighted the importance of strengthening Wisbech town centre as retail and leisure destination and advocated the primacy of the town centre over out of town locations. |
| **March-vibrant railway town** (20,000 population) | March has two key economic strengths; it is the administrative centre for Fenland and is a railway town with direct links to Peterborough and then London which give it a clear mandate for growth based on current opportunity.<br><br>In addition to the public sector employment March is a location for Rail based jobs in rail freight/logistics and has some stable manufacturing and engineering employment. This role has been strengthened with the addition new freight infrastructure investment and link road.<br><br>March is an obvious location for the expansion of the business services sector reinforced by strong links to Peterborough and London. ICT, Creative and lifestyle business would also be attracted to this affordable but vibrant town with its excellent transport links.<br><br>March has also been identified has a centre for possible retail and leisure expansion which would further enhance its role in attracting economically people and employment from elsewhere. |

| | |
|---|---|
| **Chatteris- high end employment location reinforced by high quality housing offer and proximity to Cambridge** (9,000 population) | Chatteris is the southernmost town which has grown quickly over recent years due to its proximity to Cambridge. An attractive town it is also the location for the South Fens Business Centre, now including Phase ii which is an obvious location for knowledge economy overspill from Cambridge or Peterborough. There is little precedent for this type of development in Chatteris but success will be about getting the necessary components in place:<br><br>• The right quality business accommodations offer<br>• An attractive housing offer in neighbourhoods of choice<br>• A stronger town centre with sufficient range and quality of retail offer.<br>• Desirable primary schools and other social infrastructure<br><br>Chatteris is also the location for some well established manufacturing employment in metal components etc- this will continue but offers little prospect of major expansion. |
| **Whittlesey- resilient growth** (14,000) | Whittlesey is a historic market town with an attractive and well defined centre situated close to Peterborough and as such is closely linked with the Peterborough economy. Inevitably the town is serving a dormitory role to some extent but has some large employers (McCain Chips and Hansons Brick Works) in mature sub-regional clusters.<br><br>Due to the large amount of available industrial land the town has potential to grow in significance. The recent retail study recommended environmental improvements to the town centre to improve performance. |

## Town Centre Performance

4.5 A key underlying principle in our approach to improving the performance of Fenland's town centres is that place making and physical improvements that make the town more attractive and also have a direct effect on economic indicators such as footfall, retail spend levels of investment, employment and turnover. The link between these factors is shown in the diagram below which shows how the drivers of town centre competitiveness relate to place making and distinctiveness.




## The Stage 2 Character Study

4.6 A character study will be undertaken of each market town to identify further social, environment and economic opportunities. This will be used to inform the development of three spatial options for growth.

## Options development and testing

4.7 An assessment will be made of the potential growth locations to inform the development of three options to take forward the emerging visions for Fenland and its market towns.

4.8 The options will be tested against the vision and strategic programmes, their viability, opportunities to create employment, ability to deliver infrastructure and against the emerging Core Strategy Sustainability Appraisal.

# Appendix 1 Good practice examples

We have set out a number of case studies to help illustrate the detailed propositions set out above and explain how they could be taken forward in relation to Fenland.

**Resource efficient Fenland**

A key element of the resource efficient Fenland strategic proposition could be the use and management of renewable technology at the district, residential or business community level. The case studies below provide successful example of such schemes. The benefit to Fenland's residents and business could be cheaper, safer energy, but also funding to support community infrastructure needs.

**Westmill Wind Farm**

Built on the site of a former airfield in Watchfield, South Oxfordshire, Westmill Wind Farm was the first onshore wind farm in the South East of England and one of the first entirely community owned schemes in the country. Westmill Wind Farm Co-operative Ltd is an Industrial & Provident Society with 2,374 members; a model based on the successful wind farm run by Baywind Energy co-operative in Cumbria. The co-operative financed the purchase and construction of five wind turbines through a 4.6m fundraising campaign that saw the public able to buy shares in the project and was supplemented by a bank loan. The five 1.3MW turbines provide enough electricity to power more than 2,500 homes. Power generated from the turbines is sold through a Power Purchase Agreement to two separate electricity suppliers for a fixed term. The turbines are maintained and insured throughout their working life, which is expected to be for the 25 years of the planning consent.

