

# THE ELY GROUP OF INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARDS



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Greater Cambridge Local Plan  
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Cambourne Business Park  
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Cambridge  
CB23 6EA

Our ref: AN/tlr

Your ref:

16<sup>th</sup> December 2021

Dear Sirs

## **Great Cambridge Local Plan**

I write to represent the following three Internal Drainage Boards (IDBs) that fall within your local plan area:-

Old West IDB  
Swaffham IDB  
Waterbeach Level IDB

Details of these Boards and District plans can be found on our website at [www.elydrainageboards.co.uk](http://www.elydrainageboards.co.uk).

These Boards are concerned on the impact new development will have, not only on our own drains, but also on the main river systems that flow through the fens.

Most of our area lies below sea level. Consequently, flood and land drainage infrastructure is crucial in enabling surrounding agricultural land, businesses, communities and habitats to prosper.

The last major flood in the fens was in 1947, following which there was major government investment to improve flood protection in the area. Throughout the 1950s and 60s, rivers were deepened, embankments raised, new channels built and pumping stations constructed or improved. We still benefit from these assets today. However, they are coming to or are at the end of their design life, and major investment will be required not only to protect from the effects of climate change, but also to just provide the same standard of protection afforded to the area today.

Flood Risk Management Authorities in the area, led by the Environment Agency, have developed the Future Fens – Flood Risk Management Project, which will consider what the future of the fens might look like.

The project is looking at the adaptive approach needed to manage this catchment, to balance the needs of people, the environment and agriculture, to ensure the right legacy is created over the next 100 years. This approach will identify the decisions that need to be taken now and those that will need to be taken in the future. This will result in changes to the current flood risk and drainage activities, coupled with significant investment.

Whilst the majority of the local plan area is outside of the fens, all of the water run-off from the development areas will flow through the fenland rivers and into the sea.

The decision as a Council that you take today, should consider that the standard of protection in the fens may be a lot lower in the future, due to sea level rise and climate change. Water from development sites needs to be managed on-site to ensure there is no detriment to areas further downstream. Future new settlements and infrastructure projects should help to invest in flood risk assets in the fens, as all sites will have a direct or indirect benefit from the fenland system.

The Board's systems have no residual capacity to accept direct water discharges from developments. Our pumping stations have limited capacity and are ageing assets that require refurbishment or replacement. However, due to current government policy, grant aid funding for this work is severely limited. We also need to consider the outcomes of the above report, which may mean investment may not be viable, unless policy changes or partnership funding is obtained. This is why it is vital that water management is given careful consideration in the plan.

We today see the effects of climate change, with more incidents of intense rainfall in short periods of time, putting ever increasing pressure on our assets, from water not only from within the Districts, but also water flowing from outside the Districts into them for our pumps to deal with.

If we wish to continue to expect the same levels of flood protection in the future, new development and infrastructure must not add to the burden, as well as local authorities and developers helping to invest in our flood assets for the benefit of future generations and the prosperity of the area.

Yours faithfully,

A large black rectangular redaction box covering the signature area.

A Newton  
Engineer