

# **Sustainability Assessment**

**Stage 1**

## **Context and Objectives**

**November 2014 Consultation**

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# Introduction

March Town Council is producing a neighbourhood plan to help guide the development of the town. The plan will contain a set of planning policies that will be used by Fenland District Council to help decide planning applications in the town.

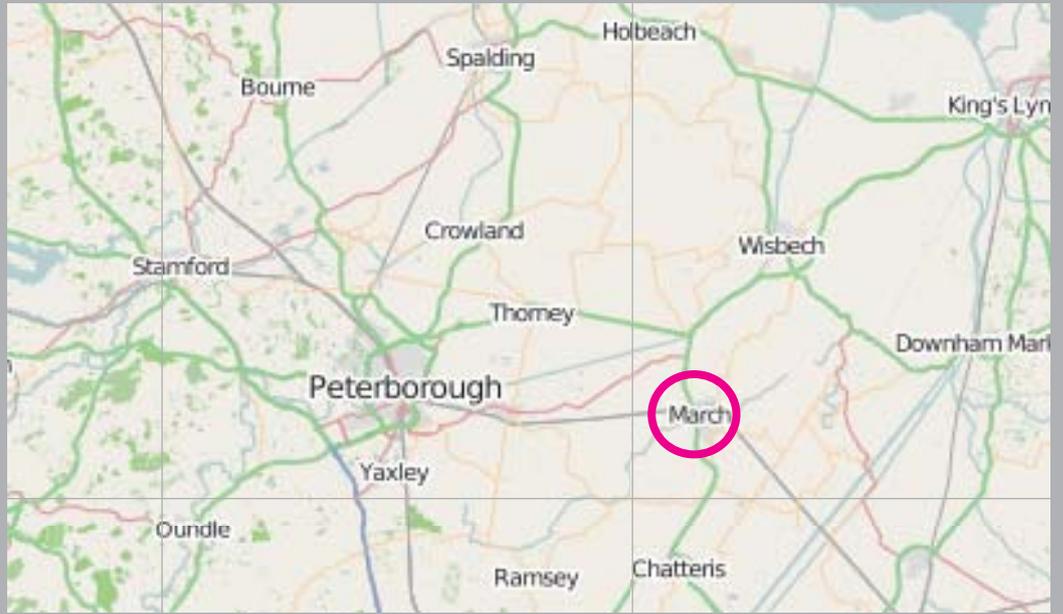
Neighbourhood planning is a relatively new tool for communities who want to take a greater responsibility for their area. Receiving royal ascent in November 2011, the Localism Act established the right for community groups to come together to create a neighbourhood development plan for their area.

Neighbourhood plans are essentially mini local plans that focus in on a particular area. It establishes general planning policies for the development and use of land in a neighbourhood, like:

- where new homes and offices should be built
- what they should look like

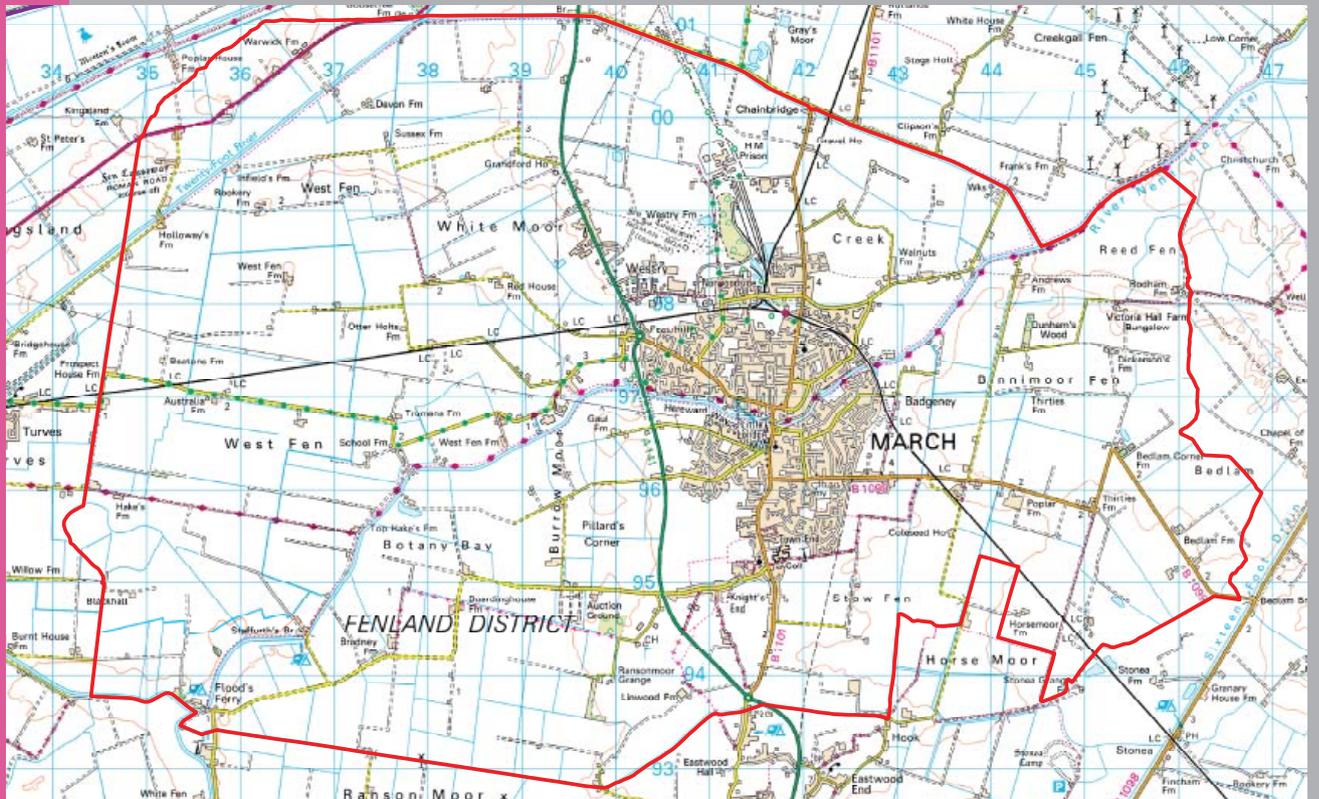
The plan can be detailed or general, depending what local people want. More information can be found on neighbourhood planning on the [government website](#).

As with local plans, neighbourhood plans should ensure that they are planning for sustainable development. This means taking account of the economy, the environment, and society and making sure that one is not promoted at the expense of the other. We are therefore undertaking this sustainability assessment to help inform the preparation of our plan.



March's regional context

© Open Streetmap Contributors



The area of the March Neighbourhood Plan

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# What is a Sustainability Assessment?

Our sustainability assessment will be developed alongside the plan so that we can make sure we have as much information as possible about the economy, the environment and society in March to make the right decisions for our plan.

The sustainability assessment will be a useful tool for us to embed sustainability in our thinking from the offset. This part of the assessment, the context and objectives report, will provide 18 sustainability objectives. These objectives are then used like a checklist when we are considering different options for the plan to give us an indication of how well a certain course of action may perform.

We will use the assessment to guide our decision-making but it will not be the decision making document. In some cases, for example, we may feel that we need to pursue an environmental policy at the expense of the economy and society. In these instances, our assessment will be used to tell us how we can offset the harm of such a policy while understanding that it is still in the public interest to do so.

Our sustainability assessment fulfills the role of the Strategic Environmental Assessment of Plans regulations from the European Union, transposed into UK law by the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004. It also considers economic and social factors and so is above and beyond the requirements of the EU Directive.

For more information on the statutory requirements of the Strategic Environmental Assessment Regulations, please visit the [government's website](#).

## What is this report?

In order to assess how sustainable our emerging plan is, we need to know two things:

- i** If there are any other organisations or authorities with sustainability aspirations for March - for example Fenland District Council, government, the European Union. These aspirations could be locally specific or generic national or international aims (such as reducing carbon dioxide emissions)
- ii** The current context in March, i.e. how close are we to meeting the aims of the other organisations in point i.

