

` Provided by the Middle Level Commissioners		Item No:	9
Meeting:	OVER & WILLINGHAM IDB (Hereafter referred to as the Board)	Subject:	CONSULTING ENGINEERS REPORT: CHIEF ENGINEER'S SUMMARY, M&E REPORT & CAPITAL PROGRAMME
Date:	Wednesday 30th April 2025	Officer Responsible:	Nicola Oldfield

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Board is asked to:

- A. **Acknowledge the proposed approach to introduce interim charges for responding to applicant's questions.**
- B. **Confirm whether it wishes to create, adopt and issue standing advice notes for its district and instruct the Consulting Engineer accordingly.**
- C. **The Board is advised to consider what funding is needed from next year for submission to the Environment Agency.**

1. Technical Services

- 1.1 Since Chris Bailey started as our new Head of Technical Services, we have been updating the catalogue of services which MLC could provide. Given the increasing frequency of complex cases where Boards consider there may be a need for regulation and enforcement dependent on the costs and benefits, we are reviewing and updating training, policies, and capacity to undertake enforcement and compliance regulation on behalf of the Boards we represent.

We are receiving an increased number of questions from developers ahead of planning applications/consent applications, with an expectation that we can provide the information freely. We have completed the review of our charging model and we will be introducing a new charging model for answering these questions if applicants do not enter into a pre-app agreement.

Please refer to item 4 in the Clerks report.

The Board is asked to acknowledge this approach.

2. Summary of Key Planning Issues

We will, when possible, seek the Board's input, rather than wait for Board meetings. This will be done via correspondence with the Chair, Vice Chair, District Officer and any appropriate sub-committees.

2.1 Proposed reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework and other changes to the planning system - Open consultation

Following the change of government in July an open consultation was held between 30th July and 24th September 2024 on proposed reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and other changes to the planning system.

As the NPPF sets out government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied, it is therefore a significant driver and influence on development related planning policy, and it was essential that a suitable response be made.

During August the Boards' Chairs were given the opportunity to comment on the issues raised within the draft consultation document and provide comments and any other related items of unease that the Boards had.

A response, which was primarily providing answers to specific questions, was submitted before the deadline.

One of the big issues related to development of the "green belt" and the introduction of the "grey belt" but the consultation also included decision making, climate change, flood risk, and environmental related issues. Responses to specific questions contained within the consultation included:

1. The advantages and disadvantages of restoring the 5-Year Housing Land Supply (5YHLS).
2. Further supporting effective co-operation on cross boundary and strategic planning matters.
3. The LPA's need to understand, consider and acknowledge the impact of new development on their special levy and future funding requests under Defra's Partnership Funding Policy. Under this policy housing built or converted after January 2012 is **not** included in FCERM government grant in aid calculations.
4. The need to consider the adoption of appropriate measures that consider the whole water cycle process such as rainwater harvesting and the re-use of as much water as possible.
5. The need for bodies involved in the planning process but which are not LPAs to be provided with suitable compensation, benefit and other incentives for contributing to and enabling the aspirational growth and local economy.

The opportunity was taken to raise some issues not covered by the reform consultation as a concern by many Boards, in the hope that these points are heard and acted upon. These included:

- A. The Fenland Situation – special requirements needed due to the low-lying topography, the managed flood risk and land drainage systems, the provision of enabling infrastructure to allow life to continue and also accommodate current growth aspirations.
- B. The flawed methodology used by LPAs and poor decisions made by the LPAs when considering and allocating sites often caused by the need to meet government targets.
- C. The impacts of growth and climate change and the need to revise nationally accepted design standards.

The revised NPPF constitutes a significant departure from previous versions with 810 changes. It was issued during December, and its contents are currently being reviewed.

2.2 New developments and the use of SuDS

Analysis of the responses from the last round of meetings revealed that the Board and its members had overwhelming concerns about the uses of SuDS Devices from the design, construction, ownership, management and maintenance phases.

