

## The Current Situation

### Population and demographics

- 3.1.4 The 2021 census recorded a total population of 102,462 people in Fenland<sup>12</sup>. This is made up of 49% males and 51% females. This accounts for about 15% of Cambridgeshire's population.
- 3.1.5 The population has grown in Fenland by 7.6% since the last census in 2011, which recorded a population of 95,262 people. The population growth in Fenland was lower than the East of England (8.3%), but greater than the rate of population growth for England (6.6%)<sup>13</sup>. By 2043, Fenland's population is projected to be 118,826 people - an increase of almost 16% in 23 years.
- 3.1.6 Fenland has a very low density of 187.5 residents per square kilometre, compared to 331.4 in the east of England and 433.5 in England.

### Age structure

- 3.1.7 The number of young people (0-14years) in Fenland accounts for 16.2% of the population which is slightly less than the average for Cambridgeshire (16.5%) and less than the average for England (17.4%).<sup>14</sup> Those in the 15-64 age bracket account for 60.9% which is again less than both Cambridgeshire (64.9%) and England (64.2%).
- 3.1.8 However, the population in the 64+ age bracket is higher at 22.8% than that for Cambridgeshire (18.6%) and England (18.4%). For all age cohorts over 50, Fenland has a higher percentage population than Cambridgeshire or England. This is in line with a nationally increasing elderly population but in Fenland it is that much higher.
- 3.1.9 This trend is likely to continue into the foreseeable future. By 2041 the over-64s are forecast to comprise almost a third of the population of Fenland (28.1%). This continues to be significantly higher than Cambridgeshire (22.6%) as a whole.<sup>15</sup>

**Figure 5: Population by age group 2021**

Age Category	Fenland	Cambridgeshire	England
Total aged 0-14	16,600	112,000	9,838,700
Total aged 0-14 (%)	16.2	16.5	17.4
Total aged 15-64	62,400	440,200	36,249,800
Total aged 15-64 (%)	60.9	64.9	64.2
Total aged 65 and over	23,400	126,500	10,401,200
Total aged 65 and over (%)	22.8	18.6	18.4

Source: Cambridgeshire Insight, Population Report for Fenland 2021

<sup>12</sup> Cambridgeshire Insight: [Population - LTLA | Fenland | Report Builder for ArcGIS \(cambridgeshireinsight.org.uk\)](https://cambridgeshireinsight.org.uk/population-ltla-fenland-report-builder-for-arcgis)

<sup>13</sup> Office for National Statistics: [How life has changed in Fenland: Census 2021 \(ons.gov.uk\)](https://ons.gov.uk/how-life-has-changed-in-fenland-census-2021)

<sup>14</sup> Cambridgeshire Insight: [Population - LTLA | Fenland | Report Builder for ArcGIS \(cambridgeshireinsight.org.uk\)](https://cambridgeshireinsight.org.uk/population-ltla-fenland-report-builder-for-arcgis)

<sup>15</sup> Ibid: [2022-based-population-forecasts-for-Cl.xlsx \(live.com\)](https://live.com/2022-based-population-forecasts-for-cl.xlsx)

## Nationality and Ethnicity

- 3.1.10 In 2021, 9.5% of Fenland residents did not identify with any national identity associated with the UK. This figure increased from 6.8% in 2011. In 2021, the proportion of residents that identified with a UK identity and non-UK identity was 0.9%, which also increased from 0.3% in 2011.
- 3.1.11 The percentage of people in Fenland who did not identify with any national identity associated with the UK, increased more than in the East of England and England. There was a 2.7% increase in Fenland compared to 2.1% increase in the East of England and 1.7% increase across England.
- 3.1.12 The 2021 Census data shows that Fenland was less ethnically diverse than other parts of England, with a greater than average proportion of the population being white (95.9%). This compares with 88.6% for Cambridgeshire and 81% for England. The remaining 4.1% of Fenland's population comprised a wide mix of ethnic groups.

**Figure 6: Population by broad ethnic groups 2021**

Broad Ethnic Groups	Fenland	Cambridgeshire	England
Asian, Asian British or Asian Welsh	1,232	39,689	5,426,392
Asian, Asian British or Asian Welsh (%)	1.2	5.8	9.6
Black, Black British, Black Welsh, Caribbean or African	814	9,745	2,381,724
Black, Black British, Black Welsh, Caribbean or African (%)	0.8	1.4	4.2
Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups	1,412	19,354	1,669,378
Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups (%)	1.4	2.9	3
White	98,280	601,166	45,783,401
White (%)	95.9	88.6	81
Other ethnic group	723	8,895	1,229,153
Other ethnic group (%)	0.7	1.3	2.2

Source: Cambridgeshire Insight, Population Report for Fenland 2021

- 3.1.13 From the 2021 census, 0.6% of the population identified as Gypsies and Irish Travellers which compares with 0.3% for Cambridgeshire and 0.1% for England.

