

**FENLAND DISTRICT COUNCIL;
LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK - CORE STRATEGY PREFERRED
OPTIONS.**

(Report by Head of Planning Services)

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Fenland District Council has published for consultation the Preferred Options for the Core Strategy of its Local Development Framework. The consultation period ended on 27th November and therefore an Officer response has been sent, in order to safeguard Huntingdonshire's interests. Cabinet are asked to endorse the Officer response.

2 THE MAIN ISSUES FOR HUNTINGDONSHIRE

- 2.1 The Fenland Core Strategy, which will cover the period to 2021, will replace the existing Fenland Local Plan of 1991.
- 2.2 Many of the Preferred Options relate to dealing with development issues within Fenland and are unlikely to have any external impact on neighbouring authorities such as Huntingdonshire. The main issue for Huntingdonshire is the distribution of growth, particularly housing development, and how this might lead to increased out commuting to areas where jobs are more available. For Fenland existing patterns show that such commuting would be mostly from Chatteris into Huntingdonshire, especially Huntingdon, and the Cambridge area. The vast majority of these journeys would be by car.
- 2.3 The Preferred Option for the higher orders in the settlement hierarchy is:
- Market Towns - Chatteris, March, Whittlesey and Wisbech
 - Key Service Centres – Doddington, Wimblington
- 2.4 In terms of allocating housing development to these main settlements, the report suggests that provision be made as follows:
- March 1400 dwellings
 - Wisbech 1400 dwellings
 - Chatteris 700 dwellings
 - Whittlesey 350 dwellings
 - Key and Limited Service Centres 270.
- 2.5 In terms of the distribution between the Market Towns, the fact that the housing allocated to March and Wisbech is considerably more than at Chatteris is to be welcomed. The report suggests that growth at Chatteris can be accommodated sustainably. However, the report does not acknowledge the issue of unsustainable car-borne out-commuting if housing development runs ahead of employment growth.

- 2.6 The Preferred Options does seek to provide an adequate supply of employment land, but the problem in Fenland has traditionally been that employment development has been much slow to be taken up than housing. There is no guarantee that the land allocated for employment will be taken up. This is less of an issue in March and Wisbech where out-commuting is limited by relative remoteness, but very much an issue at Chatteris where there needs to be a robust link between the take-up of housing and employment allocations.
- 2.7 This could be achieved by linking the phasing of the release of planning permissions for housing in Chatteris to the completion of employment development in the town. Currently the Preferred Options phasing suggests that land for housing will be released only to take account of the overall target for housing delivery.
- 2.8 In this way, new housing would be linked to increased job opportunities in Chatteris and thus limit any increase in car-commuting into Huntingdonshire, which would be unsustainable and lead to increased traffic, with associated problems for the highway network in Huntingdonshire.
- 2.9 In terms of process, the previous stage in the preparation of Fenland's Core Strategy, Issues and Options, did not identify a range of options for the distribution of development. Members will be aware that for Huntingdonshire's Core Strategy, the Inspector has postponed the Examination to allow for further details on the spatial strategy to be prepared and subjected to public participation. This will involve consulting on a range of options. Fenland has not given Huntingdonshire the opportunity to comment on options and therefore the soundness of Fenland's approach has to be questioned.

3 RECOMMENDATION

- 3.1 It is recommended that Cabinet agrees:

That the above concerns be confirmed as the basis for the formal representation to Fenland District Council.

Background Papers:

Fenland District Council, Core Strategy and Development Policies – Preferred Options, October 2006.

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