

# Local Government Reorganisation

## What Whittlesey Needs to Know — and Could Do Now

CAPALC Parish Briefing — March 2026 — prepared with the assistance of AI, there may be some errors

**LGR is underway. The question is whether Whittlesey is prepared for the practical consequences — or risks discovering them after the window to act has closed.**

### How Each Option Affects Your Parish

*The government consultation numbers the four proposals 1–4. The local option letters (A, B, D, E) used throughout this briefing correspond to Proposals 2, 1, 3 and 4 respectively. Each proposer chose their own working names for the new authorities (e.g. ‘North West’, ‘South East’, ‘North East’); this briefing uses more descriptive names to help distinguish the authorities across options.*

Option	Your UA	Parishes	Key Risk
<b>A</b> <b>(Proposal 2)</b>	Northwest Unitary Council (Hunts + Fenland + Peterborough)	120	CIL/S106 regime change risk; Peterborough may dominate priorities
<b>B</b> <b>(Proposal 1)</b>	North Cambridgeshire & Peterborough (Hunts + Fenland + East Cambs + Peterborough)	156	Largest UA — practical influence diluted; multiple developer contribution regimes to reconcile
<b>D</b> <b>(Proposal 4)</b>	Mid Cambridgeshire (East Hunts + East Cambs + Fenland)	90	Weakest financial base; no dominant urban centre; CIL/S106 regime change
<b>E</b> <b>(Proposal 3)</b>	North-East Cambridgeshire (Peterborough + East Cambs + Fenland)	78	Peterborough-anchored; three developer contribution regimes to reconcile; rural parishes risk being overshadowed

### The Risks That Matter Most to Whittlesey

**Planning influence diluted — but legal weight unchanged.** Whittlesey remains a statutory consultee under all options. The legal weight of parish comments does not change. The practical risk is that fewer officers covering more parishes means less capacity to engage meaningfully with Whittlesey’s responses, and less local knowledge to interpret them. A larger authority dilutes influence, not legal standing.

**Developer contribution regime could change entirely.** As a Fenland parish, Whittlesey currently sits under an S106-only regime (no CIL). Under options that merge {dist} with CIL districts, the parish could move to a CIL regime — changing the developer contribution framework entirely. The greater risk is administrative: whether the new UA collects contributions promptly and allocates funds without delay. CIL should not be relied upon as a primary funding source regardless of option.

**Neighbourhood Plan needs active protection.** Whittlesey has a made Neighbourhood Plan, which provides statutory weight in planning decisions. However, NP policies must be in general conformity with the Local Plan’s strategic policies. When the new UA writes its Local Plan, existing NP policies may need review. The parish should monitor the new Local Plan process closely to protect its NP’s provisions.

**Relationships with officers may need to be rebuilt.** The working relationships your clerk and councillors have built with current district and county officers could be disrupted. Officers in a new authority may not have the same familiarity with your parish. The transition period (to April 2028) is when parish issues are most likely to fall between the cracks.

## What Whittlesey Could Do Now

**Document existing commitments.** Record all current S106 payments, CIL neighbourhood portion payments due, grant agreements, SLAs, and concurrent function funding. These are at risk during transition and must be actively chased with the new authority.

**Identify which promised benefits are statutory and which are discretionary.** For every benefit cited in an LGR proposal (parish forums, locality working, asset devolution), ask whether it is written into law, constitution, or binding agreement — or whether it is simply a stated intention.

**Press for embedding during transition.** This is the window where the Parish Council has the strongest negotiating position. Once the new authority is operational, engagement promises are easily deprioritised. Press for a parish charter and constitutional recognition.

**Model financial impact.** Prepare for potential precept implications from lost grant schemes, concurrent function changes, and possible asset or service transfers. Communicate proactively with residents about what the precept pays for.

**Engage your ward and division councillors.** Your current ward and division councillors are your advocates within the principal authorities. Ensure they understand your parish's specific concerns and are briefed to raise them during transition planning.

**Protect your Neighbourhood Plan.** Monitor the new UA's Local Plan process to ensure your NP policies remain in conformity. Consider whether a review or update is needed once the new strategic framework emerges. CAPALC can advise.