Funding for the project was from a public share issue and a loan from the Co-op bank allowing local ownership of the site and maximising the social, environmental and economic benefits to the area. Westmill has a minimum share holding of £250 and a maximum (by law) of £20,000. This is the first project of its kind in Southern England and its importance has been recognised by the award of a capital grant from South East England Development Agency (SEEDA).

**Torrs Hydro, New Mills, Derbyshire**
While hydo may have limited potential in Fenland, the Torrs Hydro, was the UK's first community-led and owned hydropower scheme and therefore demonstrate how communities can bring forward schemes without major support. It is situated on the site of a textile mill built in 1790, with the turbine sitting in the original mill pit where the water wheel would have been. Its members, the 231 shareholders, own the scheme. The shareholders are mostly local people and businesses plus people from further afield who wish to support renewable energy schemes.

Water flowing into the weir from the Rivers Sett and Goyt rotates the blades of the turbine with a maximum output of 63kW given a 3m head and a 3m/s flow. It is the ambition of Torrs Hydro to generate 240,000kWh (240MWh) of electricity which is around 43.5% of the maximum. The scheme cost around £330,000, with community share issue generating around £125 000 and grant funding providing a further £165,000. The local Cooperative Food Superstore buys electricity from Torrs Hydro, with any surplus sold through the national grid.

**Woking Borough Council Energy Services Company**

Since 1990, Woking Borough Council has undertaken a series of sustainable energy projects, and become a pioneer in the process. Between 1991 and 2001, the council reduced its energy consumption by 40%. It established the UK's first local sustainable community energy system and the first district public/private joint venture Energy Services Company (ESCo). This has resulted in £4.9 million in savings for the council, as well as other savings for local households and businesses. Woking is recognized as the UK's most energy efficient local authority, and is the only local authority to ever be awarded the Queen's Award for Enterprise for its work in sustainable development. In 2002, Woking's energy efficiency policy was replaced with by a more comprehensive Climate Change Strategy for the Borough as a whole, shifting its focus from savings in kWh to savings in tonnes of $CO_2$.

| Category | Savings over 11 years - Woking |
|---|---|
| Energy consumption savings | 170,170, 665 KWh (43.8%) |
| Carbon dioxide emissions savings | 95,588 tonnes (71.5%) |
| Nitrogen oxides emissions savings | 319.1 tonnes (68%) |
| Sulphur dioxide emissions savings | 976.6 tonnes (73.4%) |
| Water consumption savings | 340,011,000 litres (43.8%) |
| Savings in energy and water budgets | £4,889,501 (34.3%) |

Source: http://www.climatespace.org/wp-content/uploads/2007/10/case_study_2-woking.pdf

**Eat Fenland**

This proposition provides scope to develop interventions around healthy heating, opportunities to address education and training gaps and build better understanding of local produce. It also could enable long-term aspirations for one of more of the market towns to position itself as a food and culinary centre, bringing with it tourism, employment and distinctiveness.

**Bute Produce, Isle of Bute**

The community gardening project has been developed, building on experiences of research undertaken by the Argyll and Bute Agricultural Forum working closely with Fyne Homes Housing Association. The wider community have been involved via ongoing consultation. There is a development group involving a range of stakeholder representatives, including the farming community, Healthy Living Partnership, Community Regeneration, local producers and Farmers Market.