## Religion

- 3.1.14 The proportion of Fenland's residents stating they are Christian is 52.1%, which is higher than Cambridgeshire (45.1%) and England (46.3%). For all other religions, Fenland has a lower proportion of residents than Cambridgeshire and England. There is a notable lower

proportion of residents stating they are Muslim (0.7%) compared to across Cambridgeshire (2.1%) and England (6.7%). 40% of residents stated no religion.

**Figure 7: Population by religion 2021**

Religion	Fenland	Cambridgeshire	England
Christian	53,354	306,302	26,167,899
Christian (%)	52.1	45.1	46.3
Buddhist	239	3,698	262,433
Buddhist (%)	0.2	0.5	0.5
Hindu	213	7,245	1,020,533
Hindu (%)	0.2	1.1	1.8
Jewish	110	1,978	269,283
Jewish (%)	0.1	0.3	0.5
Muslim	682	13,953	3,801,186
Muslim (%)	0.7	2.1	6.7
Sikh	111	1,165	520,092
Sikh (%)	0.1	0.2	0.9
Other religion	513	3,853	332,410
Other religion (%)	0.5	0.6	0.6

Source: Cambridgeshire Insight, Population Report for Fenland 2021

## Migration

- 3.1.15 The 2021 census found that 90.7% of Fenland's residents lived at the same address as one year previously. This is a higher proportion than Cambridgeshire (87.1%) and England (88.9%). The percentage of residents whose address one year ago was in the UK was 8.7% and 0.4% stated their address was outside the UK.
- 3.1.16 In Fenland, 85.7% of the population said they were born in England, which is a reduction from 89.4% in 2011. This latest percentage is higher than Cambridgeshire as a whole (79%) and England (80.3%).
- 3.1.17 Lithuania was the second most represented country, with 3.4% of Fenland's population having been born there. This has doubled from 1.7% in 2011. Similarly, the percentage of residents born in countries that joined the EU between April 2001 and March 2011 has risen from 1.1% in 2011 to 2.2% in 2021.
- 3.1.18 In 2016 the East of England continued to experience relatively high levels of migration in comparison to other areas of the United Kingdom. The percentage increase in migration has been high in Fenland and Peterborough, with rises in non-UK born population in these areas between 2001 and 2011 of 210.8% and 148.2% respectively (see Figure 8).

**Figure 8: East of England Migration Patterns – Non-UK Born Population, 2001-2011**

Area	2001 Non-UK Born Population	2011 Non-UK Born Population	Numerical Increase	% Increase 2001-2011
Fenland	2,641	8,209	5,568	210.8%
Peterborough	15,268	37,892	22,624	148.2%

South Cambs	9,333	16,564	7,231	77.5%
Cambridge City	20,851	36,381	15,530	74.5%
East Cambs	4,973	8,242	3,269	65.7%
Huntingdonshire	10,822	16,302	5,480	50.6%

Source: Oxford Migration Observatory, 2013, [East of England: Census Profile - Migration Observatory - The Migration Observatory \(ox.ac.uk\)](http://www.ox.ac.uk/migration-observatory)

3.1.19 From school census data it is clear that Wisbech is a location that attracts Eastern Europeans, particularly people from Lithuania, Poland and Latvia. Of the ten wards with the highest proportion of Eastern European residents, five are in the Wisbech area.<sup>16</sup>

### Household Composition

3.1.20 In Fenland, the composition of single family households (64.8%) is in line with the rest of Cambridgeshire (65.1%) but above that of England (63%). For single person households there were more people living on their own (all ages) in Fenland (29%) than in Cambridgeshire as a whole (28.4%), but this was less than the average for England (30.1%).

### Health and Wellbeing - Overview

3.1.21 Good health, 'expected healthy years of life,' is fundamental to achieving a good quality of life, and is one of the Government's 12 key headline measures of sustainability. The Council recognises the World Health Organisation's definition of health, which is:

**"Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity."**

3.1.22 Wellbeing is often referred to as being healthy, happy, contented, comfortable and satisfied with one's quality of life. These definitions are reflected in the 'Wider Determinants of Health' model shown in Figure 9 which places an emphasis on the prevention of illness rather than the treatment of disease. The model shows there are many different factors that combine together to affect health and wellbeing. Health is determined by a complex interaction between individual characteristics including age, sex and genetics, lifestyle and the physical, social and economic environment.