This report provides answers to points i. and ii. above. In some cases however we will not be able to get all the information that we need due to it not being publicly available or at the right scale for March. Where this is the case we have noted that the information is either not available or is not the best fit for March. Furthermore we need to ensure that our assessment is proportionate to the responsibilities of our plan and that we are only collecting information on topics that our plan can hope to effect.

This report follows a simple structure to develop our 18 sustainability objectives across 8 themes:

- Biodiversity, flora and fauna
- Population and human health
- Soil
- Water
- Air
- Climatic factors
- Economy (sometimes called material assets)
- Cultural heritage and landscape

Each of these eight themes will be addressed in turn as follows:

- i** What other plans are there that affect March and what their aspirations for the town
- ii** What is the current situation in March
- iii** What is the gap between what the situation ought to be (I.) and what it currently is (II.), and how the plan can help to address this
- iv** Our sustainability objective(s) for that theme

The report is tied together by a conclusion that outlines the next steps for the sustainability assessment and how it will go on to interact with the neighbourhood planning process.

Image Source: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/biodiversitycyprus/>

## Biodiversity, flora and fauna

### i. Plans affecting March

#### Cambridgeshire Biodiversity Action Plan 2007:

- To protect the extent and quality of biodiversity on previously developed land. Where possible, biodiversity should be preserved, enhanced and made a central feature of redevelopment sites.
- To stop the loss of acidic grassland and where possible create more
- Create new wildlife gardens
- Maintain and improve the quality of wildlife ditches, increase the use of buffer zones between development and ditches, and improve water quality in ditches
- Maintain the amount and quality of fen habitats
- Halt the loss of species rich hedgerows
- Create new managed green spaces
- Maximise biodiversity gain from sustainable urban drainage schemes
- Increase the range of species and age of urban trees
- The protection and introduction of species into Cambridgeshire that will be facilitated by the points above.

## European Union Habitats' Directive 1992

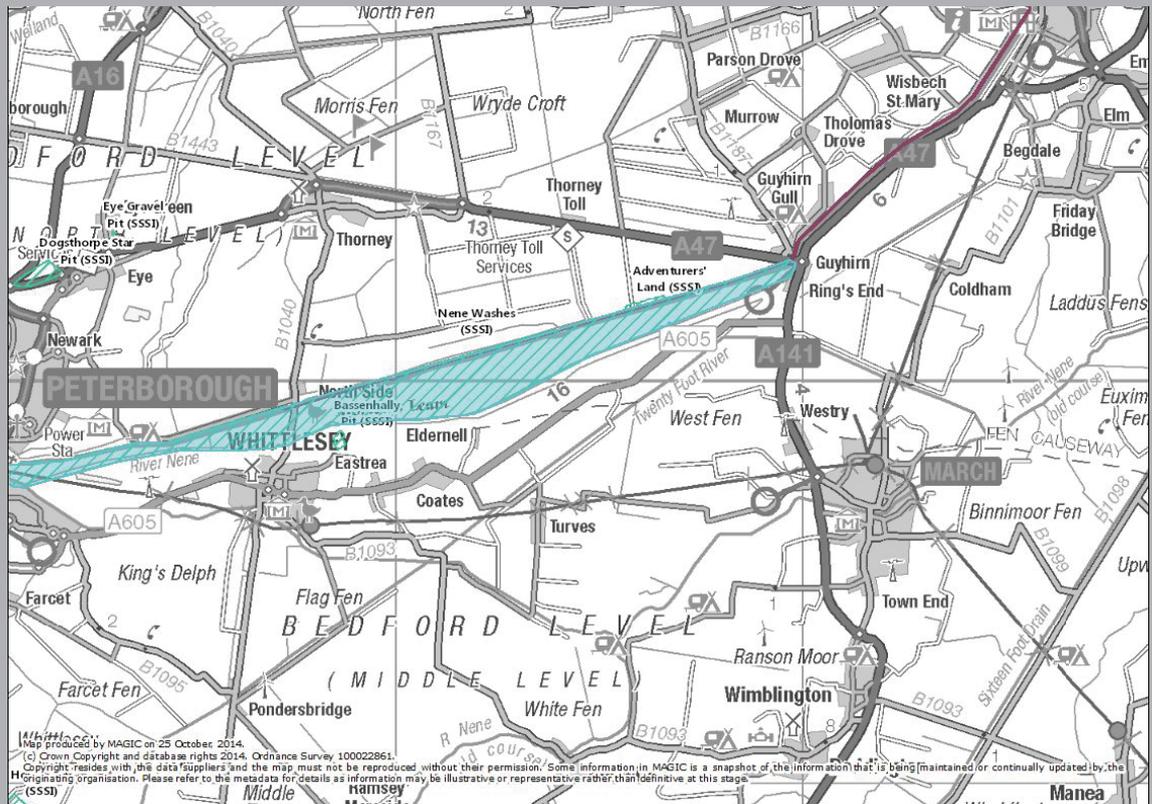
- The Directive establishes a Natura 2000 network of internationally important habitat sites that receive the highest form of environmental protection. These are known as Special Areas of Conservation or SACs.

## European Union Birds' Directive 2009

- The Directive affords protection to internationally important bird habitat and migration sites. These are known as Special Protection Areas or SPAs.

## ii. The current situation

- There are no national or European sites within our plan's area. The nearest designated site is Nene Washes about 7km to the north west of the town. This is a Site of Special Scientific Interest, a Special Protection Area and a Ramsar Wetland Site. Natural England undertook a survey of the site in September 2014 and found that roughly 80% of the site is unfavourable condition, but is recovering.
- A residents survey at the start of the neighbourhood plan process revealed that 75% of those who responded placed a high value on the existing green spaces in and around March, and wanted to see more provided with new development.
- March Clay Island is immediately to the south of the town, with some parts of March actually in the island. The industrial built edge to the south of the town creates an unpleasant edge to the site. There are many hedgerows and poplar belts on the clay island.
- The Fens form the majority of land for Fenland District with March sitting in the centre of them.



### Nene Washes Site of Special Scientific Interest

MagicMap © Crown Copyright and database rights 2013 Ordnance Survey 10022861

## iii. How could our plan help?

- There is a discontinuity between the aspirations of the Biodiversity Action Plan and the information that we have available. We do not therefore know how well its goals are being achieved. However, we can aim to promote the aspirations of the Biodiversity Action Plan through planning policies and site development templates. For example, we could specify that all biodiversity rich hedgerows and their setting are maintained, or that a certain area of wildlife gardens should be provided alongside new residential development.
- The Biodiversity Action Plan suggests that new green infrastructure should be provided as part of new developments, and this view was reinforced by the resident survey (see above). The neighbourhood plan can ensure that policies are in place to require this on new developments and redevelopment.

- Although the Nene Washes are outside of our area, we need to make sure that our neighbourhood plan does not have any indirect negative effects on them. For example, domestic pets from new development could distress wild birds on the site and therefore reduce the amount of habitable space for them.

