

District Councillor's Report – September 2026

This month's update covers planning and drainage issues in Buckden, developments concerning the Market Towns Regeneration project, and the current position on Local Government Reorganisation.

Pre-Submission Local Plan

By the time you read this report Huntingdonshire District Council will likely have decided to publish its proposed Local Plan for formal public consultation.

This is an important stage in deciding where future homes, jobs and infrastructure may go across Huntingdonshire over the next twenty years. Publication would begin the formal Regulation 19 consultation, when residents, parish councils and other organisations can comment on whether the plan is legally sound and properly supported by evidence.

The decision is not straightforward. Members are having to weigh some significant and competing considerations.

The Council faces a tight deadline to submit the plan to the Planning Inspectorate by the end of December. If that deadline is missed, the district may be unable to progress the plan until questions around Local Government Reorganisation have been resolved. That could leave Huntingdonshire without an up-to-date plan for several years.

This matters because the Council's current supply of deliverable housing land has fallen below the five-year level required by national policy. Without an adopted plan and a sufficient supply of housing land, it becomes much harder to resist speculative development proposals, including proposals in villages that may not have the necessary roads, drainage or community facilities in place.

At the same time, there are serious questions about whether the infrastructure needed for the proposed growth can be delivered. Huntingdonshire is classed as an area of serious water stress. The Council's own evidence identifies concerns about wastewater treatment capacity and about highway pressures, including on the A141 corridor. These issues need credible answers if new development is to be sustainable.

I have also raised the importance of clear governance arrangements. Residents must have confidence that decisions on site selection are based on planning evidence and the public interest. The Council should be able to demonstrate a clear separation between its commercial engagement with developers and the impartial process used to assess and select development sites.

Recent events elsewhere show the risk of simply stopping the plan-making process. The Government has intervened in other councils where Local Plan progress has been delayed, and it has powers to take control of plan making in certain circumstances. Huntingdonshire therefore needs to protect local democratic control while also ensuring that the plan is lawful, evidence based and deliverable.

My focus is on securing a plan that protects our environment, responds honestly to water and infrastructure constraints, and gives local communities the strongest possible say over where development takes place. I will report back after Wednesday's decision and, if publication is approved, explain how residents can take part in the consultation.

[#Land East of Silver Street \(26/00956/REM\)](#)

The consultation on the proposed 290 home development has now closed. Several of the official responses raise issues that residents and the Parish Council have highlighted, particularly on drainage and flood risk.

The Lead Local Flood Authority has raised questions about high groundwater levels, the capacity of the proposed drainage basin, and the move to a pumped surface water system. It has also made clear that permission from affected ditch owners may be needed before water can be discharged into the local watercourse.

Anglian Water has spotted conflicting information about the proposed foul water pumping rate and has asked to be consulted again. It has warned that the higher rate mentioned in the drainage statement could create risks for the receiving sewer network.

Council urban design officers have also questioned whether the proposed central open space would work well as a community green, given that much of it is taken up by the drainage basin.

I have called in the application, so it will be decided at a public Development Management Committee meeting rather than by officers under delegated powers. Thank you to everyone who took

the time to submit evidence and local knowledge. It has made a real difference to the issues now being considered.

Market Towns Regeneration and Vote of No Confidence

On 2 September, Full Council debated a motion of no confidence in the Executive Leader. The motion was not carried.

Many people have understandably raised concerns about the Market Towns Regeneration project, especially the proposals affecting Market Towns' car parks and Huntingdon bus station. Residents, traders and parish councils need clear answers about what would replace these facilities and how the plans would affect everyday journeys into town.

My view in the debate was that simply changing the Leader would not, by itself, answer the wider questions about how the project has been managed. The Council's external auditor has already identified a significant governance issue, and it is important that this is properly addressed.

I have asked for straightforward information about the Capital & Centric contract, including how much has been spent so far. I have not yet received the information I requested. I will continue to press for openness, proper independent scrutiny, and clear answers for residents.

Local Government Reorganisation

There has been plenty of speculation about possible changes to local government in Cambridgeshire. At present, however, no formal decision has been announced by government.

We expect more clarity later this autumn. I will share confirmed information when it is available, rather than add to the rumours.

Buckden–Hinchingsbrooke Active Travel Route Enhancements

This scheme delivers improvements to the existing shared and segregated paths between Buckden and Hinchingsbrooke, prioritising safer access to Hinchingsbrooke School, Huntingdon Station, and Huntingdon town centre. It also connects directly with the recently completed Buckden–Brampton route to create a more coherent active-travel corridor.

Where feasible, paths will be widened to provide fully segregated cycle facilities, improving safety and capacity for both cyclists and pedestrians.

- Match funding: Design phase funded through ATF4e

- Delivery scope: 2,670 metres of upgraded path and 8 improved crossings
- Programme: Construction January 2028 – August 2028
- Estimated cost: £2,900,000
- Outcome: A continuous, upgraded active-travel route between Buckden and Hinchingsbrooke completed by August 2028

Wishing you well,

Martin

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