Despite the new government growth agenda, as partly discussed above, it appears unlikely that the previously announced implementation of Schedule 3 of the Flood and Water Management Act and the introduction of the SuDS Approval Board (SAB) will occur in the near future.

2.3 Engagement with the Local Planning Authorities (LPA)

There has been a significant disconnect with the LPA's since the pandemic partly due to the changes of working practices, ever decreasing resources and lack of suitably qualified officers.

Several Council representatives have urged the need to engage with the LPA's and the developers. Where possible efforts have been made to reengage with all members of planning departments but particularly with the Case Officers but this has proved difficult. Despite several requests to engage, discuss and resolve the issues with the relevant parties these remain unanswered and this is considered to be poor partnership working.

There is particular concern about the larger strategic sites which experience has proven will take several years to build out and involve several RMA potentially including the LPA, the Environment Agency, the LLFA, the MLC, the Boards and Anglian Water etc. together with other interested parties with changing staff or representatives being involved. Therefore, it is considered that it is in everyone's interest for development specific "Drainage/Construction/Ecology" Strategy or Strategies to be established.

The documents can:

- A. Identify the key challenges involved and facing the LPA, RMAs, Landowners and Developers, and other parties concerned and identify opportunities and provide a strategic direction to encourage an integrated and sustainable approach in the context of the proposed development.
- B. Advise on how the site will be established, developed and maintained during its lifetime. This will include but will not be limited to the provision of further design detail of the on site surface water disposal systems; any potential improvement works and installation of relevant infrastructure; design, construction and long term maintenance arrangements including relevant open watercourses; ecological protection and enhancement of open watercourses; etc.
- C. Assist any new officers when dealing with the development concerned, provide more certainty and potentially speed up the decision making for all parties.
- D. Strengthen RMA strategic working and if dealt with correctly would speed up decision making, both are being promoted by Government and contained within the latest version of the NPPF and reduce long term costs for all parties including the LPA's.

In respect of an enquiry to an LPA in respect of a Strategic Allocation for a Mixed Use Development comprising residential development up to 1,000 dwellings, employment (B1, B2, & B8), Local Centre (A1, A2, A3, A4 & D1), Primary School and associated infrastructure the Case Officer involved responded as follows:

"As such, the IDB, and their decision to Grant or Refuse land drainage consent is at the discretion of the IDB and covered under legislation separate to planning, and I note your interest in engaging with them to address this matter. As this is separate to the planning system, the LPA will not involve themselves in this matter further, unless changes need to be made to the surface water drainage scheme approved by the LPA as a result of discussion with the IDB."

2.4 Planning Conditions

Efforts have also been made to engage with a well-respected local Principal Planning Officer requesting a conversation about the intricacies of imposing planning conditions. The officer concerned has advised that whilst the position is noted and would be a good idea he considers that it would be inappropriate for him to provide guidance given his status as an Interim Officer. He added that he understood that the authorities Head of Planning and Development Manager would be better placed to deal with the enquiry and would "be in touch". This approach has not yet been received.

2.5 **Planning Consultations & Updates**

The Commissioners have responded on the Board's behalf concerning the following:

A. Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Service Planning Service Consultation Matrix – In response to a query the GCSP were advised of the current planning related contact address/point of contact; the service provided; the use of planning application lists/Notices; and the process advising on the Boards requirements.

B. Cambridge Water Drought Management Plan (DMP)

Cambridge Water are commencing the review and development of its new DMP, prior to submission to Defra following a period of formal public consultation and has sought the views of several stakeholders for consideration on the development of a new plan and approach to drought management. In general, the Plan does not directly affect the Board but a response was made which amongst other items referred to Drought Triggers, Temporary Use Bans, Bulk Transfers and Communications with customers.

The Greater Cambridge Local Plan

This plan that will guide where new homes and jobs will come forward during the next 20 years, is being prepared jointly by Cambridge City Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council.