## iv. Our proposed objectives

- 1 Protect and enhance biodiversity on all development sites, especially on previously developed land.**
- 2 Improve access to green infrastructure without threatening its biodiversity value**
- 3 Contribute towards the continuing improvement of the Nene Washes**



Image Source: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/sundve/>

## Human Health

### i. Plans affecting March

#### Fenland Sustainable Communities Strategy 2009-2012

- Reduce anti-social behaviour, violent crime, domestic burglary, theft of a motor vehicle, theft from a motor vehicle, and robbery.
- Provide people with the opportunities and encouragement to live a healthy lifestyle
- Improve access to health services and information
- Maintain independent living
- Improve the provision of integrated transport
- Increase new business opportunities
- Develop sustainable market towns
- Improve the quality of green spaces
- Engaging the community in management of green spaces
- Provide better access to the countryside
- Promote energy efficiency through better use of resources
- Help young people feel safe by providing safe areas to play and other positive activities

## Fenland Local Plan 2014 Policy LP2

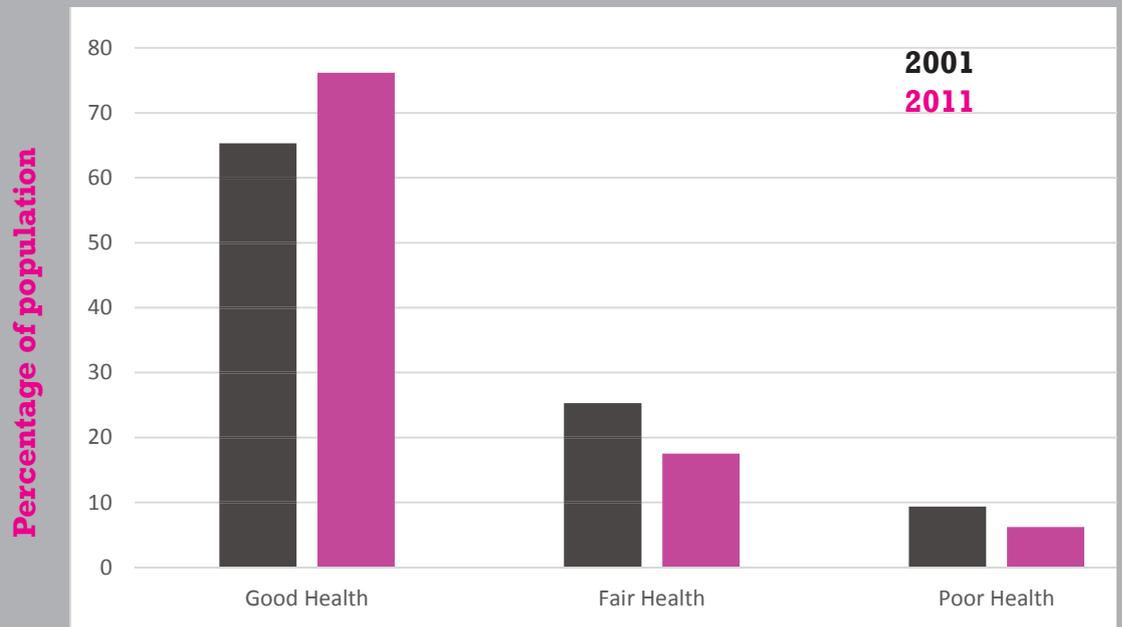
- Create an environment in which communities can flourish
- Creating sufficient and right mix of houses to meet people's needs, and in the right location
- Planning housing that reflects the changes that occur over a lifetime so people are not excluded by design as they grow older and frailer or as their circumstance change
- Building homes that are easy to warm and safe from flooding
- Promoting high levels of residential amenity
- Creating opportunities for employment in accessible locations
- Promoting and facilitating healthy lifestyles
- Providing and maintaining effective, sustainable and safe transport networks to ensure access to all essential services
- Helping to reduce crime the fear of crime and anti-social behaviour
- Considering the equality and diversity requirement of residents and local communities
- Providing good access to health, leisure and recreational facilities
- Avoiding adverse impacts

## ii. The current situation

- Between 2001 and 2011 the number of people living in March grew from 19,041 to 22,298 ; an increase of about 17% over ten years.
- The percentage of residents who reported poor health dropped from 9.3% in 2001 to 6.3% in 2011.
- There is an imbalance of deprivation across March, with the eastern, and central parts of the town being relatively deprived in areas of human health.

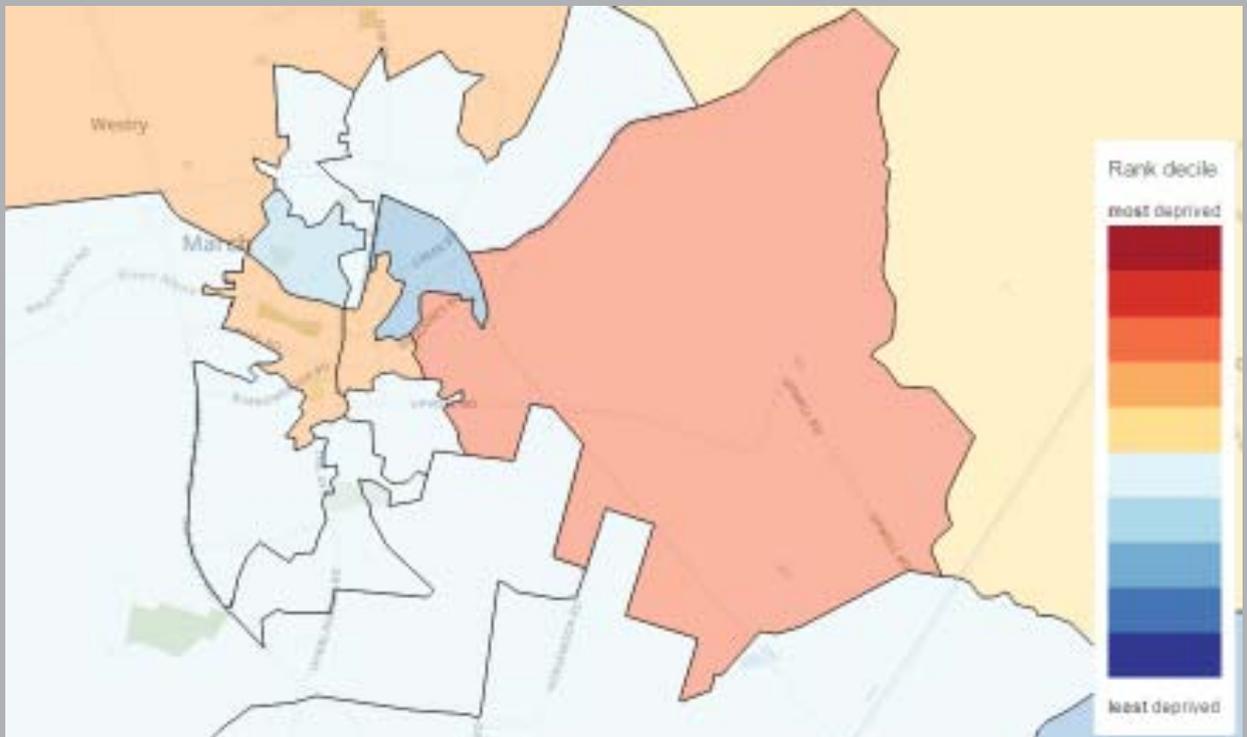
Source 2001 and 2011 Census

Resident health rating



Source 2001 and 2011 Census via [www.neighbourhoodstatistics.gov.uk](http://www.neighbourhoodstatistics.gov.uk)

Deprivation map of March in 2010



Map from Open Street Map, sourced on <http://opendatacommunities.org/showcase/deprivation>

### iii. How could our plan help?

- The population of the town has grown since 2001 which suggests there will be a continued demand for new homes. The neighbourhood plan could ensure that new homes are provided through containing permissive planning policies for residential development in appropriate areas.
- The neighbourhood plan could contain policies that ensure new homes are built to high standards, and allow for regeneration of existing homes where they are contributing to negative health.
- The environment is an important factor for people's health. The plan can contain policies that promote access to green space and health facilities, as well as reducing the amount of pollution in the area.

### iv. Our proposed objectives

- 1 Provide an environment that encourages people to be active**
- 2 Provide the right amount and type of homes for future and existing residents**
- 3 Provide the services and facilities we need, reachable by walking, cycling and public transport**



Image Source: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/tambako/>

## Water

### i. Plans affecting March

#### Fenland Local Plan 2014 - Policy LP14

- The granting or refusal of planning permission will be informed by technical flood studies affecting the area such as the district's strategic flood risk assessment, and the county's surface water management plan.
- Development in areas known to be at risk from any form of flooding will only be permitted if:
  - A sequential test (if necessary) has been completed, having regard to actual and residual flood risk,
  - An exception test if necessary,
  - The suitable demonstration of meeting an identified need, and
  - The submission of a site specific flood risk assessment for the site.
- All planning applications for relevant developments must include a drainage strategy that:
  - shows appropriate consideration has been given to surface water drainage,
  - Appropriate arrangements for attenuating surface water run-off can be accommodated on the site; and
  - Issues of ownership and maintenance are addressed.
- The use of sustainable urban drainage systems are incorporated in the site.

