

1. Save Wenny Meadow Resource Pack: Introduction



Thank you for your interest in the “Save Wenny Meadow” campaign, which aims to save this beautiful parcel of land from planned development. This information pack contains some background information about the proposed development, and how we are approaching our campaign to preserve the meadow.

When the planning application is submitted, we have a window of just 21 days to register our objections. Letters from individuals to Fenland District Council will be most powerful, but we’re also organising a more general petition in the meantime too.

Because lots of different letters carry more weight, we’re including here some information about the sorts of points you might include in your letter when you write it. We’re encouraging people to draft a letter now, to have it ready to send when the time is right.

When the full planning application has been launched, we’ll also create a guide letter, with the appropriate references, which could be printed off, signed and submitted as it is. However, we can’t draft this until the plans have been submitted. Watch this space!

2. Save Wenny Meadow Resource Pack: Background

In July 2016, developers Cannon Kirk undertook a local consultation exercise, when they outlined plans to build on several fields to the North-East of Wenny Corner. The master plan has been accepted by Fenland District Council, and the process of getting planning permissions is about to begin. The proposed development looks something like this:



The area outlined in red is the parcel of land we refer to as “Wenny Meadow”. This is a particularly special area – enriched with mature trees and hedgerows, home to many species of wildlife, and a site enjoyed by many Chatteris residents for walking.

The current plan is to retain roughly one third of the meadow as managed open space, but we are campaigning for the plans to be revised to preserve the meadow in its entirety. We believe that truncating the meadow, carving access roads through it, and building on the remainder will destroy the essence of this beautiful natural amenity.

The Fenland Local Plan cannot be reviewed until 2019, but we can stress to the planning committee that Chatteris needs a nature reserve, and we would ultimately like to see an amendment to the **Fenland Local Plan** to preserve this piece of land as Designated Local Green Space.

We feel that the lack of natural green space is a very strong argument for objecting to this development, and have identified several key policy points which support this view. The next section explains those points, which are most likely to carry weight with the planning committee.

3. Save Wenny Meadow: Key policy points

- The **Cambridgeshire Green Infrastructure Strategy 2011** states: that 'Chatteris is deficient in all standards of Accessible Natural Green Space' and 'at the moment there is a shortage of open space compared to the size/population in Chatteris'.
- Wenny Road Meadow fits every criterion for Designated Local Green Space as laid out in the **National Planning Policy Framework**:
 - reasonable proximity to the community it serves
 - demonstrably special to a local community, having beauty, historic significance, recreational value, tranquillity and richness in wildlife
 - is local in character and not an extensive tract of land
- The **Fenland Local Plan** is self-contradictory with respect to The Meadow, since Policy LP1 states: "at the heart of the strategy for Fenland is a desire to deliver sustainable growth...that brings benefits for all sectors of the community – for existing residents as much as for new ones". We can demonstrate that The Meadow is precious to many residents in Chatteris, and that the loss of this amenity would be to the serious detriment of existing residents.

Of course, there are many other grounds for objection. Concerns about destruction of trees, loss of habitat for wildlife, traffic safety, drainage and other infrastructure provision are just a few. We hope that individuals will make their concerns clear to the council in their letters.

4. Save Wenny Meadow: Additional points

Access and traffic

The proposed access roads from Wenny Road are unsuitable, due to the curvature of the road, and would require the destruction of many trees to create sufficient "splay". Also, the additional burden of the traffic from this development would put further pressure on the junction onto Ireton's Way, and make access out of Cricketers Way more difficult.

Historical/archaeological significance

The meadow is characterised by the distinctive "ridge and furrow" landscape: a vestige of medieval farming practices. In the screening report (ref *F_YR16_0093_SC-EIA_SCREENING_REPORT-226962*), the archaeological survey revealed that "archaeology dating from the medieval period was predominantly evidenced by the extensive ridge and furrow earthworks that are preserved in fields 1 and 2." (Field 1 quoted there corresponds to "the meadow".)

Destruction of the "essence" of the meadow

The proposed development plans to retain approximately one third of the meadow, but will build on the remainder, and an access road will run adjacent to the remaining

“informal green space”. Truncating the meadow in this fashion would be a travesty. The long views and expansive vistas are what define the beauty of this extraordinary space. To leave a small portion which will be bordered by houses and an access road would deprive the town of a valuable natural amenity.

Lack of current natural space in Chatteris

The meadow is the only area of natural green space within easy walking distance of the town centre. Chatteris residents, despite being surrounded by open countryside, do not enjoy an abundance of places to walk, especially those who seek tranquillity and wish to immerse themselves in nature. The old railway line is a good 20-minute walk from eg Cricketers Way, and is often plagued by quad-bikers, and is therefore not safe for children and animals. The children’s recreations grounds at Wenny and Furrowfields do not afford a peaceful environment. The proposed Tithe Road development will also destroy the character of the footpath which runs to the south west of the town (Dean Drove, part of the Chatteris Circular Walk). The only recourse for walkers who live on the east of the town will be to take their lives in their hands and attempt to cross the bypass to reach the footpaths on the land farther to the east of the town (between New Road and Langwood Hill Drove).

Somersham has a charming nature reserve, March has the riverside walks, Doddington the “pocket park” but Chatteris has nothing.

Drainage

The site is far from ideal in terms of drainage. The meadow and surrounding fields, despite being very beautiful, are frequently waterlogged after even moderate rainfall, and the drains which lead to the larger watercourses are already at capacity.

Demonstrated amenity value

The ‘Save Wenny Road Meadow’ Facebook page already has nearly 300 members. *Please explain how you use the meadow – how many people you know who also enjoy it.*

Wildlife

The development will have a devastating impact on the local wildlife. If the meadow can be preserved, at least there will be one area left for them – they need somewhere to go as their natural habitat is constantly shrinking.

We know that the meadow is home to Long Eared Bats, Tawny Owls, Barn Owls, Kestrels, Smooth Snakes, Green Woodpeckers, Hedgehogs, Foxes, Rabbits, Shrews, Voles, Deer, Toads.... *What species have you seen there?*

Health benefits

Recent government guidelines recommend a brisk daily walk for a healthy lifestyle. A tranquil walk amidst the natural environment offers many health benefits, and is a far cry from the slender walkway along the bypass proposed by the developers. If the

Tithe development goes ahead, the population of Chatteris will exceed 13,000, and the need for open space will be even more acute.

Impact on the Cannon Kirk development

To preserve the meadow in its entirety would reduce the number of houses on the overall development by perhaps one quarter, but what would be saved for the town would be an asset of immeasurable value.

Ownership and ongoing management of the meadow

The meadow would be a valuable and convenient amenity for residents of the new Tithe development and the proposed Cannon Kirk development, so we would propose that the developers purchase the land and gift it to the town, under a Section 106 planning condition.

Footbridge?

If, in the worst-case scenario, the development does go ahead with the proposed attenuation of the meadow, we would urge the planning department to insist that the developers are required to erect a footbridge across the bypass to connect with the public footpaths to the east of the town.