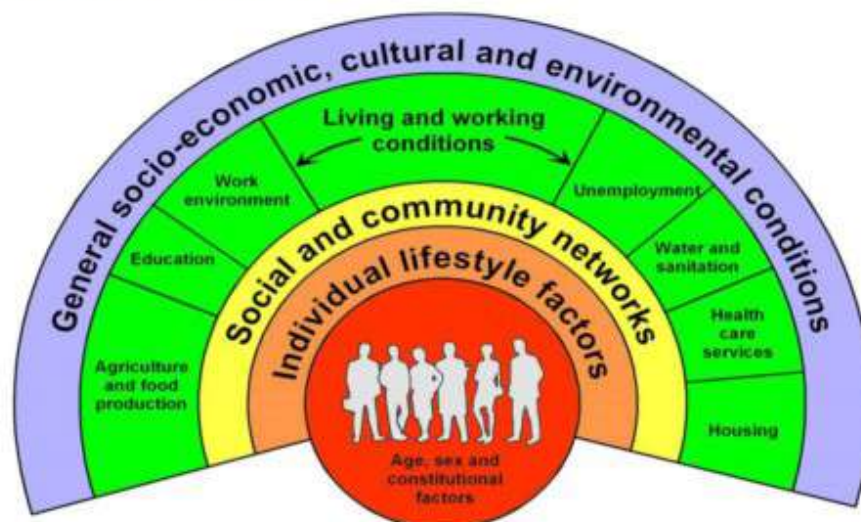
3.1.23 Research (McGiniss et al 2002) suggests that our health behaviours and social-environmental factors may contribute to 85% (40% behaviour/45% socio-environmental factors) of our health outcomes with only 15% being healthcare itself.

3.1.24 The Council recognises the wider determinants of health model as a key concept in how it can contribute to the health and wellbeing of Fenland's communities. This model is widely used and sets out how the environment, culture and the economy impact on health including issues such as worklessness, housing standards and educational attainment.

<sup>16</sup> Migrant and Refugee Joint Strategic Needs Assessment for Cambridgeshire, 2016 Page 8  
[https://cambridgeshireinsight.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/Cambs-Migrant-JSNA-full-v12\\_0-FINAL.pdf](https://cambridgeshireinsight.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/Cambs-Migrant-JSNA-full-v12_0-FINAL.pdf)

Often these issues link to community problems such as anti-social behaviour and a lack of community spirit.<sup>17</sup>

**Figure 9: Wider Determinants of Health**



Source: Dahlgren and Whitehead, 1991

### Fenland Health in Context

3.1.25 The 2021 census asked Fenland residents for their opinion on the state of their health. The proportion of residents stating they were in 'very good health' (40.3%) was lower than the average for the East of England (48.3%) and England (48.5%). The proportion of people stating they were in 'good health', 'fair health', 'bad health' and 'very bad health' were higher than the East of England and England.<sup>18</sup>

**Figure 10: Population health status for Fenland, East of England and England**

All usual residents	Fenland	East of England	England
All usual residents	102,462 (100%)	6,335,072 (100%)	56,490,046 (100%)
Very good health	41,264 (40.3%)	3,058,673 (48.3%)	27,390,829 (48.5%)
Good health	38,407 (37.5%)	2,194,562 (34.6)	19,040,735 (33.7%)
Fair health	16,256 (15.9%)	791,639 (12.5%)	7,147,346 (12.7%)

<sup>17</sup> Fenland District Council Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2018-2021 [https://www.fenland.gov.uk/media/12208/Health-and-Wellbeing-Strategy/pdf/Health\\_\\_Wellbeing\\_Strategy\\_v2.pdf](https://www.fenland.gov.uk/media/12208/Health-and-Wellbeing-Strategy/pdf/Health__Wellbeing_Strategy_v2.pdf)

<sup>18</sup> ONS Census 2021: Available at [2021 Census Profile for areas in England and Wales - Nomis \(nomisweb.co.uk\)](https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/census/2021)

Bad health	5,064 (4.9%)	226,719 (3.6%)	2,248,255 (4.0%)
Very bad health	1,471 (1.4%)	63,479 (1.0%)	662,881 (1.2%)

Source: ONS 2021 Census

3.1.26 The current Health Profile for Fenland compiled by Public Health England<sup>19</sup> shows that the health of people in Fenland is varied when compared to the England average. A number of key health indicators have been selected and summarised in Figure 11.

**Figure 11: Comparison of key health indicators for Fenland, East of England and England 2019 onwards**

Indicator	Fenland	East of England	England
Male life expectancy at birth, 3 year range (2020-22)	77.5	79.8	78.9
Female life expectancy at birth, 3 year range (2020-22)	82.0	83.5	82.8
Under 75 mortality rate from all causes (2023)	434.8	310.9	341.6
Under 75 mortality rate from cardiovascular disease (2023)	97.1	68.6	77.4
Under 75 mortality rate from cancer (2023)	148.4	113.4	120.8
Suicide rate (Persons 10+ years) (2021-23)	13.3	9.5	10.7
Admission episodes for alcohol specific conditions – Under 18s (2020/21 – 22/23)	33.6	21.5	26.0
Smoking prevalence in adults (18+) – current smokers (2022)	14.0%	13.2%	12.7%
Percentage of physically active adults (19+ years) (2022/23)	58.2%	67.7%	67.1%
Overweight (including obesity) prevalence in adults (18+ years)	70.6%	64.8%	64.0%

