



Press Release

13 October 2026

Fenland councillors raise concerns over new national planning rules being “forced” upon them by Government

Fenland District councillors have spoken out against new national planning regulations which will change the way planning applications are decided in England.

From 31 October, the Government’s mandatory National Scheme of Delegation (NSD) for planning applications will come into force, introducing new rules on which applications are decided by planning officers, and which can be determined by councillors sitting on planning committees.

Councillors have raised concerns that the changes will reduce local involvement in planning decisions and limit the circumstances in which applications can be considered by elected members.

The regulations, which form part of wider Government planning reforms, will reduce the number of planning applications that can be decided by 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 NSD 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.

Full Council will consider the issue at its meeting on Monday 19 October, when members will be asked to approve the constitutional changes needed to implement the NSD and ensure the Council complies with the new statutory requirements.

A report to Full Council states that, unlike the Council’s current arrangements, the NSD is prescribed nationally and is not a matter for local determination. It adds that changes to the Council’s Constitution are required before 31 October to ensure compliance with the new legislation.

The NSD will apply irrespective of any decision of the Council, and failure to comply could have significant consequences for the authority and planning applicants.

Leader of Fenland District Council, Cllr Chris Boden, 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.”

Cllr Dee Laws, the Council’s Portfolio Holder for Planning, added: “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. While the Council is legally required to implement the changes, we will continue to ensure planning applications are determined fairly, and in accordance with planning law and policy.”

For more information on the National Scheme of Delegation, visit: [Planning Committees and the National Scheme of Delegation of Planning Functions: Guidance for local planning authorities in England - GOV.UK](#)

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