**Note on bus services:** Bus service funding sits with the Combined Authority (CPCA) under the Mayor and is unaffected by LGR. The transport risk for parishes is around highways maintenance priorities and local road management transferring to a new UA — not bus subsidies.

*The full option-by-option analysis follows on the next page. Contact CAPALC at [info@capalc.org.uk](mailto:info@capalc.org.uk) for support.*

## Your Parish At A Glance

Parish: Whittlesey

District: Fenland

Population (2023): 18,510

Dwellings (2023): 8,450

Parish type: Variable-UA

Neighbourhood Plan: Made (in force)

As a Fenland parish, Whittlesey could fall under different unitary authorities depending on which option is selected: Mid Cambridgeshire, North Cambridgeshire & Peterborough, North-East Cambridgeshire, Northwest Unitary Council. This means the character, priorities and scale of your principal authority vary significantly between options — and so do the practical consequences for your parish.

## Your Parish Under Each Option

### Option A: Northwest Unitary

**Merges:** Huntingdonshire, Fenland and Peterborough

**Parishes:** 120

**Character:** Large, mixed urban/rural authority anchored by Peterborough

### Option B: North Cambs & Peterborough

**Merges:** Huntingdonshire, Fenland, East Cambridgeshire and Peterborough

**Parishes:** 156

**Character:** Very large authority, the biggest proposed UA by parish count

### Option D: Mid Cambridgeshire

**Merges:** East Huntingdonshire, East Cambridgeshire and Fenland

**Parishes:** 90

**Character:** Predominantly rural authority without a central urban hub

### Option E: North-East Cambridgeshire

**Merges:** Peterborough, East Cambridgeshire and Fenland

**Parishes:** 78

**Character:** Large mixed authority combining Peterborough city with two rural districts

## How Each Option Affects Key Impacts

### A. Planning & Development

Option A (Northwest Unitary):

**Local Plan:** Local Plan would cover a large merged area. Parish planning views would need to be heard alongside Peterborough's strategic growth priorities, and it may take time for officers to build familiarity with rural Huntingdonshire character.

**Developer Contributions:** Merges three different regimes: Hunts CIL (£152/m<sup>2</sup> indexed), Peterborough CIL (£70/m<sup>2</sup> indexed, 15+ units only) and Fenland (£106 only, no CIL) — Harmonising these is likely to mean changes to current rates, and Huntingdonshire parishes may wish to consider how this could affect their CIL income

Option B (North Cambs & Peterborough):

**Local Plan:** Local Plan would cover the largest proposed area. Strategic housing pressures from multiple growth corridors would need to be balanced. It is worth considering whether Huntingdonshire's emerging defence sector growth might receive less attention alongside Peterborough and East Cambridgeshire priorities.

**Developer Contributions:** Merges four different regimes: Hunts CIL (£152/m<sup>2</sup> indexed), East Cambs CIL (£125/m<sup>2</sup> indexed), Peterborough CIL (£70/m<sup>2</sup> indexed, 15+ units only) and Fenland (£106 only, no CIL) — harmonising four different approaches would be complex, and Huntingdonshire parishes may want to consider how this could affect their current CIL income

Option D (Mid Cambridgeshire):

**Local Plan:** Local Plan would cover eastern Huntingdonshire, East Cambridgeshire and Fenland — a large, predominantly rural area. Huntingdonshire's district-wide Local Plan would be split, with western parishes under Greater Peterborough. There is no dominant urban centre, which could help rural parish concerns be heard, but the authority would also lack the economic weight of a major city.

**Developer Contributions:** Merges three different regimes: Hunts CIL (£152/m<sup>2</sup> indexed), East Cambs CIL (£125/m<sup>2</sup> indexed) and Fenland (£106 only, no CIL). Harmonisation would be needed, and Huntingdonshire parishes may want to consider how this could affect their current CIL income.

Option E (North-East Cambridgeshire):

**Local Plan:** Three different planning regimes to merge. Peterborough's strategic growth priorities would carry significant weight alongside Ely and Fenland market towns. Rural parishes may find it harder to influence planning decisions alongside a major urban centre.