The project provides affordable healthy produce, reducing food miles and supporting the local economy. The demand for supply of local fresh produce is growing highlighted by carbon footprint and food miles. In Year 1 a basic crop was available for the community to buy on site, selected retail outlets, local events, farmers market, and local events. The success has brought forward the plans to commence a Green Box scheme by 12 months ahead of schedule and trials took place in late 2009 to evaluate the logistics of the programme due to it's growing popularity. 2010 will also witness an increase in the volume and range of produce, increased training support and workshops, extended retail outlets, and a continued community support programme.

Bute Produce is entering the 2nd year and with infrastructure complete for the 1st of 3 acres within the 6 acre site, the phase 2 plan which will deliver a 6kw Wind Turbine (Nov 2010), 1 acre fruit cage, additional polytunnel, community orchard, and the productive development of the remaining 3 acres of land. The project is funded for the next 2 years from on site income streams and also supported by European Leader funding, Scottish Government Wider Role, Community Energy Scotland and Argyll and Bute Employability.

The project has integrated positively with many of the Bute community link projects to ensure the social inclusion of all members of the public. 80% of Year 1 trainees were successfully employed within organizations and businesses on Bute and the programme in Year 2 is aiming to train and support and additional 15 trainees on site based on a 13 week work plan schedule. As well as training and employment, the project provides outdoor classrooms for local schools and volunteering opportunities for all ages.

**Ludlow 'Food Town', Shropshire**

While Fenland's market towns differ in many respects to Ludow, the long-term opportunity to exploit heritage, and local produce and promote a Fenland Food Festival at a scale appropriate to the districts offer could be a clear aspiration.

Ludlow is a traditional market town with a population of 10,500 located in Shropshire near the Welsh border. Now boasting a strong restaurant 'offer' and a prestigious annual food festival, Ludlow emerged after the mid-1990s as a thriving destination for gastro-tourists. Despite its small size, the town has an enviable reputation as a centre for high quality food and drink. With nearly 500 listed buildings, the town's combination of historic architecture and exceptional food offer make it a popular weekend getaway destination.

In 1995, the Ludlow Food Festival was launched as a vehicle for showcasing the local area's independent food and drink producers, as well as encouraging visitors to explore the town's shops, restaurants and pubs. The festival has grown every year since 1995 in terms of the number of visitors, exhibitors and events. With its focus on celebrating the diversity and quality of the local area's food and drink suppliers, Ludlow is at the forefront of the international 'slow food' movement and became the UK's first Cittaslow town, or 'slow town' in 2004. The slow food movement places particular emphasis on sustainable food production and promotes the consumption of locally produced food.

**Build Fenland**

The case studies chosen for this strategic proposition highlight Fenland's location close to nationally significant centres for sustainable construction research and expertise. Fenland's proximity presents an opportunity to work with the key organisations to provide training and skills for its residents, potentially working with local FE provider, the College of West Anglia.

**SmartLIFE Centre, Cambridge**

The SmartLIFE Centre currently operates as a partnership between the County Council and Cambridge Regional College. The facility offers dedicated training in modern methods of construction and sustainable development, providing local people with knowledge and practical experience of MMC.

Modern Methods of Construction (MMC) refers to a range of building processes and technologies relating to supply chain specifications, prefabrication and off-site assembly. As well as promoting high standards of design quality, improving energy performance and helping to speed up housing delivery, MMC can play a role in addressing construction skills shortages.

SmartLIFE started life as an EU-funded project between Cambridgeshire, Hamburg in Germany and Malmö in Sweden. Its aim was to promote sustainable and modern construction methods in EU growth regions. The initial project involved the construction of a training centre, the SmartLIFE Centre in Cambridge, to provide local people with training in innovative sustainable construction skills. As a result of the project's initial success, the work of SmartLIFE was continued by Cambridgeshire County Council and partners after the EU project ended in 2007.

