

Cllrs Lorna Dupré and Mark Inskip

MONTHLY REPORT OCTOBER 2026

CHATTERIS WIND FARM APPLICATION

Planning applications are being developed by Swedish firm Vattenfall for two wind farms, one at Redmere with the East Cambridgeshire section between Lark Bank and Shippea Hill, and the other between Chatteris, Somersham and Mepal.

These applications are National Strategic Infrastructure Project applications, so they will be determined by the Government through the Planning Inspectorate, not by local councillors. Vattenfall expects to submit its projects to the Planning Inspectorate in Autumn 2027.

Links to the site boundary map, Planning Inspectorate website, and Environmental Impact Assessment Scoping Report for the Chatteris site are available at the Chatteris link below.

Application stages

There are six stages to a National Strategic Infrastructure Project application:

- Pre-application
- Acceptance
- Pre-examination
- Examination
- Recommendation
- Decision

We are currently in the pre-application stage.

Pre-application stage

Anyone can get involved in the pre-application stage. It is an opportunity to:

- find out more about the project and how it might impact the local area
- ask questions and raise any concerns with the applicant
- influence the project as it evolves. At this stage the applicant can listen to the concerns raised and consider amending the project before they send their application to the Planning Inspectorate.

At this stage the application has not been submitted to the Planning Inspectorate so anyone who wants to get involved and have their say will need to contact the applicant and respond to any engagement and/ or consultation that the applicant carries out.

Open events

Three open events are scheduled this month, all from 4:00 to 8:00PM:

- Tuesday 13 October, Feltwell Royal British Legion Hall, 6 Long Lane, Feltwell, Thetford IP26 4BJ
- Wednesday 14 October, Mepal Village Hall, School Lane, Mepal CB6 2AJ
- Thursday 15 October, Littleport Leisure Community Centre, Camel Road Littleport CB6 1EW

Further events will follow in early 2027 when more detailed information, including visualisations, will be available.

<https://www.vattenfall.co.uk/our-projects/chatteris/>

<https://www.vattenfall.co.uk/our-projects/redmere/>

ELEAN BUSINESS PARK DATA CENTRE

SWI group, an alternative investment company, are advertising plans to build a hyperscale data centre at Elean Business Park. Permission was granted for a much smaller data centre on land within the existing the Elean Business Park in 2008 and again in 2011. Early stage plans have been submitted by a utility company to cable up the data centre site to Histon and Impington via Haddenham, Aldreth and Cottenham. There is no planning permission for a large hyperscale data centre and no new planning application has been submitted.

History of the data centre permission

In 2008 East Cambridgeshire District Council granted outline planning permission (07/01429/OUM) for a data centre on land on Elean Business Park south of the straw burning plant. It was not built, so permission ran out.

The applicants reapplied fifteen years ago, in 2011, and the renewed application (11/00452/OUM) was granted permission at the end of August 2011. The applicants then arranged for a minor piece of work to be carried out on the site. Under planning law, this counts as beginning the development, and means the planning permission is now permanent. As long as the applicants are intending to build the same thing they have permission for, they do not have to renew their application ever again.

No-one has yet come forward to build a data centre here in the fifteen years since the outline permission was granted.

Details of the buildings, offices, parking and landscaping were approved by the district council in a 'reserved matters' application (22/00580/RMM) in 2022. Those details had to be consistent with the original 2008 permission. If the applicants wanted to build something larger than was approved in 2008 they would need to put in a new planning application. That would have to be publicised and people given the opportunity to object.

The current advertisement

International investors SWI Group have recently advertised a hyperscale 330MW data centre at the Elean Business Park, with further opportunities to reach 530MW capacity. Even 330MW is well over three times the size of the existing approved data centre plans. They have not applied for, and do not have permission for, a data centre of this size. If they wish to build this, they will need fresh planning permission.

The Government recently decided that large data centres would be classed as Critical National Infrastructure, and applications would be decided not by councils but by the Secretary of State under the National Strategic Infrastructure Project process (like solar farms or incinerators or reservoirs). The government has also announced AI Growth Zones for new data centres in Cumbria and the north east, Scotland and North Wales. There is no AI Growth Zone in Cambridgeshire.