**Developer Contributions:** Merges three different regimes: East Cambs CIL (£125/m<sup>2</sup> indexed), Peterborough CIL (£70/m<sup>2</sup> indexed, 15+ units only) and Fenland (£106 only, no CIL) — harmonising three approaches would be complex, and East Cambridgeshire parishes may want to consider how this could affect their current CIL income

**FROM YOUR DATA:** Your parish has grown steadily (+845 residents since 2021, +5%). New housing allocations in the UA's Local Plan may need to reflect this continuing demand. 28% of households have dependent children (3,390 children aged 0–15). New housing allocations would ideally account for school capacity, play areas and youth infrastructure.

**FROM YOUR MINUTES:** Whittlesey regularly reviews planning applications and has engaged with the Local Plan process — so these changes are likely to matter to you. £106 developer contributions appear in 1 sets of your minutes. Under options that merge your district with others, the approach to developer contributions could change.

## B. Finance & Funding

Option A (Northwest Unitary):

**Council Tax:** Council tax harmonisation across three areas with different current rates. Peterborough's social care costs would be shared across the merged base.

**Rural/Urban:** Peterborough's urban population would carry significant weight in political representation. Rural Huntingdonshire parishes may find it harder to secure attention and resources alongside a large urban centre.

Option B (North Cambs & Peterborough):

**Council Tax:** Harmonisation across four former districts with the widest range of current council tax rates. The largest budget for absorbing social care costs, but also the most competing demands to balance.

**Rural/Urban:** Peterborough's urban population plus multiple market towns. Rural Huntingdonshire parishes may find it harder to be heard in such a large authority.

#### Option D (Mid Cambridgeshire):

**Council Tax:** Mid Cambridgeshire would have the weakest financial base of Option D's three authorities. The independent assessment found Option D's services would cost £3.7m more than current by 2040. Council tax harmonisation across three former districts with different rates.

**Rural/Urban:** No dominant urban centre. Predominantly rural with market towns (St Ives, St Neots, Ramsey, Ely). Parish voice could be strong, though it is worth considering whether the authority would have sufficient financial resources to act on parish concerns.

#### Option E (North-East Cambridgeshire):

**Council Tax:** Council tax harmonisation across Peterborough, East Cambridgeshire and Fenland with different current rates. Peterborough's social care costs would be shared across the merged base, though the combined tax base is stronger than a rural-only authority.

**Rural/Urban:** Peterborough's urban population would carry significant weight in political representation. Rural East Cambridgeshire and Fenland parishes may find it harder to secure attention and resources alongside a large urban centre.

**FROM YOUR MINUTES:** Whittlesey's budget, precept and reserves are discussed regularly. Your precept may become more visible as a separate line item when district rates merge into a single UA rate, which could create pressure to freeze or reduce it -- so it may be worth thinking about how to communicate the value of what it pays for.

## C. Governance, Services & Representation

#### Option A (Northwest Unitary):

**Representation:** Approximately 47 councillors covering 120 parishes. Wards would be significantly larger than current district wards, which could make it harder for individual parishes to build close relationships with their UA councillor.

**Services:** Scale offers financial resilience, though there is a trade-off with potential centralisation. It would be worth considering how rural service needs might be balanced against urban Peterborough priorities.

#### Option B (North Cambs & Peterborough):

**Representation:** The largest proposed UA by parish count. Even with ~100 councillors, each would represent a very large area. Parish forums across this geography could be challenging to make effective. This option would represent the biggest change from current parish-officer relationships.

**Services:** Greatest financial resilience from scale, though also the highest potential for centralisation. Parish-level service responsiveness could be more difficult to maintain. Named locality officers would be particularly important but may be harder to sustain at this scale.

#### Option D (Mid Cambridgeshire):

**Representation:** Around 90 parishes in a predominantly rural authority. No dominant urban centre, which could strengthen parish voice. However, the independent assessment raised concerns about this authority's financial sustainability and ability to deliver complex services at scale.

**Services:** The independent assessment rated Option D's service delivery at 2 out of 5. Mid Cambridgeshire would have a weaker economic base and higher initial transition costs (£140.7m). Without a central urban hub, service delivery could be more challenging to organise efficiently. Three separate management teams across the three UAs would increase overhead costs.