<sup>19</sup> <https://fingertips.phe.org.uk/profile/health-profiles>

(2022/23)			
Deprivation score (2019)	25.4	17.4	21.7
Year 6 prevalence of obesity (including severe obesity) 10-11 years (2022/23)	26.5%	20.6%	22.7%
Children in relative low income families (under 16s) (2022/23)	21.0%	13.8%	19.8%
Children in absolute low income families (under 16s) (2022/23)	16.4%	11.0%	15.6%
Average attainment 8 score (2022/23)	39.5%	46.4%	46.2%
Winter mortality index (2021-2022)	12.3%	6.8%	8.1%

Source: Department of Health and Social Care

3.1.27 The majority of health outcomes are worse or similar to the England average. Health outcomes in Fenland are generally worse than the East of England average. Some of the health outcomes that are significantly worse or similar to the England average are:

- Both male and female life expectancy is lower in Fenland compared to the average for England. Male life expectancy in Fenland is 77.5 years compared to 78.9 years in England. Female life expectancy in Fenland is 82 years compared to 82.8 years for England.
- The mortality rate for under 75s from all sources is significantly higher in Fenland than the average for England. The mortality rate for under 75s from circulatory disease and cancer is similar to the average for England.
- About 21% of children live in relative low income families and 16.4% live in absolute low income families.
- Prevalence of obese children (Year 6) is 26.5% (285 children) which is significantly worse than the average for England of 22.7%.
- Hospital stays for alcohol specific conditions in under 18's is 33.6 per 100,000 population, similar to the England average.
- The rate of self-harm related hospital stays is 154.9 per 100,000 population which is worse than the England average.
- Adult excess weight, smoking prevalence and physical activity levels are worse than the England average.

### Long Term Health and Disability

3.1.28 The 2021 census asked Fenland residents about physical and mental health conditions<sup>20</sup>. The percentage of residents that stated they were disabled under the Equality Act was 20.3%, and of these, 8.8% stated that their day-to-day activities were limited a lot. The proportion of disabled residents was higher in Fenland than in the East of England and in England overall.

<sup>20</sup> [2021 Census Profile for areas in England and Wales - Nomis \(nomisweb.co.uk\)](https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/census/2021)

3.1.29 In addition, 7% of residents stated that whilst they were not disabled under the Equality Act, they had a long term physical or mental health condition but day-to-day activities were not limited. This figure was very similar to the East of England and England.

**Figure 12: Long term health problem or disability**

All usual residents	Fenland	East of England	England
All usual residents	102,462 (100%)	6,335,073 (100%)	56,490,048 (100%)
Disabled under the Equality Act: Day-to-day activities limited a lot	9,046 (8.8%)	420,499 (6.6%)	4,140,357 (7.3%)
Disabled under the Equality Act: Day-to-day activities limited a little	11,790 (11.5%)	633,333 (10.0%)	5,634,153 (10.0%)
Not disabled under the Equality Act: Has long term physical or mental health condition but day-to-day activities are not limited	7,186 (7.0%)	457,748 (7.2%)	3,856,029 (6.8%)
Not disabled under the Equality Act: No long term physical or mental health conditions	74,440 (72.7%)	4,823,493 (76.1%)	42,859,509 (75.9%)

Source: ONS 2021 Census

### Hospitals and GP Surgeries

3.1.30 There are no major hospitals in Fenland although Doddington Hospital and the North Cambridgeshire in Wisbech deal with minor injuries and run outpatients' clinics. Depending on treatment, Fenland residents can access Addenbroke's Hospital in Cambridge, Peterborough City Hospital, Queen Elizabeth Hospital in Kings Lynn or Hinchingsbrooke Hospital in Huntingdon.

3.1.31 There are also a number of other health facilities, such as GPs, opticians and dental surgeries in the district. These are generally in the market towns although a number of villages also have GP surgeries. Lack of a GP or dentist or increased waiting times are often cited by the public when responding to consultations for new proposal for housing.

**Figure 13: Settlements in Fenland District with GP surgery facilities**

Settlement	Number
Chatteris	1
Doddington	1
Manea	1
March	3
Parson Drove	1
Whittlesey	2
Wimblington	1
Wisbech	3



## Deprivation and Social Exclusion

- 3.1.32 The Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) 2019 is the official measure of relative deprivation for small area geographies called Lower-layer Super Output Areas (LSOAs), in England.<sup>21</sup> This index has been calculated since the 1970s, and is updated every 3 – 5 years.
- 3.1.33 Each LSOA contains an average of 1,500 residents or 650 households; in the IMD 2019 there is a total of 32,844 LSOAs in England. Deprivation does not just cover finances but a complex range need and a lack of access to resources.
- 3.1.34 Seven domains of deprivation are included in the index. These are income, employment, education, health, crime, barriers to housing services and living environment.
- 3.1.35 Fenland is ranked 51 out of 317 Local Authorities across the country, where 1 is most deprived. In 2015 Fenland was ranked 55 out of 317 Local Authorities, it has therefore become more deprived between 2015-19.

