

District and County Councillor's Report – July 2026

Kingsway Solar

Last month we reported that the Kingsway Solar application had been submitted to the government's planning inspectorate (PINS) for assessment. PINS had to validate the application, where they make sure all the information is there for them to make a decision on it, before it was accepted. PINS replied to Kingsway with a list of changes that they'd need to make before it was in an acceptable state for examination – the letter stretched to some 11 pages! As a result of this, Kingsway withdrew the application with a view to making the required improvements and then resubmitting.

So it looks like this hasn't gone away totally but does give those of us that are interested the 'summer off' reading and commenting on hundreds of technical documents. The positive thing from this process is that it demonstrates that the government are committed to scrutinising this proposal seriously, rather than waving it through.

Forest City

More good news (in our opinion) – you may have seen that Matthew Pennycook, the minister for Housing and Planning, recently announced in Parliament that the Forest City idea wasn't in the government's New Towns plan, meaning it currently doesn't have any mechanism for gaining approval. Given the size of the proposal, this wouldn't be able to go via the local councils, it would have to be a government led scheme, so now they have ruled this out for the time being, I know a lot of us are breathing a sigh of relief. Although, with anything relating to planning and development, nothing is impossible, so this may not be the last we've heard of it but it certainly is for the moment.

The local authorities in our area had also jointly written to the government outlining why they think the plan is unsuitable and that they don't support it. This was pivotal as these are the local planning authorities in our area, so a joint letter from them all condemning the proposal was helpful. For clarity the authorities that penned the letter were – South Cambs District Council, Cambridgeshire County Council, East Cambs District Council and West Suffolk District Council. Suffolk County Council opted not to sign, the reasons for which we are unsure.

Local Plan

The District and City council's Local Plan is moving forward. The current status is that the Council are due to start another round of consultation on the final draft of the Plan. This is very important as it's the last opportunity for us to comment on the proposals before they're submitted to a government inspector for examination. The comments made at this stage will be seen by the inspector.

The big-ticket item in our area is the Grange Farm new town proposal. Initially it was proposed to build a new 6000 house development to the north of Abington. There were over 1000 representations received on this proposal alone, so thank you to all those who engaged with the process. We will wait to see what changes, if any, the Council has made based on the feedback they received, although our view is that it's unlikely that they will have removed the site from the Plan, they may have altered the layout/density etc.

Councillors Henry Batchelor and Geoff Harvey

Whatever the final proposal is, please do use the opportunity to comment on it – positively or negatively – as it will be the largest settlement in our area, larger than Linton.

Local Government Reorganisation

At time of writing, we are expecting an imminent announcement from government outlining their preferred geographies for the new unitary authorities in Cambridgeshire. Once this announcement is made it'll be all hands-on deck for the local authorities to get themselves in order for the first elections of the new councils in May 2027.

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