**Peterborough EnviroCluster Retrofit Project**

The Peterborough EnviroCluster Retrofit Project, could also provide an important area for Fenland to link with. The project, a partnership between UK CEED and Peterborough City Council is one of 87 social housing projects across the UK funded by the government to test low carbon building technology. The project's aim is to perform a comprehensive upgrade of the fabric and services of a 1970s, masonry construction, two storey, three bedroom, end-terrace house to effect an 87% reduction in its overall energy consumption. Understanding and implementing best practice retrofitting is vital to meeting the government's $CO_2$ reduction target of 80% by 2050 and building up a skill base in this area would provide residents with valuable opportunities for employment.

Both these projects have physical bases in areas outside, but close to Fenland. Opportunities to link up with these partnerships to deliver training, skills and qualification opportunities within the district could be critical in exploiting the potential for employment associated with projected housing growth in Fenland.

**One Fenland**

Fenland is already heavily involved in the Making Cambridgeshire Count programme, a new initiative designed to transform partnership working and public services across Cambridgeshire. Its aim is to make each pound spent by the public sector count.

Between September and December 2009, people from the public sector across Cambridgeshire identified key areas which Making Cambridgeshire Count should focus on. As a result, work has started on the following eight projects:

1. Public Service Redesign
2. Making Assets Count
3. Community Co-production for Older People
4. Tackling Inequalities
5. Supporting Victims of Domestic Abuse
6. Supporting Gypsies and Travellers
7. Sharing Services
8. Places Pilot in Arbury and Rural Areas

These projects are at various stages of inception; the case study set out below describes a successful project launched as part of the government's Total Place pilot, from which lessons for Fenland's programme can be drawn.

**Croydon Total Place – Child: Family: Place**

Croydon was selected as one of 13 Total Place pilot areas and looked specifically at outcomes for young children from conception to seven years old - as well as their families. This focus on the youngest people is based on the mounting evidence of the profound role early years plays in shaping long term individual and social outcomes.

The pilot project involved engaging directly with families and following their journey through Croydon's early years system. This process highlighted that the system currently provides 'bitty solutions to parts of problems'[9] and is not designed to

[9] *Child: Family: Place: Radical efficiency to improve outcomes for young children* (NHS Croydon and Croydon Council, 2010)

encourage greater independence. The study also involved mapping money and activity in the system, which revealed that early years intervention is not aligned with the way families actually lead their lives. This mapping exercise starkly illustrated how money tends to flow into a complex web of organisational bodies and services, which families must somehow navigate. Furthermore, the Total Place work highlighted that a relatively small proportion of the council's spending on early years is determined locally.

The Total Place project resulted in significant breakthroughs in Croydon's shared understanding of the problems inherent in the council's children and families' system. Importantly, the project resulted in the identification of key areas where better value for taxpayers' money can be achieved through the reduction of administrative expenditure associated with organisational inefficiency. The project established a clear vision for achieving a significant shift in investment and activity towards prevention and early intervention. Through the realisation of this vision, Croydon estimates that savings (on a Net Present Value basis) of over £8.3million during the spending period 2011/12 – 2013/14 can be achieved, rising to £25million by the end of 2016/17 and in excess of £62 million by 2023/24 – when the current cohort of 4 year olds turn 18.

**Connected Fenland**

This detailed proposition could provide a framework that sees services to rural areas better targeted through further links with public and community transport networks. Moreover, better linking rural communities to broadband should promote economic and prosperity and could also fit within the proposition. The case studies below demonstrate examples of how this has happened elsewhere.

**Denton Surgery Bus, Northamptonshire**

A minibus provides services between villages and the local surgery in the village of Denton in rural Northamptonshire, the local surgery is an NHS Primary Care Practice on the outskirts of Northampton with 5,400 patients. The scheme mainly uses 18-seat minibuses and was funded with a Countryside Agency Rural Transport Partnership (RTP) grant and a contribution from the surgery. Consolidation and expansion of facilities at the surgery has enabled the healthcare authority to make efficiency savings while still introducing the transport service.