#### Option E (North-East Cambridgeshire):

**Representation:** 78 parishes in a Peterborough-anchored authority. Peterborough's urban population would carry significant political weight. Rural East Cambridgeshire and Fenland parishes may find it harder to build close relationships with their UA councillor.

**Services:** Peterborough brings existing unitary service capacity, providing a stronger financial base than a purely rural authority. However, there is a trade-off: service design and investment priorities could lean towards Peterborough's urban needs rather than rural requirements.

**FROM YOUR DATA:** With 18,510 residents, Whittlesey has the scale to be a credible partner for the new UA — and it may be worth seeking engagement mechanisms that are constitutionally embedded rather than discretionary.

**FROM YOUR MINUTES:** Your council has engaged with service changes (3 meetings). LGR has already been discussed at 4 of your meetings. These service delivery arrangements are likely to be redesigned under the new UA, and the approach will depend on which option is selected.

## D. Highways & Transport

Option A (Northwest Unitary):

CCC highways responsibilities transfer to Northwest Unitary. With 120 parishes, your highway improvement priorities would need to be heard alongside a much larger area.

Option B (North Cambs & Peterborough):

CCC highways responsibilities transfer to North Cambs & Peterborough. With 156 parishes, your highway improvement priorities would need to be heard alongside a much larger area.

Option D (Mid Cambridgeshire):

CCC highways responsibilities transfer to Mid Cambridgeshire. With 90 parishes, highway priorities would remain more locally focused, which could help your concerns be heard more readily.

Option E (North-East Cambridgeshire):

CCC highways responsibilities transfer to North-East Cambridgeshire. With 78 parishes, highway priorities would remain more locally focused, which could help your concerns be heard more readily.

**FROM YOUR MINUTES:** Highways and transport issues feature prominently in Whittlesey's minutes. These are currently managed through established relationships with CCC highways officers. Under LGR, all of this would transfer to the new UA - so it may be worth thinking about how to carry forward the relationships and progress you've built.

## E. Flooding & Environment

Option A (Northwest Unitary):

Lead Local Flood Authority would cover a large, diverse area. It is worth considering whether flood risk expertise might be focused more on Fenland/Peterborough priorities than Huntingdonshire catchments.

Option B (North Cambs & Peterborough):

Lead Local Flood Authority would cover the most diverse geography: Fenland floodplain, Great Ouse catchment, and urban Peterborough drainage. There is a question about whether expertise could be spread too thin across such varied needs.

Option D (Mid Cambridgeshire):

Lead Local Flood Authority would cover Great Ouse catchment (eastern Huntingdonshire), Fenland floodplain, and East Cambridgeshire. Diverse flood risk but coherent enough geography for effective management.

Option E (North-East Cambridgeshire):

Lead Local Flood Authority would cover Peterborough urban drainage, Fenland floodplain and East Cambridgeshire catchments. Fenland flood risk is nationally significant. Diverse flood risk types to manage across a large geography.

**FROM YOUR MINUTES:** Whittlesey's minutes record flooding and drainage concerns. The Lead Local Flood Authority responsibility transfers from CCC to the new UA, and the capacity to manage your specific catchment area could vary depending on which option is selected.

## F. Education, Health & Social Care

These services are currently managed county-wide by CCC. Under LGR they transfer to the new UA(s). While not directly controlled by parishes, they significantly affect residents and take up a large share of UA budgets -- which could reduce the discretionary spending that parishes often benefit from.

Option A (Northwest Unitary):

Moderate financial base for social care. Competing demands from a mixed urban/rural population.

Option B (North Cambs & Peterborough):

Greater financial resilience for social care, but resources spread across a larger population.

Option D (Mid Cambridgeshire):

Moderate financial base for social care. Competing demands from a mixed urban/rural population.

Option E (North-East Cambridgeshire):

A smaller revenue base could make financial pressures more keenly felt. Social care costs may have a greater impact on other services.