## Cambridge Water Resource Management Plan 2014

- Cambridge Water expect significant growth in the region over the next 25 years, and is planning for 47,000 new properties to be built by 2040, with the number of connections increasing each year through much of the period.
- Although no regulatory target is proposed, they will continue to promote water efficiency to meet a minimum annual reduction of 1litre/property/day
- Cambridge Water shall also continue to lobby for newly built properties to meet the higher levels of the Code for Sustainable Homes (CSH). Where this can be shown, they will incorporate the lower consumption figures into our demand forecasts.

## Anglian river basin management plan 2009

- Achieve good status on all river water bodies by 2015 in line with the European Union Water Framework Directive
- Influence development of plans to ensure that policies require water efficiency standards in new development that exceed extant Buildings Regulations. Standards should be linked to the Code for Sustainable Homes level 3 and above, and Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method (Breeam) standards
- Education and influence of developers in the issues of water efficiency
- Include water efficiency policies in Spatial Strategies and Local Development Plans/Frameworks.
- Contribute to maintenance of, or restoration to, favourable conservation status on Natura 2000 Protected Areas through Flood Management Programme

## ii. The current situation

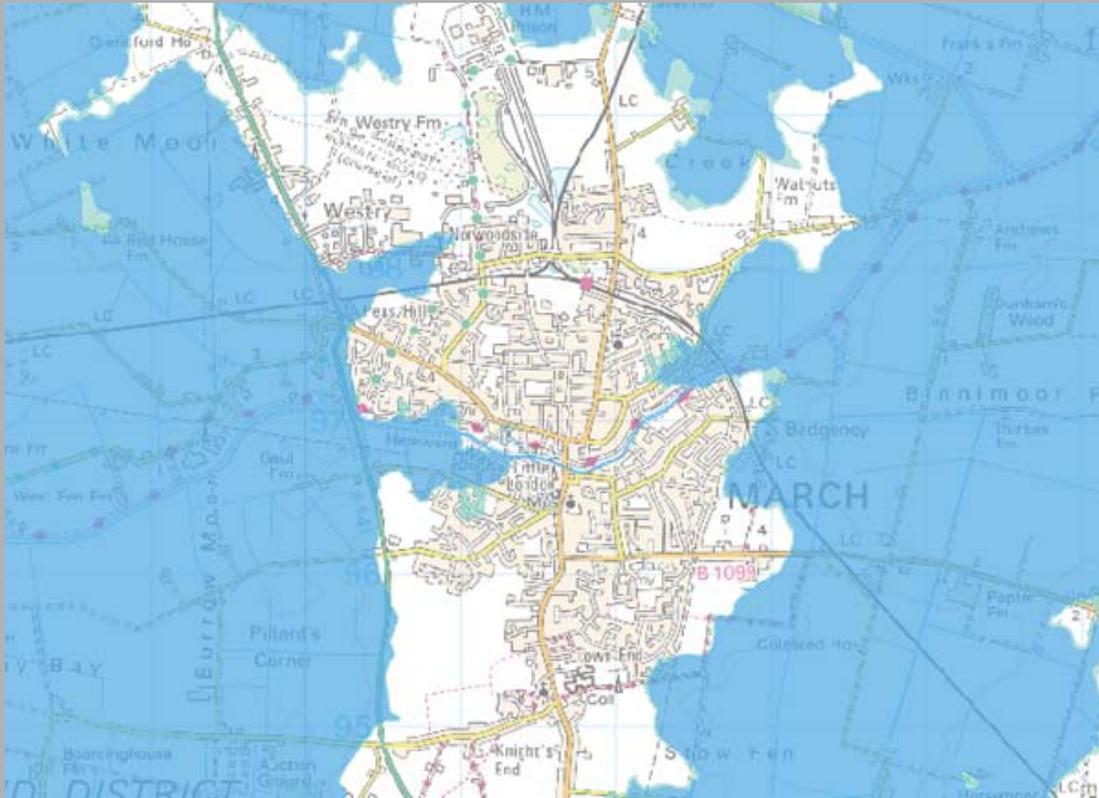
- Ecological river water quality is currently good on the Old River Nene that flows through the centre of the town. This high quality is expected to be maintained by 2015, therefore achieving the aspirations of the Anglian River Basin Management Plan. However, the Environment Agency expect that Well Creek to the north of the town and Floods Drain to the south of the town will only achieve moderate status by 2015 (see map below).
- March is tightly constrained by flood zone 3, areas that are at high risk of flooding (more than one percent chance a year).
- Unfortunately Fenland District Council does not monitor how many properties are built in flood zones each year nor how many properties are built to code for sustainable homes, we do not therefore have this information available but will encourage Fenland District Council to start monitoring this information in their annual reports.

Predicted river water quality around March 2015



<http://apps.environment-agency.gov.uk/wiyby/>

**Flood zones around March**



**Flood Zone 3 (greater than 1% chance of annual flooding)**

**Flood Zone 2 (1% chance of annual flooding)**

<http://apps.environment-agency.gov.uk/wiyby/>

### iii. How could our plan help?

- The two water bodies predicted to receive moderate status in 2015 (Well Creek and Flood Drains) are on the peripheries of the plan area but can still be affected by policies in the plan. We could therefore propose policies that require new development to not negatively affect these water bodies, or go even further (if viable) and promote the improvement of these water bodies through developer contributions.
- The plan should take account of the severe constraint posed by flood risk and try and encourage development to the north and south of the town where flooding is less of a problem. However, new development should ensure that it is not contributing to the flooding issues elsewhere.
- Water supply is not a problem for the Cambridgeshire area, however it is becoming a national problem as some areas are no longer self-sufficient for water. The plan can encourage new development to meet higher levels of water efficiency.

### iv. Our proposed objectives

- 1 Contribute to the water quality of Well Creek and the Floods Drain meeting good ecological status by 2015, and maintaining the existing standards on the River Nene**
- 2 Reduce the risk and cost of flooding to new and existing properties**
- 3 Promote water efficiency on all new development**



Image Source: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/unitedsoybean/>

## Soil

### i. Plans affecting March

#### Fenland Local Plan 2014

- **Policy LP16:** Proposals for all new development, including where appropriate advertisements and extensions and alterations to existing buildings, will only be permitted if it can be demonstrated that the proposal identifies, manages and mitigates against any existing or proposed risks from sources of noise, emissions, pollution, contamination, odour and dust, vibration, landfill gas and protects from water body deterioration
- **Policy LP7:** Make use of the best quality soils for allotments, where the development has to take place on agricultural land of the best and most versatile quality;
- **Policy LP12:** Development in rural areas will not be permitted if it results in the loss of high grade agricultural land, or if so, comprehensive evidence is provided to justify the loss. This should include an assessment of all alternative reasonable opportunities in the locality to develop on lower grades of agricultural land.

## ii. The current situation

### Soil fertility

- Soil quality in March generally falls into one of the following categories:

Freely draining slightly acidic loamy soils

*Low natural fertility*



Slightly acidic loamy and clayey soils with impeded draining

*Moderate to high natural fertility*



Loamy Clayey soils of coastal flats with naturally high groundwater

*Moderate to high natural fertility*

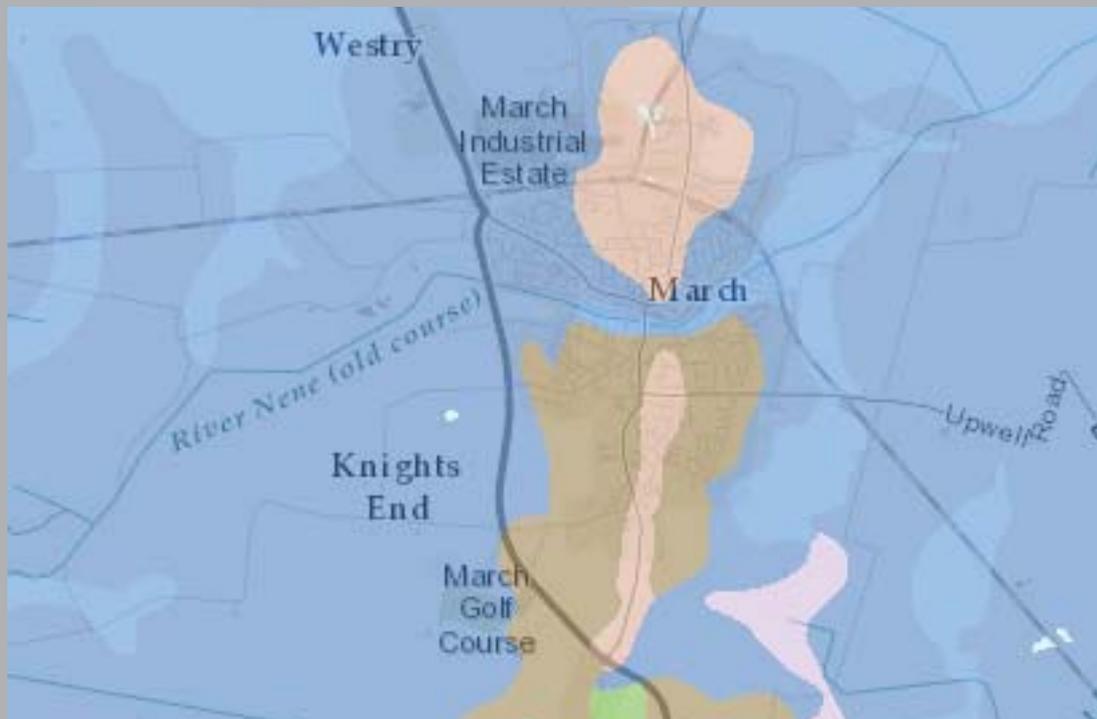


Loamy and sandy soils with naturally high groundwater and a peaty surface

*Low to high natural fertility*



### Soil types around March



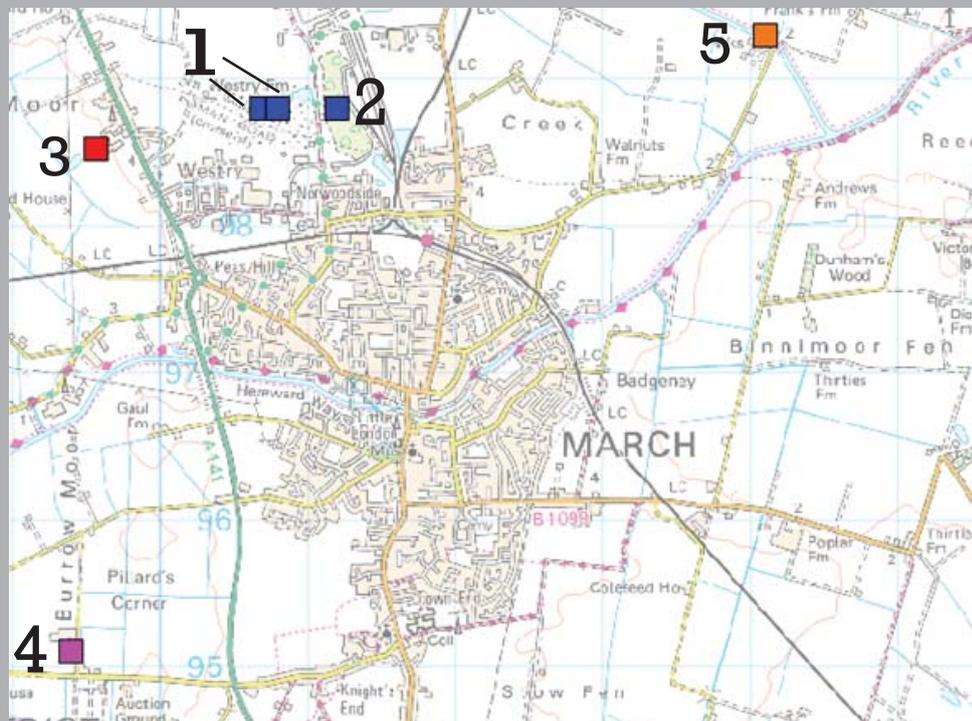
<http://www.landis.org.uk/soilscapes/>

## Potential contaminants

- There are a number of potentially contaminated sites in and around March:

- 1 March landfill site
- 2 National track materials recycling centre
- 3 Local Generation Ltd Wisbech Road
- 4 Cross Road Poultry Farm
- 5 March Sewage Treatment Works

### Potentially contaminated land around March



<http://apps.environment-agency.gov.uk/wiyby/>

### iii. How could our plan help?

- There are a number of potentially contaminated sites in and around March but they are still in use by the current occupiers. The plan can contain policies that seek to redevelop and reuse these sites and request site developers to re-mediate the contaminated land as part of this.
- The plan can also contain policies that prevent new development from contaminating the land
- Unfortunately agricultural land quality is not available at the right scale to understand how it impacts specific parts of the town. From the soil fertility ratings however it seems like development to the north, east and west of the town would result in the loss of the best agricultural land.

### vi. Our proposed objectives

- 1 Prevent the contamination of land, and where possible, seek to restore existing contaminated land**
- 2 Develop land efficiently to preserve high quality farming land**

Image Source: [https://www.flickr.com/photos/senor\\_codo/](https://www.flickr.com/photos/senor_codo/)

# Air

## Plans affecting March

### Air Quality Strategy for England 2007

- The UK Air Quality Strategy reflects the requirements of the European Union's Air Quality Directive. It contains specific targets for reducing air pollutants, which are based on the concentration of an air pollutant in micrograms (one-millionth of a gram) per cubic metre of air. This is given as  $\mu\text{g.m}^{-3}$ .

Pollutant	Associated health risks	Normal sources	Target
<b>Fine Particles (PM<sub>2.5</sub>)</b>	Coughing, wheezing and shortage of breath Aggravated asthma Lung damage Premature death for those with existing heart or lung diseases.	Motor vehicles Power plants Most forms of combustion	Annual mean levels are not exceed $40\mu\text{g.m}^{-3}$
<b>Coarse particles (PM<sub>10</sub>)</b>	Coughing, wheezing and shortage of breath Aggravated asthma Lung damage Premature death for those with existing heart or lung diseases.	Crushing or grinding operations and other larger dust particles	Annual mean levels are not exceed $25\mu\text{g.m}^{-3}$
<b>Nitrogen Dioxide</b>	Increased likelihood of respiratory problems and can cause wheezing, coughing, colds, flu and bronchitis.	Burning of fossil fuels and petrol.	Annual mean levels are not exceed $40\mu\text{g.m}^{-3}$
<b>Sulphur Dioxide</b>	Irritation of the nose and throat, causing coughing and a feeling of chest tightness.	Fuel combustion	24 hour mean levels are not to exceed $125\mu\text{g.m}^{-3}$ more than 3 times a year

## **i. The current situation**

- There are no air quality management areas in March or the surrounding area. Therefore, air quality in the town is currently unknown. However, it may be safe to assume that the absence of a management area suggests March currently benefits from good air quality.

## **ii. How could our plan help?**

- There appears to be no problems with air quality, but the plan can still play a role in ensuring air quality standards are maintained. This could be for example, through reducing pollution from road traffic by encouraging the use of public transport and walking.

## **iv. Our proposed objective**

- 1 Preserve and improve existing good air quality**

Image Source: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/68397968@N07/>

## Climatic factors

### i. Plans affecting March

#### Fenland Local Plan 2014 - Policy LP14

- There is an urgent need to combat the causes of, and adaptation to, climate change
  - Renewable energy proposals will be supported and considered in the context of sustainable development and climate change. Proposals for new renewable energy technology, associated infrastructure and integration of renewable technology on existing or proposed structures will be assessed both individually and cumulative on their merits.
  - Development proposals will, through Building Regulations or other regulations, need to meet all or the majority of their required reduction of carbon emissions on-site. Where these cannot be fully met on-site, and where a lawful mechanism exists to do so, the Council will be prepared to accept, as an 'allowable solution', a financial contribution to make up the difference. To implement this policy the Council intends to participate in a local offset fund, such as a Community Energy Fund. The contribution will be used to finance renewable energy projects within the local area identified through the Cambridgeshire Carbon Reduction Infrastructure Framework (CRIF) or subsequent updates or similar approaches.