New Local Plan preparation timetable

The timetable has been revised for each stage of the process. The next time that people can give feedback will now be in Autumn of this year, when comments will be requested on a draft Plan.

Site Submission updates

In order to ensure that we have the most current and complete information as the Councils move forward with the Plan, an opportunity for developers, landowners and others to update the Councils about the site proposals they would like to be considered.

2.6 **Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Flood and Water (C&P FloW) Partnership**

In addition to the items discussed above, the following issues of interest to the Board have been raised:

A. Cambridgeshire Flood Risk Programme

Given that a year has passed since the workshop and no meaningful correspondence or outcomes appear to have been received, the Commissioners requested an update on this programme. However, it is understood that these sites are included in the Cambridgeshire Flood Risk Management Strategy: 2024 Action Plan Review. See below.

B. Community Flood Action programme

Further copies of the Community Flood and Water newsletter have been issued. You can view previous editions and subscribe to receive the newsletter automatically at [Community flood action programme | Cambridgeshire County Council](#).

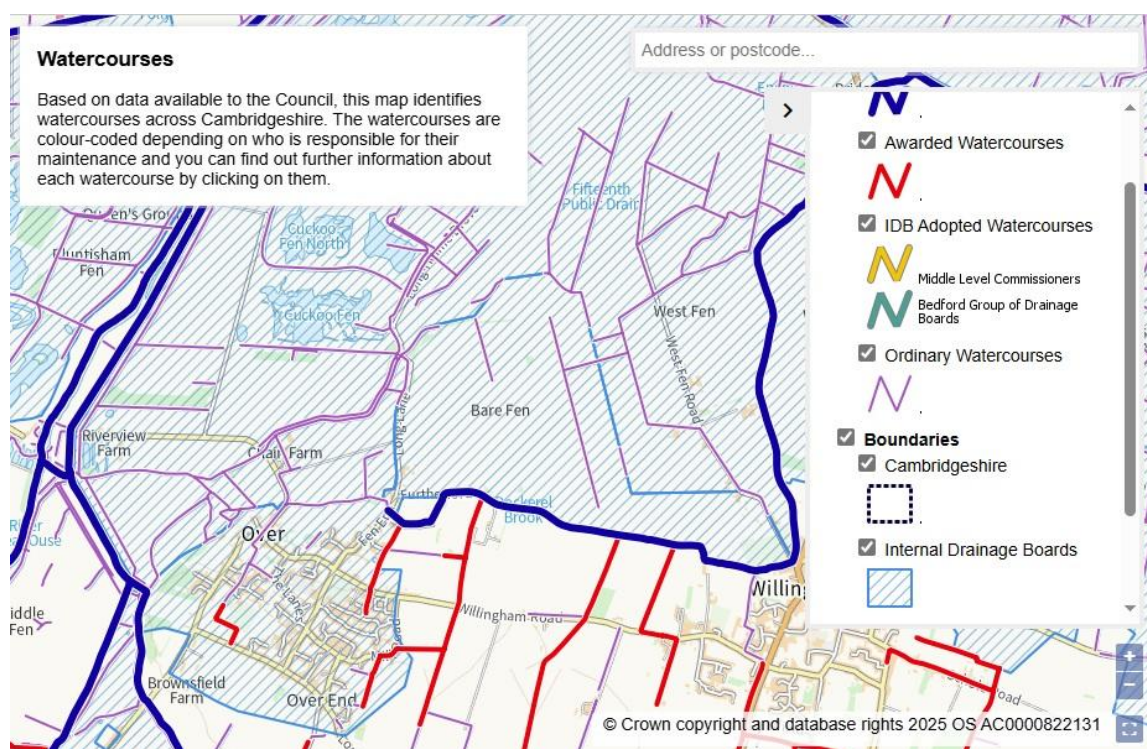
C. Watercourse Mapping Tool

The Flood Risk team has published a Watercourse Mapping Tool - [Watercourse management | Cambridgeshire County Council](#)