A fresh application for a larger data centre would go through that government process, not through the council. But no such application has been made to date, whatever SWI Group are advertising.

Can the existing permission be overturned?

Technically, there is a process for a planning permission to be revoked <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/sn00905/>

The council or the Secretary of State can revoke or modify a planning permission, but it has been made clear that such a step can only be justified in exceptional circumstances and if the original decision is judged to be grossly wrong. Such a decision could be challenged by the applicant, and if permission were revoked the council would have to pay compensation.

Electrical connection

The existing site only has around 30MW of power available. Early stage plans have recently been submitted by Matrix Group to connect the Elean Business Park data centre site by means of new electrical cabling. The intention is for this to come from Histon and Impington through Cottenham to the substation at Aldreth, then from Aldreth through Haddenham to the Elean Business Park.

No route or timetable has yet been confirmed for this piece of work. It does not require planning permission because it is a utility installation, and the county council is required by law to allow Matrix Group access to the highways network to do this piece of work. It is not clear whether this project is only to support the approved plans or whether this is also to enable a larger development. Unfortunately, it will be huge, lengthy, and disruptive.

Lorna has written to the County Council to check their understanding of whether the forthcoming electrical connection will enable SWI Group it to meet its 530MW target, or the 330MW capacity figure, or something else.

INCLUSIVE PLAY

Following a motion proposed by Cllr Chika Akinwale (Lib Dem, Ely North) and seconded by Lorna, a new Inclusive Playground Strategy and accompanying toolkit have been developed. They were approved by the District Council's Finance and Assets Committee on Thursday 24 September following independent audits of playgrounds across the district.

The work aims to make outdoor play more accessible and enjoyable for all children, including those with disabilities, wheelchair users and children with special educational needs. The council commissioned specialist organisation PiPA Play (Plan Inclusive Play Areas) to assess 23 council-managed playgrounds and 15 parish council playgrounds.

The audits found that many playgrounds already have good access through pathways, gates and surfacing, but identified opportunities to introduce more inclusive play equipment, sensory features, wheelchair-accessible activities and better places for children and families to spend time together.

Alongside improving its own playgrounds, the council will also work with developers, housing associations and parish councils to encourage inclusive design from the earliest stages of new playground projects.

To support local councils and open space providers when planning their play areas, the council has created an Inclusive Playground toolkit with practical help and advice, including a step-by-step guide to assist them in reviewing, developing and enhancing accessible play spaces.

The District Council has already established an Inclusive Play and Open Spaces Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Fund, to which local councils and community organisations can apply for support with accessibility improvements and new inclusive play projects.

The Strategy also includes plans to update information on the council's website so that parents and carers can more easily find playgrounds with accessible features and facilities.

DEVELOPER FUNDS USED FOR COUNCIL PROJECTS

East Cambs District Council has agreed to use more than £778,000 of funding from Cambridgeshire Horizons to plug financial holes in two of its own schemes.

£405,000 will be used by the council's own in-house company East Cambs Trading Company to support delivery of 100 per cent affordable housing at Arbour Square and reduce the company's financial shortfalls.

£373,107 will be used to install solar panels on car park canopies at the council's new crematorium, increasing the soaring cost of this scheme still further.

Given that the funds were required to be spent and work completed by May 2027 to fulfil the conditions of the funders, it would have been impossible at this short notice to have found alternative uses for the money, which would then have to be returned.

Background note

Cambridgeshire Horizons Limited was a publicly-funded growth company formed as the Cambridge Infrastructure Partnership in 2004 to coordinate large-scale housing development and infrastructure across the Cambridgeshire sub-region. The company involved Cambridgeshire County Council and local district councils.

Active operations and staff functions wound down around 2011 as central government funding concluded, and its principal business concluded by 2021 following the distribution of remaining residual monies and asset wind-downs to local authorities, such as East Cambridgeshire, Fenland, and Huntingdonshire district councils. The corporate legal entity was kept dormant simply to manage returning loans and legacy investments.