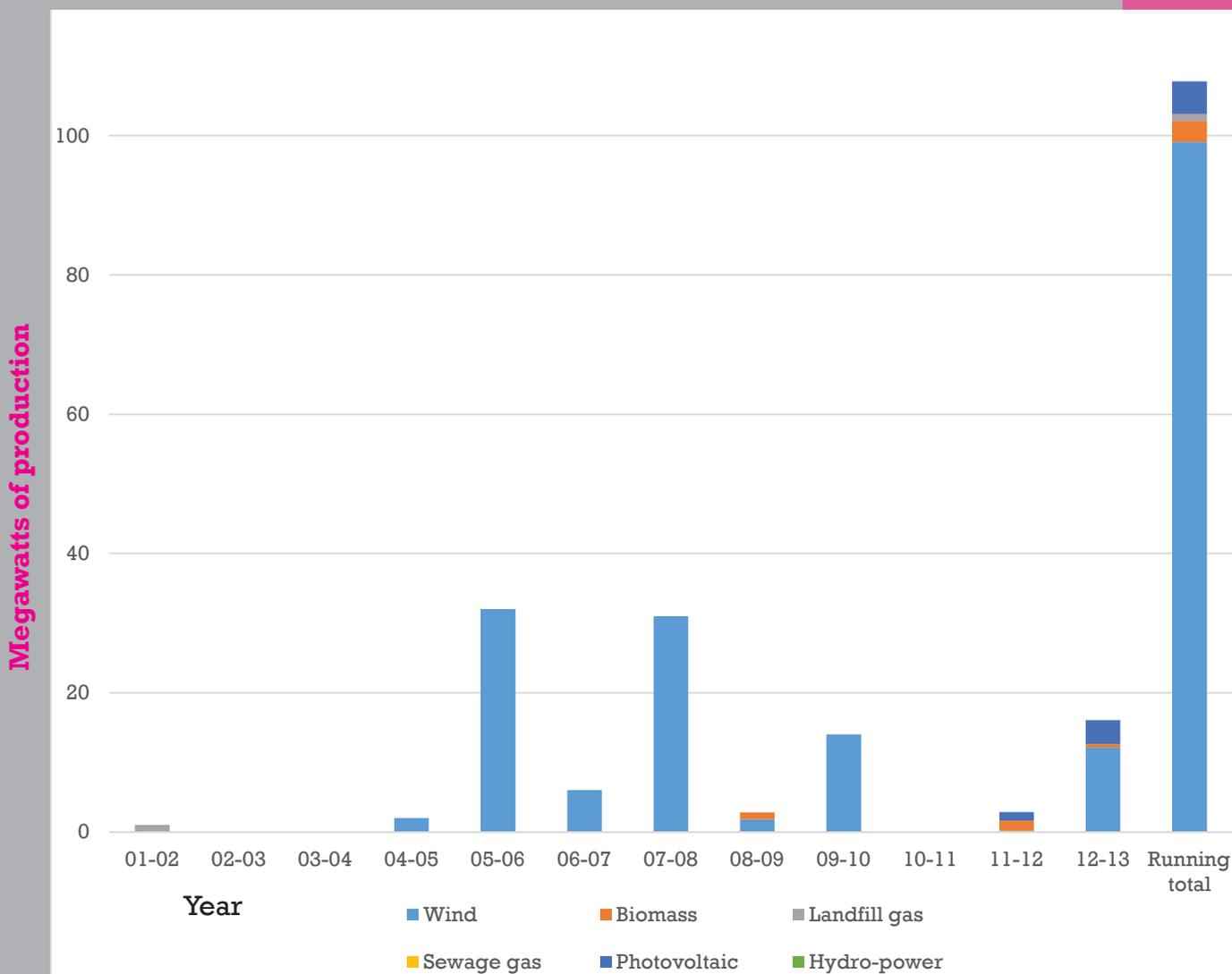
## The National Adaptation Programme 2013

- Buildings and places and the people who live and work in them are resilient to a changing climate and extreme weather
- To provide a clear local planning framework to enable all participants in the planning system to deliver sustainable new development, including infrastructure that minimises vulnerability and provides resilience to the impacts of climate change
- To ensure infrastructure is located, planned, designed and maintained to be resilient to climate change, including increasingly extreme weather events.
- To minimise the impacts of climate change on vulnerable groups in society by strengthening their resilience to better prepare for, respond to and recover from future climate risk

## ii. The current situation

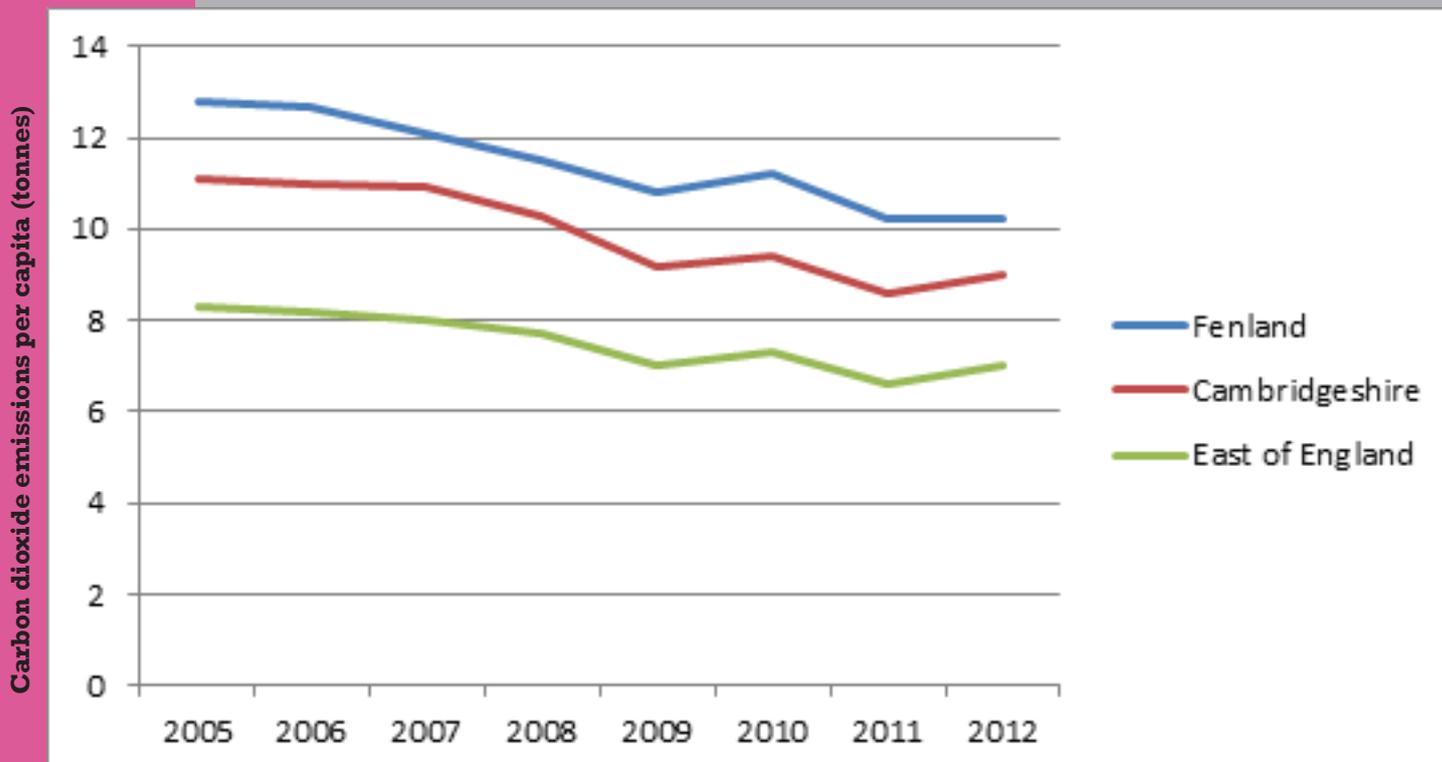
- We do not know how much renewable energy is currently produced in March; however, renewable energy provision in Fenland as a whole contributes over 100,000 megawatts a year to the grid. Most of this comes from wind power (Fenland District Council Monitoring Reports).
- Fenland currently produces more carbon dioxide emissions per capita than the East of England, and England as a whole. However, the amount of carbon dioxide produced in the district is falling over time.

