



Press Release

21 October 2026

Councillors vote against changes to planning system that “erode democracy”

Elected members of Fenland District Council voted against changes to the Council’s constitution to comply with new planning laws they say “erodes democracy” – but were advised the law will have to be followed.

Members present at an Extraordinary Meeting of the Council on Monday (October 19), voted unanimously against the changes, with 32 votes cast, including representatives from across political groups represented on the Council.

Members were told the law supersedes the constitution, and Council officers will be forced to amend the constitution and Council processes to comply with the law as outlined in the Government’s mandatory National Scheme of Delegation.

Before the meeting, Cllr Boden, had said: “These new arrangements will significantly reduce the role locally elected councillors can play in determining planning applications and limit the opportunities for matters of local concern to be considered by planning committee. This will have a significant impact on residents’ ability to have issues affecting their communities considered by elected representatives.

“These changes are being forced upon us by Government and councils have no choice but to comply with them. They represent an erosion of democratic decision-making, but we are being legally required to implement them regardless.”

While Cllr Dee Laws, the Council’s Portfolio Holder for Planning, said: “Planning decisions can have a huge impact on communities, which is why residents rightly expect councillors to play a role in considering applications that affect their area.

“The new rules will result in significantly fewer planning applications being considered by committee and remove some of the routes through which local issues can currently be raised.”

The National Scheme of Delegation changes the way planning applications are decided in England.

The regulations, which form part of wider Government planning reforms, will reduce the number of planning applications that can be decided by elected members through committee and introduce revised limits on the size of planning committees.

The changes will also remove councillors' call-in powers and end the automatic referral of applications to committee when a certain number of public objections have been received.

The Government says the National Scheme of Delegation aims to streamline the planning process, reduce planning committee workloads and allow elected members to focus on the most significant planning applications affecting their area.

Ends