**FROM YOUR DATA:** 23% of residents are aged 65 or over (4,096 people), and 13% of households are a single person over 65. Adult social care — the single largest cost facing any new UA — could affect service availability in your area. If a UA comes under financial pressure, discretionary services may be reduced to fund statutory social care obligations. 3,390 children aged 0–15 live in Whittlesey (18% of the population). School place planning, currently managed county-wide by CCC, transfers to the new UA. If the new authority covers a larger or differently shaped area, catchment planning could become more complex, and it is worth considering how SEND provision might be affected. With 820 children aged 0–3, early years and childcare provision is also a live concern that will transfer to the new authority.

## Risks Common To All Options

Regardless of which option is selected, every parish faces these risks:

- **TRANSITION DISRUPTION (to April 2028)** — Both old and new authorities operate simultaneously. Officer capacity may be stretched by merger logistics, which could affect response times. Planning processing could slow. It is worth keeping a close eye on existing S106 payments, grants and contracts to make sure they carry across.
- **EXPENDITURE TRANSFER** — There is a possibility that a UA under financial pressure could pass services to parishes without fully matching funding. National evidence suggests precepts have sometimes increased significantly (69%+) following unitarisation, so this is worth being aware of.
- **ASSET TRANSFER PRESSURE** — The new UA may rationalise its assets. Parishes could be offered parks, play areas or buildings along with their running costs. It is worth thinking through the financial implications carefully, and being aware that the alternative may be that the asset is no longer maintained.
- **ASPIRATIONS VS FORMAL COMMITMENTS** — "Co-production", "community empowerment" and "parish voice" do not currently have a statutory basis. Experience from previous reorganisations suggests these can be difficult to maintain under financial pressure. It is worth seeking formal embedding of any engagement mechanisms that matter to your parish.
- **NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN** — Whittlesey has a made Neighbourhood Plan, which provides statutory weight in planning decisions and increases your CIL neighbourhood portion from 15% to 25%. However, a new Local Plan could undermine or supersede NP policies — active monitoring during transition would be well worthwhile.

## What Whittlesey Can Do Now

1. 1. CONSIDER DOCUMENTING YOUR EXISTING COMMITMENTS. It may be helpful to record all current S106 payments, grant agreements, SLAs and concurrent function funding, so you have a clear record to follow up with the new authority.
2. 2. THINK ABOUT WHAT IS STATUTORY VS DISCRETIONARY. For benefits mentioned in LGR proposals, it is worth asking whether they are written into law, a constitution or a binding agreement. If not, they may be harder to rely on in the long term.
3. 3. MAKE YOUR VOICE HEARD DURING THE TRANSITION. The period between now and vesting day is likely when parishes have the best opportunity to shape how the new authority will work with them.
4. 4. THINK ABOUT THE POTENTIAL FINANCIAL IMPACT. You might want to consider modelling how changes to grants, concurrent function funding and possible asset or service transfers could affect your precept.
5. 5. STAY IN TOUCH WITH YOUR COUNCILLORS. Your Fenland ward councillor(s) (Cllr Alec Branton, Cllr Alex Miscandlon, Cllr Chris Boden, Cllr Dr Haq Nawaz, Cllr Gurninder Singh Gill, Cllr Jason Mockett, Cllr Mrs Dee Laws, Cllr Roy Gerstner) and your CCC division councillor(s) (Cllr Chris Boden, Cllr Michael Fisher) are your current advocates within the principal authorities. It would be helpful to make sure they understand Whittlesey's specific concerns and are briefed to raise them during transition planning. They are copied on this email for that reason.

## How Capalc Can Help

The full 47-point LGR Parish Impact Assessment

Guidance on reviewing LGR option proposals from a parish perspective

Template responses for parish council engagement

Advice on Neighbourhood Plans, asset transfers and service devolution

Updates as the reorganisation process develops

Contact us at [info@capalc.org.uk](mailto:info@capalc.org.uk).

Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Association of Local Councils (CAPALC)

This briefing draws on CAPALC's LGR Parish Impact Assessment (March 2026), the LGR option proposals (Options A, B, D and E), national evidence from previous reorganisations, and NALC/SLCC research.

Sent to: Whittlesey Parish Council (clerk and councillors), with copy to ward and division councillors.