Fenland renewable energy capacity



Fenland District Council Annual Monitoring Reports

## Carbon dioxide emissions in Fenland



Source <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/local-authority-emissions-estimates>

### iii. How could our plan help?

- Our plan can contain policies that are permissive of renewable energy installation. This could be at the smaller scale, for example photo-voltaic cells on existing residential properties, to larger scale renewable energy plants.
- The plan could also require that new buildings provide renewable energy, for example through photo-voltaic cells, and are built to such a high standard that they are carbon neutral. This can be achieved through insulation, orientating the buildings to maximise solar gain, or by providing green shelter belts to protect buildings from wind.
- Carbon emissions are falling, but the plan could further this trend by encouraging people to stop using their car through providing more facilities in walking, cycling, or public transport distance. Furthermore, increasing renewable energy provision and making new development independent of the need to heat or cool it, will help reduce emissions.

## **iv. Our proposed objectives**

- 1 Encourage the development of renewable energy sources, and minimise the amount of energy used by new developments**
- 2 Reduce the overall carbon footprint of March**



Image Source: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/pixelpyro/>

## i. Plans affecting March

### Cambridgeshire Strategic Economic Plan 2014

- **Be the UK's exemplar area for digital connectivity**
  - Identify opportunities to use the world-class experience of companies in our area to provide a world leading digitally connected area
  - Ensure infrastructure provides world-class mobile and broadband coverage
  - Support the growth of digitally enabled businesses, the increasing digital aspirations of rural economy, and the demand from inward investors for a world-class provision
- **Deliver a growth hub to support business growth**
  - Translation of innovation from start-up to commercialisation
  - Entrepreneurship and growing existing businesses
  - Increase the export of goods and services
  - Capacity to draw down financing – private and public
  - Extend our existing successful grant/loan funds
  - Create a focused inward investment offering

- **Respond to existing pressure for the growth and retention of businesses by facilitation the provision of additional innovation and incubator space**
  - Support the delivery of Innovation & Incubation space in partnership with the private and public sector
  - Create a fund mechanism that seeks to share capital and risk funding with the private sector
  - Support both refurbishment and new-build
  - Target research, innovation and follow-on
  - Encourage the expansion beyond Cambridge of technology businesses
  
- **A transport network fit for an economically vital high growth area**
  - Use smart technology
  - Work with partners to facilitate improvements on key routes
  - Ensure the delivery of local transport priorities approved through the Local Transport Board
  - Ensure linkage with national transport investment decisions
  - Early engagement in transport studies with long term roll-out of programmes
  - Identify scalable interventions that open up access to significant growth locations
  - Encourage the delivery of long-haul flights from Stansted Airport to key international locations via a temporary Air Passenger Duty exemption

## Fenland Local Plan 2014

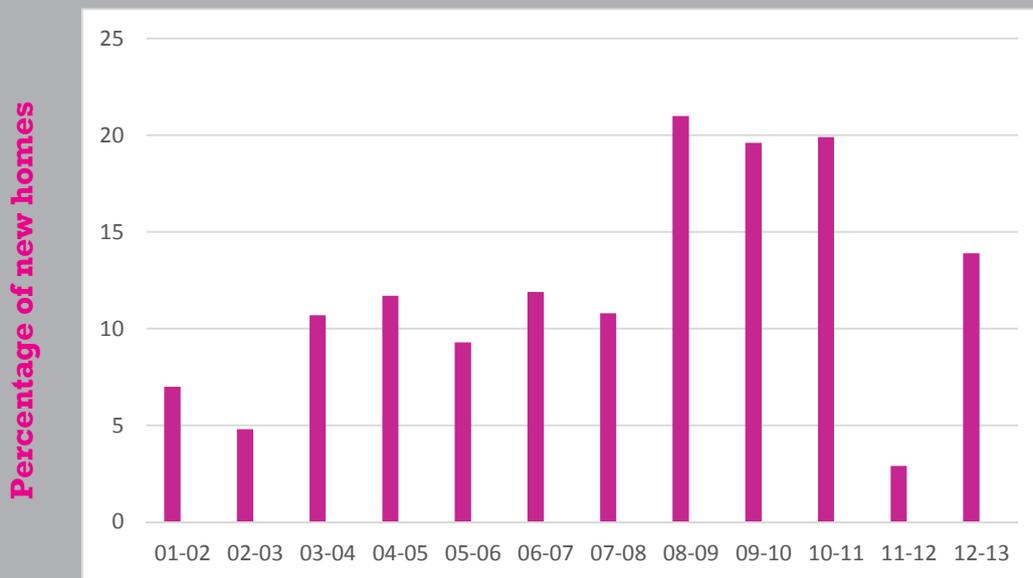
### ○ Policy LP6 - Employment, Tourism, Community Facilities and Retail

- March will deliver an additional 30ha of employment land between 2011 and 2031.
- High quality B1/B2/B8 employment land will be retained, unless it can be demonstrated that these premises are commercially unviable.
- The tourism and visitor industry will be supported by welcoming new accommodation and retaining hotels.
- Existing cultural, tourism, and visitor facilities will be retained, and the development of new heritage tourism opportunities will be encouraged where appropriate.
- Proposals that would lead to the loss of community facilities (e.g. public houses, village shops, community halls, post offices) will only be permitted if:
  - 1) it can be demonstrated that the retention of the facility is no longer financially viable and an appropriate marketing exercise has been carried out, and it can be demonstrated that there is a lack of community need for the facility, or
  - 2) an alternative facility is provided.
- Retail development will be encouraged to maintain and enhance the vitality and viability of centres.
- Development of an appropriate scale that enhances the retail offer of March and Wisbech as the primary centres in the district will be supported.

## ii. The current situation

- Between 2001 and 2013, 1,494 new homes were built in March. In this period, 6,398 new homes were built across all of Fenland. March accommodated 23.4% of all new homes in Fenland in this 12 year period.
- The number of affordable housing completions in March has dropped since its peak years of 2006 to 2008. This may be due to the national economic recession that hit in 2008 / 2009 as new affordable homes have been completed in 2014 (compared to none in 2012 and 2013).
- There is no consistency in the amount of employment floorspace being provided each year in Fenland, but the general trend appears to be that less floorspace is being built year on year.

### Fenland affordable housing provision



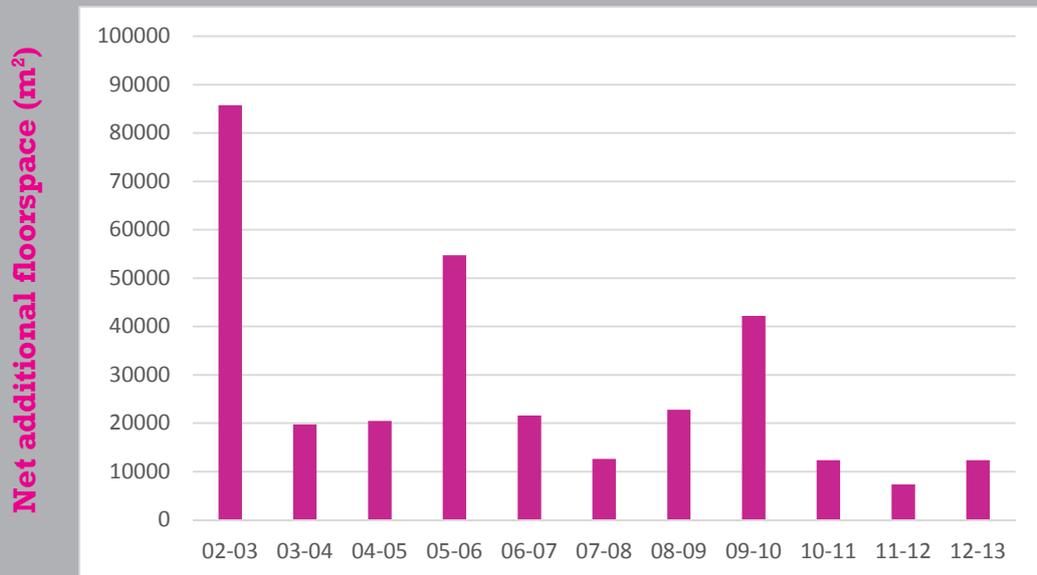
Fenland District Council Annual Monitoring Reports