The scheme aims to provide registered patients with more convenient access to the surgery because existing non-car options are limited. Although open to all patients, the scheme is mostly used by older people and other people without a car. Passenger numbers are estimated to be 4,000–5,000 per year. According to GPs, the scheme is beneficial in terms of reducing the stress associated with arranging travel to the surgery for both staff and patients, especially those suffering from rural isolation. In addition, the bus initiative has contributed to small reductions in traffic in Denton.

Currently, the scheme operates on three mornings a week and on two routes. There are plans to extend operations to five weekdays next year and to cover villages currently excluded.

**Wireless Wedmore**

Wireless Wedmore was formed to bring Broadband access to the Internet to a rural community in the Somerset. BT, cable and other means of access had not been provided for this small village by mid 2003 and small businesses in the area had been limited in their ability to capitalise on online opportunities. In response, a group of local small businesses and civic leaders formed a not-for-profit community association to provide Broadband business-only access using Satellite communications until BT could provide a similar (if not better) service. The satellite transceivers are linked to business users using a local area WiFi wireless (802.11b) network and provide up to 2 megabit bandwidth access with a very low contention ratio per Satellite unit.

The network, whilst technically difficult to set up, has operated successfully for nearly 2 years but has now outlived it usefulness. BT has ADSL enabled the local exchange and is able to provide competing services for businesses and residential users alike and for less than the current operating cost of Wireless Wedmore. Wireless Wedmore closed on 30th June 2005.

**Switch on Shropshire**

In 2004, take up of broadband in Shropshire stood at only 1% - bottom of the national broadband take up table. Following the roll out of new broadband infrastructure by the county council, Shropshire Council established 'Switch On Shropshire' to promote greater broadband usage. The initiative focussed on increasing demand amongst rural businesses and reducing the divide between those who could and could not afford broadband at home.

The scheme provided advice and funding to businesses, with grants offered to support the purchase of new IT equipment and the development of online services. In addition, rural communities were supported through the creation of 'Broadplaces' – local venues such as village halls equipped with a broadband internet connection, software and laptops. Decisions about where individual Broadplaces would be located and the equipment that they should offer were made by local people. Engagement with the local community also involved classes and drop-in sessions, delivered in partnership with training centres and colleges, which helped people get to grips with the technology.

By 2007, 35 Broadplaces had been created and broadband take up had increased to 35%. 250 businesses were connected and 120 provided with grants.

**Aspirational Fenland**

This detailed proposition looks at how to raise aspirations in Fenland, so that residents not only reach further and aim higher in terms of education and employment, but also demand better services, both in terms of the public and private sectors.

**Hackney Schools Mentoring Programme (HSMP)**

Although the inner city London Borough of Hackney may seem like a far cry from the predominantly rural Fenland, there are a number of commonalities which make the lessons learned from the HSMP relevant to the district. Hackney is characterised by low levels of educational attainment with many pupils having low aspirations, lacking personal confidence or awareness of career opportunities. Bordering the capital's financial engine, the City of London, Hackney also shares with Fenland a close proximity to economic dynamism (i.e. Cambridge).

The programme is the largest Mentoring Scheme operating in the Borough of Hackney, having been established in 1996 by the East London Business Alliance (ELBA) and Hackney Learning Partnerships. The programme links Year 10 school pupils in Hackney with working adults from the business community. The mentoring programme's main objectives are to increase pupils' self-confidence, raise aspirations, provide experience of the working world and improve their academic performance.

The scheme, which is entirely voluntary, is open to all Year 10 pupils in Hackney. Students signed up to the scheme travel after school to meet their mentors in his or her place of work once a fortnight for approximately one hour. By exposing pupils to different types of work and providing a focus on career goals, the mentoring scheme can help to raise participants' aspirations and motivation. Studies have shown that GCSE results do improve through students' participation in mentoring schemes.

Tackling the prevalence of low aspiration and attainment amongst young people in Fenland could be usefully addressed through a similar programme of mentoring.

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