The tool was driven by feedback from local communities, landowners, and other stakeholders who wanted to understand more about watercourse responsibilities. It aims to provide a public tool that can be used to identify location of and responsibility for different watercourses. The watercourses are colour-coded depending on type/maintenance obligations and you can find out further information about each watercourse by clicking on them. The map includes the following details in Cambridgeshire:

- Ordinary watercourses
- Awarded watercourses
- Middle Level Commissioners (MLC) Adopted watercourses
- Main rivers
- Internal Drainage Board boundaries

It is acknowledged that there will be some watercourses, particularly the smaller ones, that are not yet included on the map. It is intended to expand on this map, adding more information wherever possible. If there are watercourses in your area that satisfy the definition above but are not currently included in the mapping, please contact the Flood Risk Team so that these can be discussed and added where appropriate.



Extract from the CCC Watercourse Mapping Tool showing part of the Boards area

D. Cambridgeshire Flood Risk Management Strategy (FRMS): 2024 Action Plan Review

A plan review has been prepared to provide an update on the progress of actions listed in the Cambridgeshire FRMS, which was adopted in 2022, highlighting contributions, completed work and any risks or challenges.

The contents are currently being reviewed in detail, but it summarises that:

“Progress has already been made against 54 of the 58 actions with 6 actions now having been completed. There are several obstacles that impede progress in some areas, these are outlined below. Despite that and the persisting wet weather conditions, headway has been made across most actions and by multiple partners.

The importance of clear communication remains in focus, whilst the impactful action led by community groups and local landowners continues to provide positive results.

There is still some uncertainty from external factors that influence the work we do. In response to this we take an adaptive approach so we can be prepared for the changing circumstances.”

3. **Capital Programme**

- 3.1 There is no allocation of funding in the current FCRM Grant-in-Aid (FCRM GiA) programme.

The Board is advised to consider what funding is needed from next year for submission to the Environment Agency.

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Appendix 1: M&E Report

Provided by the Middle Level Commissioners		Item No:	9
Meeting:	OVER & WILLINGHAM IDB (Hereafter referred to as the Board)	Subject:	CONSULTING ENGINEERS REPORT: MECHANICAL & ELECTRICAL
Date:	Wednesday 30th April 2025	Officer Responsible:	Dave Bantoft

1. M&E key messages and advice

- 1.1 In light of uncertainty of GiA funding the Board is strongly advised to consider the development of an investment plan for asset refurbishment/replacement. The Board is asked to instruct the Consulting Engineer accordingly.
- 1.2 Other than matters previously reported or detailed below only routine maintenance has been carried out since the last meeting and the pumping plant appears to be mechanically and electrically in a satisfactory condition.

The station and pump are at an age where reliability is a concern, and a plan should be put in place to overhaul or replace items as necessary to ensure ongoing reliability.

2. Pumping summary

The pump wobble is now minimal, but reliability is a concern as the pump was last overhauled in 1988 and the column bolts are heavily corroded. A decision needs to be made on the pump in hand with a long-term plan for the station.

The weed screen needed a contactor replaced during summer that had failed.

3. Inspections

- 3.1 The mandatory site Electrical Installation Condition Reports (due every 5 years) are within date as shown below.

EICR Pass Date	EICR Due
12-Jul-2022	12-Jul-2027

- 3.2 HSB Engineering annual inspections for insurance were carried out in September 2024.

4. Pumping Station Key Dates

- 4.1 Please review the pumping station key dates below, if there are any discrepancies or you can add any details, please let me know. The key dates are an important reference and will feed into the upcoming Key Health Indicators and District Studies.

Station						Weedscreen				Telemetry
Built	Pump	Pump Overhaul	Motor O/H	Thrust Bearing	Controls	Bars	WSC	WSC O/H	Controls	
1961	1961	1988	1988	1998	1998	2014	2017	2017	2017	N

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