**Affordable housing completions in March**



Cambridgeshire County Council

**Net additional employment floorspace in Fenland**



Fenland District Council Annual Monitoring Reports

### iii. How could our plan help?

- Our plan can encourage economic development in March by allocating land for development, or being permissive of new employment proposals that come forward in the town.
- We can also encourage the development of new infrastructure to support this economic growth, especially broadband as identified in the strategic economic plan.
- The plan can play an important role in delivering the right amount and type of homes that will support job growth in and around the town.
- The plan can support the retention and growth of the tourism industry by improving connections to the town, and by preserving and enhancing those elements that make March an attractive tourist destination.
- Encourage proposals that develop March's town centre

### iv. Our proposed objectives

- 1 Support the growth of March's economy through providing appropriate new homes, jobs and infrastructure**
- 2 Encourage the regeneration of March's town centre**
- 3 Protect and nurture the tourism industry**

Image Source: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/sludgeulper/>

## Cultural Heritage & Landscape

### i. Plans affecting March

#### Fenland Local Plan 2014

##### ○ Policy LP18 - The historic environment

- Protect, conserve and enhance the historic environment
- Reduce the number of heritage at risk assets in Fenland on English Heritage's Heritage at Risk Register
- All development proposals that would affect any designated or undesignated heritage asset will be required to:
  - describe and assess the significance of the asset and/or its setting to determine its architectural, historic, or architectural interest; and
  - identify the impact of the proposed works on the special character asset; and
  - provide a clear justification for the works, especially if these would harm the asset or its setting.

### ○ **Policy LP19 - The natural environment**

- Protect and enhance sites which have been designated for their international, national or local importance to an extent that is commensurate with their status, in accordance with national policy in the National Planning Policy Framework.
- Refuse permission for development that would cause demonstrable harm to a protected habitat or species, unless the need for and public benefits of the development clearly outweigh the harm and mitigation and/or compensation measures can be secured to offset the harm and achieve, where possible, a net gain for biodiversity.
- Promote the preservation, restoration and re-creation of priority habitats, and the preservation and increase of priority species identified for Fenland in the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Biodiversity Action Plans.
- Ensure opportunities are taken to incorporate beneficial features for biodiversity in new developments, including, where possible, the creation of new habitats that will contribute to a viable ecological network extending beyond the District into the rest of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, and other adjoining areas.

## ii. The current situation

- There is only one asset in March on English Heritage's Heritage at Risk Register. This is the Church of St Wendreda on Church Street. The South aisle parapet is loose in places and a Heritage Lottery Fund repair grant has been offered. Repair work is expected to start in late 2014.
- Fenland District Council have identified other buildings at risk through their own at risk register. These are:
  - Cherryholt Farm, Burrowmoor Road
  - Minstrels, No.38 High Street
  - Portland House (Old Bank House), No.1, West End
  - No.55, West End
  - No.119, West End
  - No's.3, 4, 5 & 6, Acre Road

### iii. How could our plan help?

- Our plan can make sure that new development does not damage an historical or cultural assets in the town. Furthermore, we could pursue policies that seek to restore those buildings that are at risk, if the proposals are appropriate.
- Cultural heritage can also be added to through new development, so the plan could seek for an excellent realm on new development with high quality buildings to add to the experience of March.
- Our section on biodiversity above addresses how we can protect the natural environment.

### iv. Our proposed objective

- 1 Celebrate, protect and enhance March's historic buildings, conservation areas, landscape setting and other cultural assets and their setting**

# In summary



## Respecting our environment

- 1.** Contribute to the water quality of Well Creek and the Floods Drain meeting good ecological status by 2015, and maintaining the existing high standards elsewhere
- 2.** Reduce the risk and cost of flooding to new and existing properties
- 3.** Promote water efficiency on all new development
- 4.** Preserve and improve existing good air quality
- 5.** Prevent the contamination of land, and where possible, seek to restore existing contaminated land
- 6.** Develop land efficiently to preserve high quality farming land
- 7.** Encourage the development of renewable energy sources, and minimise the amount of energy used by new developments
- 8.** Reduce the overall carbon footprint of March
- 9.** Protect and enhance biodiversity, especially on previously developed land
- 10.** Improve access to green infrastructure without threatening its biodiversity value
- 11.** Contribute towards the continuing improvement of the Nene Washes



## Promoting our communities

- 12.** Celebrate, protect and enhance March's historic buildings, conservation areas and other cultural assets and their setting
- 13.** Provide an environment that encourages people to be active
- 14.** Provide the right amount and type of homes for future and existing residents
- 15.** Provide the services and facilities we need, reachable by walking, cycling and public transport



## Supporting our economy

- 16.** Support the growth of March's economy through providing appropriate new homes, jobs and infrastructure
- 17.** Encourage the regeneration of March's town centre
- 18.** Protect and nurture the tourism industry

# Where next?

The objectives we have derived above will be used to test how sustainable our emerging plan is. This section shows how this will be done and what the next steps are for our sustainability assessment.

In order to produce our plan, we will have to consider a number of courses of action that can be taken to achieve our goals. These options could be as simple as have a policy, or do nothing. In some instances though we may have a multitude of options where a number of different policies could help achieve our goals.

By testing each of the options against our objectives, we will get an idea of how sustainable each option is. This will be achieved using the table overleaf, which gives a brief assessment of the option against the objectives, grouped across the eight themes in this report.

The assessment will give each option a score against each objective:

- ✓ ✓ Major positive contribution to achieving this objective
- ✓ Poistive contribution to achieving this objective
- 0 Neutral or no contribution to achieving this objective
- ✗ Option is likely to worsen the conditions for this objective
- ✗ ✗ Option is likely to significantly worsen the conditions for this objective

In some instances, one option may score well against one objective but poorly against another. For example, meeting the housing need of residents may result in the loss of high quality farming land. In these instances, where the objectives may conflict, those undertaking the sustainability assessment will recommend how the negative effects on one option should be mitigated and the neighbourhood planning group will decide which option should be pursued. This will be done in accordance with the public consultation and engagement that the town council conduct in preparing a plan for March.

## Example assessment table

	Plan Option 1	Plan Option 2	Plan Option 3
	<i>Summary of option</i>	<i>Summary of option</i>	<i>Summary of option</i>
<b>WATER</b>			
<b>Objective 1</b>	✓ ✓	✓	× ×
Contribute to the water quality of Well Creek and the Floods Drain meeting good ecological status by 2015, and maintaining the existing high standards elsewhere	A short description of how the proposed option addresses the objective	A short description of how the proposed option addresses the objective	A short description of how the proposed option addresses the objective
<b>Objective 2</b>	0	×	✓
Reduce the risk and cost of flooding to new and existing properties	A short description of how the proposed option addresses the objective	A short description of how the proposed option addresses the objective	A short description of how the proposed option addresses the objective
<b>Objective 3</b>	✓	× ×	0
Promote water efficiency on all new development	A short description of how the proposed option addresses the objective	A short description of how the proposed option addresses the objective	A short description of how the proposed option addresses the objective
<b>Summary for Water</b>	✓	× ×	×
	A summary of the option for the whole topic of water with a recommendation of whether to proceed and what mitigation should be sought.	A summary of the option for the whole topic of water with a recommendation of whether to proceed and what mitigation should be sought.	A summary of the option for the whole topic of water with a recommendation of whether to proceed and what mitigation should be sought.

# Consultation

We have a statutory obligation to consult with the following organisations when producing our context and objectives report:

English Heritage

Environment Agency

Natural England

We will send this document to the above bodies and allow them 5 weeks to comment.