DEVELOPER FUNDS USED FOR COUNCIL PROJECTS

The Low Income Families Tracker software used by South Cambridgeshire District Council is now being used in East Cambridgeshire to identify households that may be eligible for Pension Credit.

Pension Credit tops up pension income and can help with day to day living costs. The benefit is worth on average £4,300 per year and residents may be eligible to claim Pension Credit even if they own their home or have savings. East Cambridgeshire District Council has written to eligible people in the district, offering assistance to apply.

For further information

- contact the council's advice team, or attend one of its drop-in sessions (Monday to Friday, 10:00AM-4:00PM at the district council offices in Ely

- drop-in sessions are also held 10:00AM -noon at Soham library each Wednesday, Littleport library each Friday, and Haddenham community hub, the first Tuesday of each month
- If you are unable to attend the drop-in sessions a home visit may be possible: call the council on 01353 665555 and ask to speak to an advisor, or email supporthub@eastcambs.gov.uk

For more information, and to check eligibility, visit www.gov.uk/pension-credit or apply by phone on the Pension Credit claim line 0800 99 1234.

The Low Income Family Tracker is a tool used to identify people who are eligible for benefit support who are not currently receiving it. The LIFT programme is delivered in partnership with Cambridgeshire County Council through the Crisis and Resilience Fund, with funding from the UK Government.

ELY MUSEUM LEASE EXTENDED

East Cambridgeshire District Council has approved a lease extension for the historic Old Gaol building housing Ely Museum.

The council has agreed to extend Ely Museum's lease until March 2125, providing the long-term certainty needed for the museum to pursue major funding opportunities and future investment.

The council currently leases the building to Ely Museum at a peppercorn rent, and has also previously invested £165,000 in Community Infrastructure Levy funding to support improvements at the museum.

LOCAL PLANNING APPLICATIONS

AWAITING CONSIDERATION OR DECISION

Applications in the Sutton ward awaiting consideration or determination include [Mepal](#)

- **Three Pickerels, Mepal:** single storey function room within garden area to replace temporary marquee (25/01303/FUL)
- **Arthur Rickwood, Chatteris Road, Mepal:** extension to warehouse, repositioning of septic tank, associated works and landscaping (26/00481/FUL)

[Sutton](#)

- **20 The Orchards:** part two storey and part single story extension to rear (26/00143/FUL)
- **19 Link Lane:** single storey rear extension with 2 no. new rooflights to existing roof (26/00939/FUL)

- **124 The Row:** single and two-storey rear extensions and partial demolition of existing garage (26/00825/FUL)
- **95 High Street:** demolish existing bungalow and replace with new detached two-story self-build dwelling (26/00797/FUL)
- **Units 5 And 6 Elean Business Park:** change of use from storage and distribution to general industrial use (26/00642/FUM)
- **3 Peacock Chase:** loft conversion, single storey rear extension, internal alterations and outbuilding (26/00103/FUL)
- **126 High Street:** conversion of outbuildings to habitable space and demolition of conservatory and existing outbuilding; external alterations (26/00076/FUL)
- **3 The Row:** change of use of part of adjoining orchard to garden (25/01235/FUL)

DECIDED

Applications in the Sutton ward which have recently been decided include (all permitted)

- **Land adjacent 43 Mepal Road:** signs and flagpoles for housing sales centre (26/00755/ADN) **PERMITTED**
- **12 Sutton Road:** single-storey porch (26/00514/FUL) **WITHDRAWN**

OCTOBER MEETINGS

- Wednesday 7 October: Planning Committee
- Thursday 15 October: Full Council
- Tuesday 20 October: Audit Committee
- Wednesday 21 October: Planning Committee

MEET YOUR COUNCILLORS

We will be at Joy Bistro, 65 High Street, Sutton on Monday 5 October and Monday 2 November at 6:30-7:30PM. Between surgeries, residents can continue to contact us by email, Facebook, or phone.

Cllrs Lorna Dupré and Mark Inskip

District Councillors for the Sutton ward
(Mepal, Sutton, Wentworth, and Witcham)