

FDC/Matter 8

**FENLAND LOCAL PLAN CORE STRATEGY
DEVELOPMENT PLAN DOCUMENT**

EXAMINATION

FENLAND DISTRICT COUNCIL STATEMENT

MATTER 8: WISBECH (POLICY CS8)

Fenland District Council
Fenland Hall
County Road
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PE15 8NQ

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www.fenland.gov.uk

Fenland District Council Statement in response to Matter 8: Wisbech (Policy CS8)

ISSUES and QUESTIONS

Q1. Will the LP be effective in delivering the targeted provision of 3000 dwellings in Wisbech, given that the Council identify a need for further master planning to determine more precisely the growth potential of Wisbech, as set out in CS4 (Part A)?

The Council believes the LP will be effective in delivering the targeted provision of 3,000 dwellings in Wisbech.

The paragraph referring to the need for further master planning to determine the growth potential of Wisbech was written at a time when there was uncertainty regarding the feasibility of mitigation measures to overcome transport issues. Detailed discussions with the relevant partners, namely Cambridgeshire County Council and Highways Agency, have since been concluded. The Statement of Common Ground (CD013) formalises these discussions and demonstrates that the targeted provision is deliverable, subject to mitigation measures.

The Council is also comforted by the support the Environment Agency has given to the Council in preparing the Wisbech Policy (CS8), and the subsequent lack of ‘objection’ from the Agency for the growth proposals at Wisbech.

Thus, whilst master planning will still be required for major sites at Wisbech, the Council is considerably more confident that the growth can be delivered at Wisbech than it was at the point of consulting on the Proposed Submission version of the Plan.

As such, the paragraph as referred to by the question above (namely, the first paragraph at the top of page 19 within Policy CS4) can now be removed in its entirety.

This is proposed through Proposed Modification MPC/3/009.

Q2. Is it reasonable for new development to have an exceptionally strong focus on the provision of deliverable measures which would result in a modal shift to sustainable transport modes for residents and workers of existing communities in addition to those of new development? How will the Council determine where such measures may or may not be possible through a development?

Such an approach as set out in the question above would not be reasonable; however, this is not the intention of the policy.

The paragraph reads *“must have an exceptionally strong focus on the provision of deliverable measures which should result in a modal shift to sustainable transport modes for residents and workers of both the new development themselves and, **where possible**, for existing communities”* [emphasis added].

The purpose of this policy is not to *require* all new development to create a modal shift for existing communities. As indicated by the wording ‘where possible’ it is instead to encourage the benefits of new development to spread beyond the immediate site. For example, if a bus stop is being put in place to serve the new development, there may be opportunities for this bus stop to be positioned in such a way as to also benefit adjacent existing community

without any additional cost e.g. by locating on the edge of the site. The policy wording above simply suggests that these opportunities be maximised, which FDC considers is entirely reasonable and indeed sensible.

Such measures are expected to be set out either in an accompanying Transport Statement, Transport Assessment or Travel Plan, as required by Policy CS15. There is clearly no set of standard measures that can be used for all development. Therefore proposals will be assessed on a site by site basis drawing on local examples and best practice and through negotiation with the developer to arrive at such measures.

Q3. Is the development of South Wisbech (broad location for growth) for predominantly business purposes likely to provide the infrastructure required?

Yes, it will.

The infrastructure requirements for this site are commensurate with the level of development proposed. As such this area has been identified as a Broad Location for growth without exact boundaries to enable the exact relationship, in terms of viability, to be investigated further. This will be formalised through a comprehensive delivery scheme.

The Sustainability Appraisal work illustrates that business led development in this area is the most appropriate though, as can be seen in the policy, some residential development may also be appropriate and assist the viability of a comprehensive scheme in this area.

The infrastructure requirements for this site are not prohibitive. The highways mitigation strategy for Wisbech indicates that whilst there is recognition of the challenges with implementing the mitigation strategy, all parties agree that over the plan period there is a reasonable prospect of it being delivered.

Q4. Will the development of West Wisbech be a viable option given flood risk considerations and transport infrastructure requirements?

Yes, it is.

The West Wisbech site is designated as a broad location for growth, with exact boundaries yet to be determined. It is estimated that, very broadly, around 750 dwellings could come forward in this area.

The principle for housing at West Wisbech, as agreed with partner organisations (including the Environment Agency), is subject to satisfying a number of requirements, specifically regarding flood risk mitigation measures and transport infrastructure. The uncertainty inherent in incorporating these solutions into a scheme is reflected in the designation of the area as a broad location of growth rather than a strategic allocation. As a broad location of growth the flexibility of the exact boundaries and thus the composition of site, will allow a viable scheme to be designed. The housing trajectory takes into account the likely additional lead-in time required to agree solutions by estimating that the site will come forward no earlier than 2019/20.

Much will depend on the exact composition of the scheme, suitability of exact mitigation measures and the state of the local and national economy; issues that will be discussed in further detail as part of the preparation of a comprehensive delivery scheme. The Council has been clear that it will make every effort to take into account the viability of the scheme;

indeed, with regards the potential link road, it specifically states *“the Council will be willing to negotiate appropriate levels of other wider infrastructure, such as affordable housing, to ensure the development remains viable”*.

As such, whilst it is accepted that the exact position on the viability of the site is, at this stage, not determined; the flexibility and lead-in period mean that development of west Wisbech is a viable option for growth over the plan period.

The implementation section of the Core Strategy sets out how we will carefully monitor the progress on each of the proposed sites, including the more challenging ones such as this, and take action if issues emerge.

The Council is aware of representations that are arguing for a smaller designation (250 homes) and a bigger designation (1,500 homes). We accept that either of these propositions may be the final outcome, at the extreme ends of the range, and therefore take comfort that, first, development in this locality appears viable from the landowners perspective, and second that the indicative figure of 750 is a reasonable mid-range estimate at this stage.

If 250 homes (or some other figure significantly lower than 750) results from detailed comprehensive investigations, then the Council will monitor delivery elsewhere in the Wisbech area (including neighbouring villages which serve Wisbech) and take action should the overall Wisbech target be significantly off-track.

If 1,500 homes or so is the final outcome, then the Council believes that delivery of such is unlikely to take place fully in the plan period and as such the indicative figure of 750 within the plan period remains sound.