## Comparison with Cambridgeshire

- 3.1.36 The IMD 2019 reconfirmed that Fenland remains the most deprived district in Cambridgeshire. The next most deprived is Cambridge City, Huntingdonshire, East Cambridgeshire and South Cambridgeshire.
- 3.1.37 Cambridgeshire has 16 LSOAs in the 20% most deprived nationally – the same amount as in 2015, but not all LSOAs are the same. Three are in Cambridge City, two are in Huntingdonshire and eleven are in Fenland (one less than in 2015). Four of the LSOAs in Fenland are in the 10% most deprived nationally (in March North, Wisbech East and Wisbech West). March North was not in the top 10% most deprived in 2015.<sup>22</sup>
- 3.1.38 Eight of the top 10 most deprived LSOAs in Cambridgeshire are in Fenland as shown in Figure 14.

**Figure 14: Top 10 most deprived LSOAs in Cambridgeshire and their change since 2015**

LSOA name	Ward	Local Rank 2019	Local Rank 2015	Change in Rank
Fenland 003F	Staithe	1	2	-1
Fenland 002C	Waterlees Village	2	3	-1
Fenland 002D	Waterlees Village	3	1	2
Fenland 007B	March East	4	6	-2
Fenland 003I	Medworth	5	4	1
Cambridge 006F	Abbey	6	9	-3
Fenland 003H	Medworth	7	7	0
Fenland 001D	Roman Bank	8	18	-10

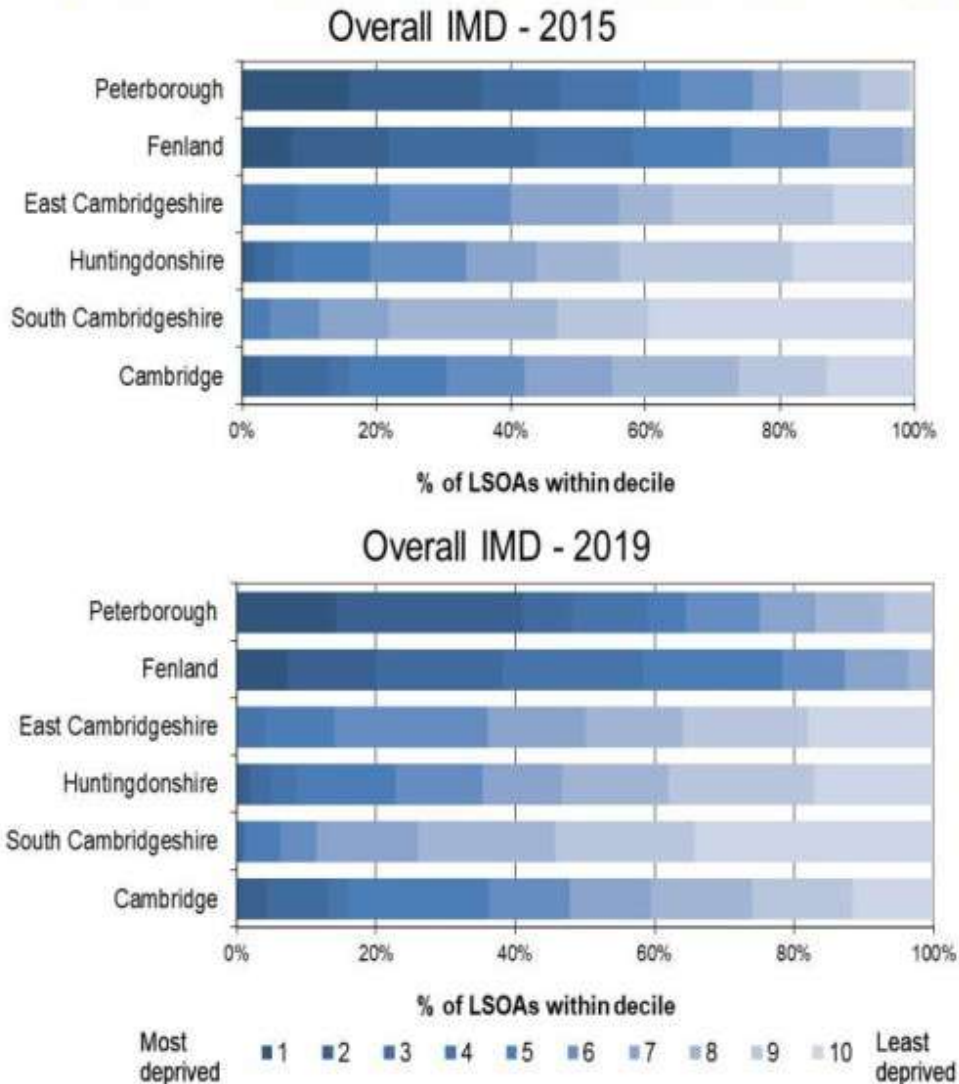
<sup>21</sup> [Microsoft Power BI](#)

