

District Councillor report to Parish Council January 2026

Happy new year!

Local Government Reorganisation Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Consultation

I want to update you on the government's plans to streamline local government by transitioning to single-tier unitary councils, replacing the current two-tier system. This reform aims to strengthen local councils, drive economic growth, improve public services, and empower communities. The Minister of State for Local Government and Homelessness, Alison McGovern MP, has expressed appreciation for the collaborative efforts in submitting proposals for this change and outlined the next steps. A consultation on proposals from the remaining areas is expected to launch in early February 2025, lasting seven weeks, as required by the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007. While the government cannot comment on the substance of the proposals yet, officials will address any questions raised. We will continue to work closely with the government and keep you informed as this process progresses.

Happy to send the letter from government to anyone that wants to read it.

Government Consultation on Changes to National Planning Policy

The Government has launched a public consultation on a new National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), alongside a wider package of proposed planning reforms.

Residents can view:

- The Written Ministerial Statement issued by the Government
- The Oral Statement delivered to Parliament
- The Government press release
- The full consultation documents

The consultation is open for responses until **10 March**.

Key proposed changes include:

- The Government has decided not to introduce statutory National Development Management Policies (NDMPs) at this time. Instead, national planning policy changes are being made through the revised NPPF, with the option to introduce statutory NDMPs in the future if required.

- The NPPF has been significantly restructured, with a new format and layout compared to previous versions.
- A number of new national planning policies are proposed, including:
 - A **permanent presumption in favour of development** in suitable locations, particularly in urban areas.
 - A **“default approval” approach for housing near railway stations**, including:
 - Development around stations within existing settlements
 - Development around well-connected stations outside settlements, including on Green Belt land
 - Proposed minimum densities of 40 dwellings per hectare around all stations, and 50 dwellings per hectare around well-connected stations.
 - Measures to **increase density in urban and suburban areas**, such as redeveloping low-density sites, corner plots, upward extensions, and infill development, including within residential gardens.
 - Additional support for **small and medium-sized housing sites**, with a new category of “medium development” (10–49 homes) aimed at reducing costs and regulatory burdens for small and medium-sized builders. This may include exemption from the Building Safety Levy.
 - Proposals to **exempt very small developments (up to 0.2 hectares)** from Biodiversity Net Gain requirements, alongside simplified rules for small and medium sites that are not exempt. Further consultation is also proposed on potential exemptions for certain brownfield residential sites.
 - **£8 million of new funding** for local planning authorities to help speed up the processing of major residential planning applications after outline permission has been granted. This funding will be targeted at authorities with high levels of development activity and strong growth potential, with **£3 million allocated to London authorities**.

The Council will be reviewing the proposals in detail and will submit a formal response to the consultation. Residents are also encouraged to review the consultation documents and submit their own comments directly to the Government before the deadline.

Have your say on the Greater Cambridge Local Plan

I encourage all residents, businesses, and community groups to share their views on how the Greater Cambridge area will grow over the next 20 years.

The Local Plan, which will cover both South Cambridgeshire and Cambridge, sets out where new homes and workplaces could be built, alongside the utilities, services, green spaces, and community facilities to support them. Once adopted, it will become the official development plan guiding decisions on planning applications.

The consultation will close at 5pm on 30th January. The council is holding in-person and online events where residents can find out more and speak to planners. Please visit [the Local Plan dedicated webpage](#) for more information about the consultation and events, or drop us a line.

Weekly food waste collections starting in January

Weekly collections of food waste will begin in parts of South Cambridgeshire in January – rolling out collections to all households by the end of 2026.

The service will be extended across Greater Cambridge in phases throughout next year. All households will receive a letter with full details a few weeks before the service begins in their area to help ensure they are prepared.

Before their new collections begin, households will receive a new outdoor caddy to put out for collection at the kerbside with their wheelie bins each week, as well as a smaller indoor caddy to collect food waste in the kitchen. Most flats will share an outdoor wheelie bin in their bin store to empty their indoor caddy into. The weekly food waste collections will take place on residents' usual bin days.

Households in the first phase of the roll-out which will start in January will have received a letter before Christmas letting them know when to expect delivery of their caddies and the date that their weekly collection service will begin.

All households will receive a letter a few weeks before the service begins in their area to help ensure they are prepared. You can check your bin information at www.greatercambridgewaste.org by inputting your postcode.

There are a few households that already have caddies because the council ran a three-year trial on approximately 9,000 households between 2020 and 2023, so we asked officers for advice where residents do in fact already have one as to whether they can use that one as it seems like a waste of money to issue new ones – with the answer being that residents will have the option to return

caddies to a number of drop-off points. You can check the website for nearest drop-off points.

Reminder for postal vote renewals

A last reminder this year that if you completed a postal vote application before October 2023, you will need to renew it by January 2026 at the latest in order to remain a postal voter for the district and parish council elections in May 2026.

The easiest way for residents to re-apply is online at www.gov.uk/apply-postal-vote, but the council can send paper forms to anyone who needs them. Please email elections@scambs.gov.uk if you have any questions.

Decision-Making for Our Local Area

At Full Council this month, a proposal was brought forward calling on the Council to support the establishment of a Mayoral Development Corporation, rather than having key planning and development decisions made directly by central government.

With £4 million of Government funding proposed for Cambridge, we believe it is important that decisions about how our area develops are led locally. A Mayor—regardless of political party—is directly elected by residents and accountable to them, which provides local democratic oversight.

The Liberal Democrat administration did not support this proposal. During the meeting, the Leader of the Council confirmed that her opposition was based on the identity of the current Mayor. As a result, the administration chose not to support a locally led approach, despite the alternative being greater decision-making from Westminster.

We believe that decisions affecting our communities should be made as close to residents as possible, by leaders who are democratically elected and accountable. We would like to see all parties put the interests of local residents first, rather than allowing national party politics to influence decisions about our area.

Support for Our Local Pubs and Small Businesses

At the last Full Council meeting, we brought forward a motion calling on the Council to support our small local businesses by backing the abolition of business rates for local pubs, high street shops and businesses across the hospitality sector. These businesses are central to our communities, providing jobs, social spaces and vital local services, yet many continue to face rising costs and financial pressure.

The motion was debated at length, during which the Liberal Democrat administration proposed amendments that would have introduced a new charge,

known as a Commercial Land Levy (CLL). We were concerned that this would have replaced one tax burden with another, rather than delivering genuine relief for small businesses. As a result of these amendments, the motion was ultimately abandoned during the meeting.

Despite this outcome, I want to be clear that supporting our local pubs and small businesses remains a priority. I will continue discussions with the administration and will press for policies that provide meaningful, practical support for our pubs, high streets and hospitality venues.

I believe these businesses are the backbone of our local economy and should be helped to succeed, not faced with additional or substitute taxes. I will continue to stand up for them and oppose measures that would place further financial strain on small, locally run businesses.

*Thank you for taking the time to read my report; if you have any questions or want to discuss any of the issues raised email me on graham.cone@councillor.online or ring 07595 361 285 (please leave a voicemail if I am unavailable) **Councillor Graham Cone***