<sup>22</sup> Cambridgeshire Insight: [Cambridgeshire-Summary-Report-for-IMD-2019-1.0.pdf \(cambridgeshireinsight.org.uk\)](#)

Cambridge 006D	Abbey	9	10	-1
Fenland 004C	Elm & Christchurch	10	12	-2

Source: Cambridgeshire Insight

**Figure 15: Comparison of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough districts for 2015 and 2019**



Source: Cambridgeshire Insight: English IMD 2019 Summary Report

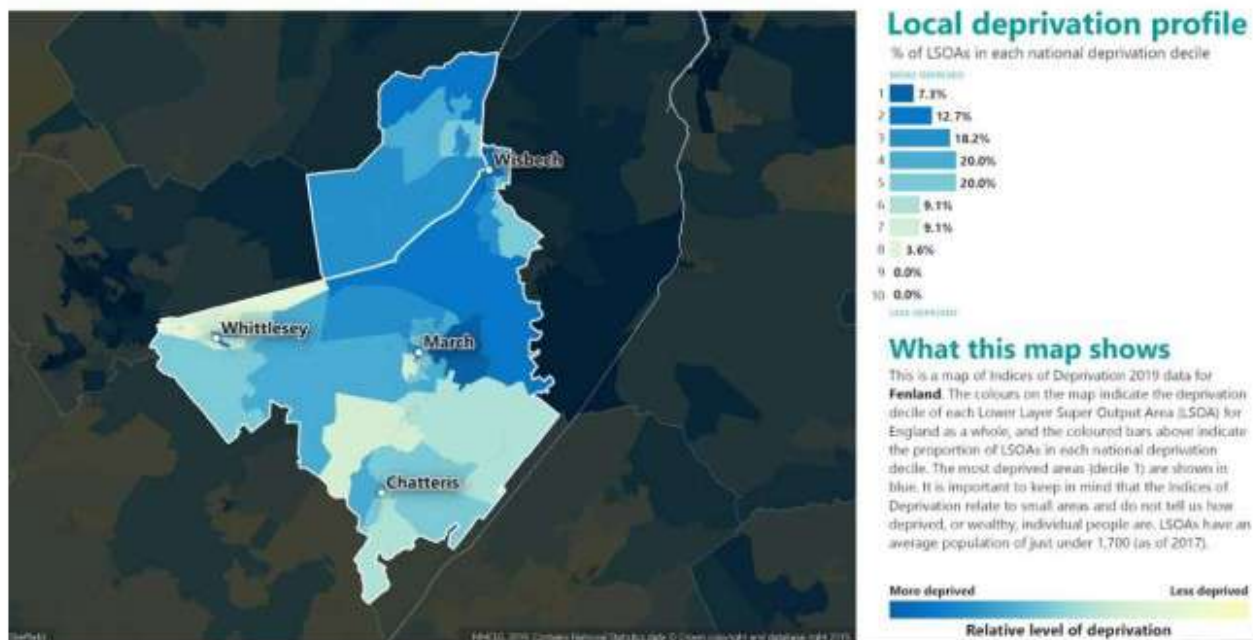
3.1.39 Cambridgeshire as a whole has less LSOAs in the less deprived deciles (6-10) than in 2015.

### Comparison within Fenland

3.1.40 Fenland has a total of 55 LSOAs. In general, the LSOA's in the north east of Fenland are the most deprived in the district. There are 21 LSOAs ranked in the lowest 3 deciles (1-3, where 1 is the most deprived) and 2 LSOAs in the highest 3 deciles (least deprived, 8-10)

nationally. Therefore, Fenland has substantially more LSOA's in the lower deciles, than the higher deciles.<sup>23</sup>

**Figure 16: English Indices of Deprivation 2019 for Fenland**



Source: Cambridgeshire Insight

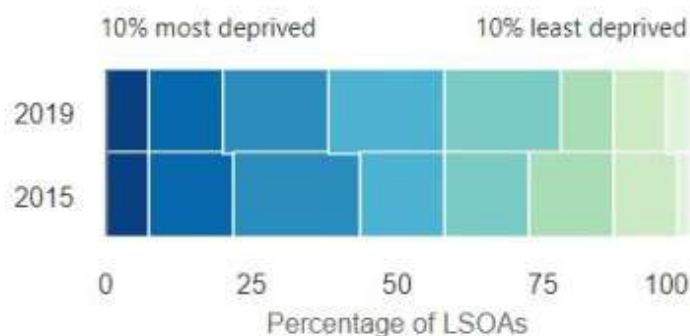
3.1.41 LSOAs Fenland 007B (March East), 003F (Straithe), and 002C and 002D (Waterlees Village) have the highest levels of deprivation in the district (Local IMD decile 1). By comparison, the least deprived LSOAs (Local IMD decile 8) are Fenland 008A (Bassenhally) and Fenland 006F (St Andrews).

3.1.42 In Fenland, 3 more LSOAs were in the more deprived deciles than in 2015, with 7% of all LSOAs falling into these deciles. The majority of LSOAs in Fenland do not fall into the 50% less deprived LSOAs nationally, apart from the Crime and Living Environment domains, where there are a minority of LSOAs. Fenland's most deprived scoring domains are Education, with 98% of its LSOAs in the more deprived half of the rankings, followed by Health with 93% in the lower half.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>23</sup> Cambridgeshire Insight: [Fenland\\_1.1.pdf \(cambridgeshireinsight.org.uk\)](https://www.cambridgeshireinsight.org.uk/Fenland_1.1.pdf)

<sup>24</sup> Cambridgeshire Insight: [Cambridgeshire-Summary-Report-for-IMD-2019-1.0.pdf \(cambridgeshireinsight.org.uk\)](https://www.cambridgeshireinsight.org.uk/Cambridgeshire-Summary-Report-for-IMD-2019-1.0.pdf)

**Figure 17: Percentage distribution in 2019 and 2015 of LSOAs in Fenland in each decile of the Index of Multiple Deprivation**



Source: MHCLG: [Indices of Deprivation 2015 and 2019 \(communities.gov.uk\)](https://communities.gov.uk)

### Children in low income families

3.1.43 There are two categories of low income families. The first is absolute low income, defined as a family whose equivalised income is below 60% of the 2010/11 median income adjusted for inflation. The second category is relative low income, where a low income family has claimed at least one or more of Universal Credit, Tax Credits or Housing Benefit at any point in the year.

3.1.44 In 2021/22 in Fenland there were 3,197 children living in absolute low income families and 4,387 children living in relative low income families.<sup>25</sup>

### Fuel Poverty

3.1.45 Fenland households that are considered to be in fuel poverty account for some 11.2% of the population which is slightly below the national average of 13.1%. However, this is above the Cambridgeshire average of 9.2%<sup>26</sup>.

### Crime

3.1.46 The absence of a safe and secure place in which to live can have an extremely negative impact on physical and emotional health and wellbeing.

3.1.47 Single crime case data has been provided by Cambridgeshire Constabulary and aggregated with rates calculated per 1,000 population. 12-month rolling figures use an average of the population monthly figures over the same period.

3.1.48 In the period May 2023 to April 2024 there were a total of 8,022 crimes recorded in Fenland. The overall crime rate for Fenland was 6.6 per 1,000 people. This is higher than the overall crime rate for Cambridgeshire (5.8) and the East of England (6.0).

<sup>25</sup> Cambridgeshire Insight: [Children and Young People - LTLA | Fenland | Report Builder for ArcGIS \(cambridgeshireinsight.org.uk\)](https://cambridgeshireinsight.org.uk)

<sup>26</sup> Cambridgeshire Insight: [Deprivation - LTLA | Fenland | Report Builder for ArcGIS \(cambridgeshireinsight.org.uk\)](https://cambridgeshireinsight.org.uk)

3.1.49 The main type of crime in this period in Fenland was violence and sexual offences (3,636). The rate of violence and sexual offences was 35.7 per 1,000 people, which is above the average for Cambridgeshire (26.5) and England (33.3). Fenland was below the average crime rate for Cambridgeshire for vehicle crime, theft from the person, shoplifting, public order, robbery and bicycle theft. Fenland was above the average crime rate for Cambridgeshire for burglary, criminal damage and arson, drugs, possession of weapons.

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## Open Space

3.1.50 Provision of good quality and publicly accessible open space is a key determinant of health and well-being.

3.1.51 Most settlements in Fenland have an area of open space for public use and recreation. However, the amount of open space available per head of population is below the national standard. The Council's Open Space Study 2006 highlighted a deficit of various types of open space for most settlements. Since then, with the exception of the provision of football pitches in Whittlesey there have been no significant additions of open space other than that provided with new developments.

3.1.52 The Council's current Open Space Standards for new developments are contained in Appendix B of the Fenland Local Plan 2014.<sup>28</sup> These are to be reviewed as part of the update of the Local Plan with the aim of ensuring that sufficient open space is provided to cater for the forecasted growth in population. The Council will however still be faced with the challenge of bringing open space standards for the district up to those for the rest of England.

## Leisure

3.1.53 There are four leisure centres in Fenland, in each of the market towns. These are run by Freedom Leisure, a not for profit leisure trust. Provision of facilities varies and future provision to cater for existing population and new growth has been highlighted in the Council's Leisure and Indoor Sports Facilities<sup>29</sup> and Playing Pitch Strategy<sup>30</sup> (both 2016).

3.1.54 There is also a library in each of the market towns that are run by Cambridgeshire County Council which provide a range of facilities and are an important hub for the local communities. The County Council also operate a mobile library which provides services to many of Fenland's villages.<sup>31</sup>

3.1.55 There are a wide number and variety of sports clubs in the district with varying standards of facilities. The most popular participatory sport in the areas is football with around 170

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<sup>27</sup> Cambridgeshire Insight: [Crime - LTLA | Fenland | Report Builder for ArcGIS \(cambridgeshireinsight.org.uk\)](#)

<sup>28</sup> [Fenland Local Plan - Adopted Web](#)

<sup>29</sup> [Fenland DC - Indoor Facility Strategy](#)

<sup>30</sup> [Fenland Playing Pitch Strategy 2016.pdf](#)

<sup>31</sup> [Libraries | Cambridgeshire County Council](#)

teams. Sport England and partners including the Council have produced a Fenland Local Football Facility Plan (August 2019)<sup>32</sup> to improve playing pitches and club facilities.

- 3.1.56 Fishing and boating are also popular leisure pursuits in the area due to the prevalence of the extensive drainage network and man-made lakes. There are a variety of pubs, clubs and restaurants throughout the district with concentrations in the market towns. Wisbech also has a cinema, 'The Light,' and both March and Wisbech have night clubs.

### **Local Food**

- 3.1.57 Whilst the district has a higher than average proportion of unhealthy and obese residents, a significant part of Fenland's area is high grade agricultural land which is an important resource and discussed in more detail in Section 3.6. Much of the food produced is exported to other areas in the country and abroad which has implications for transport and CO2 emissions. There are a few farmers markets and other facilities within the district which provide outlets for local food to be consumed locally but these are not widespread. Being a mainly arable crop producing area based on a highly mechanised farming system means that the scope for the sales of local produce is relatively limited.

### **Allotments**

- 3.1.58 Current provision of allotments in Fenland reveals an incomplete picture. All market towns have at least one site of allotments. However, the numbers appear to have dwindled over time partly because keeping an allotment went out of fashion in the recent past and the land has been used for other purposes. The number of allotments in villages and elsewhere is not unknown. The national standard requires 20 standard allotment plots of 250m<sup>2</sup> per 1,000 households. The Local Plan standard currently seeks off-site allotments for development sites of less than 10ha and more than 0.5ha and on-site for housing schemes over 10ha. The standards are to be reviewed as part of the update of the Local Plan.

### **Community Orchards**

- 3.1.59 There is a community orchard in Wisbech Park and one has been established in Manea as part of a wider conservation community project for the former Manea Pit area. Fruit trees and bushes have been planted in areas accessible to the public and are available for anyone to harvest. One aim is to improve community cohesion and the projects have been well supported by local people. Community orchards provide a very positive example of how food grown locally can have wider community benefits.

### **Evidence Gaps**

- Open space assessment is dated 2006 and requires updating to inform the new Local Plan.
- Playing Pitch Strategy is dated 2016 and requires updating to inform the new Local Plan.

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<sup>32</sup> [Fenland Local Football Facility Plan](#)

- Indoor Sports Facility Strategy is dated 2016 and requires updating to inform the new Local Plan.
- Details of allotment provision
- Information on farmers markets sales
- Unknown plans of health providers for current and future provision

### **Specific Issues and Opportunities**

#### **Key Issues:**

- 28% of Fenland's population will be over 65 by 2041 which is higher than the national average.
- Life expectancy is lower than the national average.
- Fenland people generally have less healthy lives than the national average.
- There are relatively high levels of deprivation and social exclusion in a number of areas in the district.
- There is great health inequality between some wards within the district.
- Inequalities have worsened in the past few years.
- Relatively poor open space offer.

#### **Key Opportunities:**

- Open space provision, including for allotments, can be improved throughout the authority area.
- Land exists close to or within existing settlements for new areas of open space.
- Able to plan for an elderly population.
- New housing and employment development can provide scope to improve the deprivation.
- Better place making and targeted infrastructure can improve the environment for all including the most deprived.
- The Fens Reservoir has potential to provide a large area of open space with leisure and recreation facilities to encourage exercise and social interaction.
- The Fens Reservoir has the potential to attract visitors from all over the country which could subsequently provide a boost for the local economy.

### **The Likely Situation without the Plan**

3.1.60 The likely levels of development identified in the new emerging Local Plan should help to alleviate some of the issues relating to age, health and well-being, crime, leisure and open space. Policies built around the sustainability objectives identified in this report should help to achieve some of the objectives identified in the Council's Business Plan: Communities, Environment and Economy.

### **Key Sustainability Objectives**

3.1.61 Following a review of the relevant policies relating to the topics in this section, along with an assessment of the current situation, the following key sustainability objectives have been identified: