

MEPAL PARISH COUNCIL

Clerk: Mrs Karen Peck, email: clerk@mepalparish.org

Chairman: Mrs Lorna Williams

NOTICE OF MEETING: Mepal Parish Council - Full Council

TIME: 18.30

DATE: 25th March 2026

VENUE: Mepal Community Pavilion

All members of the Council are hereby summoned to attend for the purposes of considering and resolving the business to be transacted at the meeting as set out below.

MEMBERS	5
VACANCIES	2
QUORUM	3

Minutes

Present: Councillor Williams (LW) Chair, Bradney (TB), Gould (RG), Coe (JC) County Councillor Dupre (LD) and four members of the public.

250326/1 CHAIRMANS WELCOME

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked them for attending.

250326/2 TO RECORD APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Councillor Hunter - prior commitments. Apologies accepted.

District Councillor Inskip - work commitments.

250326/3 MEMBERS' DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

250326/4 TO RECEIVE STATEMENT FROM CAMBRIDGESHIRE CONSTABULARY AND CAMBRIDGESHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL IN REGARD TO MEPAL FOOTPATH 3 AND 7

Cambridgeshire Police Statement -

Police have seen the statement made by Mark Peck from the Cambridgeshire County Council which outlines the rules on the land and where the public may or may not go.

In relation to Trespass, it is common knowledge that this is a civil offence so Police cannot take action in relation to this. However, this does not stop other agencies from taking action in relation to trespass.

In relation to fencing being removed from the field, this is criminal damage. It is no different from removing a picket fence from someone's front garden of their house. This is an offence the Police will investigate and prosecute if evidence allows.

In relation to the removal/vandalism of signage put up by the landowners, highways and county council this is also criminal damage. This is an offence the Police will investigate and prosecute if evidence allows.

In relation to fly tipping/garden waste being thrown into the field, this is also a criminal offence under the Environmental Protection Act 1990. This may lead to action being taken by Police and potentially the Environmental Agency. Garden waste also falls under this, there may be a viewpoint that garden waste is biodegradable, but this is not a defence. Put simply, it is exactly the same as if you were to dump your garden waste in someone's front garden. In addition to this, it is also an offence to dump on public land without permission so it should not be done at all on this land.

I would implore that the Mepal community come together to support the Veal's in their new venture with this plot of land. It states that they're using this for sheep grazing. Mepal being in quite a rural area of East Cambridgeshire, is ideal for what the Veals which to use this land for. Looking more nationally in relation to supporting British farmers, this is a good opportunity to support local sheep farmers in Cambridgeshire. In addition to this, having sheep in the field can make this appealing for families during country walks and making sure we look after the field can overall keep Mepal looking visually appealing, especially as we move closer to summer.

Cambridgeshire County Council Statement

The field in question, owned by Mr Veal is crossed by two Public Rights of Way:

- Mepal Footpath 3
- Mepal Footpath 7

A Public Right of Way is a way over which all members of the public have right of passage, for the purpose of passing and repassing.

If there is use other than for passing and repassing or a purpose reasonably incidental thereto, a user exceeds his entitlement to be on the land and becomes a trespasser.

It is perfectly acceptable for a walker to take a dog with them along a Public Footpath. But the entitlement to take a dog along a public right of way is confined to the line of the path and exists while the dog is accompanying its owner or keeper. Thus, if a dog is allowed to run around off the path trespass is committed against the holder of the land.

Specific to the field:

Mepal Footpath 3 runs in a straight diagonal line from the kissing gate at the end of Brangehill Lane to the kissing gate south of The Three Pickerels.

Mepal Footpath 7 runs from the kissing gate south of The Three Pickerels, along the top of the flood bank, to pass under the A142 road bridge

Both these Public Footpaths are marked out with waymark posts, and a legal right of access is only through following the line of these two public rights of way.

Please note there is no Public Right of Way running directly between the kissing gate at the end of Brangehill Lane and the point Mepal Footpath 7 passes under the A142 road bridge.

Any intentional deviance away from the line of these two Public Footpaths or resulting damage that may be caused would be a matter of trespass against the landowner.

Mark Peck, Public Rights of Way Officer, East Cambridgeshire & Fenland

The landowners were present and stated that on inspecting the land today, to establish if it was dry enough to roll, they had found further damage to property. This will be reported to the Police to progress.

The Parish Council fully support the above statements and would like to ask that anyone wishing to use footpath 3 and 7 (and indeed all footpaths) abide by the designated route as identified on the official footpaths map and be respectful of landowner's rights, livestock and wildlife.

The Official Mepal Footpaths Map will be shared online and, on all Parish, owned noticeboards in due course.

250326/5

TO RECEIVE DISTRICT AND COUNTY COUNCILLOR REPORTS

County Council and District Reports are available in full on the Parish Council website.

LD highlighted LGR updates, Household Support Fund cuts and Crisis Resilience Fund.

The Public Spaces Protection Order - Vehicle Related Anti-Social Behaviour Consultation had also been approved, and it is likely to be implemented in Summer 2026.

250326/6

TO SIGN AND APPROVE MINUTES OF MEETINGS OF: 21st January 2026

The Parish Council minutes of 21st January 2026 were unanimously **approved**.

Proposed LW Seconded TB

250326/7

OPEN FORUM FOR PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (15 minutes)

Members of the public may make only one address to the Council of no more than three minute' duration and only concerning topics on the agenda. A question shall not require a response at the meeting nor start a debate on the question. The chairman of the meeting may direct that a written or oral response be given. A person shall raise his hand when requesting to speak and stand when speaking (except when a person has a disability or is likely to suffer discomfort). The chairman of the meeting may at any time permit a person to be seated when speaking. A person who speaks at a meeting shall direct their comments to the Chairman of the meeting. At the close of this item, members of the public will no longer be permitted to address the Council unless invited to do so by the Chairman.

A member of the public who left a message at the door and did not wish to enter the meeting shared concerns on Laurel Close parking.

250326/8

COUNCIL BUSINESS

- a) To receive update on traffic survey and agree to extend the closing date to 15th April due to low level of response
Due to the low response to date, the Parish Council **approved** unanimously to extend the closing date to 15th April 2026. Motion carried.

Proposed LW Seconded TB

- b) To note Council position on Rural Exception sites for affordable housing in Mepal
The Parish Council don't feel they have a mandate to progress this currently as the process of the development of the neighbourhood plan highlighted concerns about building new homes on 'green' sites in Mepal and also concern about the number of empty houses (social housing for rental) in Mepal with seemingly no agency by Sanctuary Housing to bring these up to standard to allow occupation.

The Council understand we are now into double figures in terms of empty rental social housing, and our mandate was not to engage in any new house build, until this position was resolved. There was also a degree of scepticism regarding what 'affordable' housing meant. The community response to the Brick Lane application to develop the site off Brick Lane by proposing the construction of 55 houses was very clearly against any new developments and as the Plan states, we support infill plots but not larger developments outside the development window. Engagement with the ACRE Rural Housing Enabler would go against the spirit of the plan.

The Parish Council took resolution on Wednesday 25th March 2026 that they wished not to engage due to reason detailed above. Statement **approved** unanimously.

Proposed LW Seconded TB

- c) To discuss and approve CAPALC Renewal 2026-27
The renewal cost is £ 504.61 and the Motion was **approved** unanimously.

Proposed LW Seconded TB

- d) To note the Parish Council are aware that the residents of Laurel Close have received a polite warning in relation to vehicles being parked inconsiderately and illegally.
The Parish Council wish to note they support the efforts of the Cambridgeshire Police and ask residents to follow the advice given.

250326/9

PLANNING TO DISCUSS

26/00018/FUL 17 Bridge Road, Mepal

Conservation, repair and partial demolition of existing grouping of redundant agricultural storage structures followed by localised elements of new build combining to create a leisure/accommodation facility.

Mepal Parish Council has reviewed the planning application for the redevelopment and conversion of the derelict buildings opposite the Three Pickerels into a 12-bedroom leisure accommodation facility. The Council is broadly supportive of the proposal and welcomes the opportunity to see the site improved, given that the existing buildings are in a derelict state and currently present a visual and environmental detractor within the village. The Parish Council recognises that the development forms part of a wider effort to ensure the long-term commercial viability of the site and the associated local business, which plays an important role in the community and local economy.

The Parish Council has attempted to review the amended planning application documents. However, the amendments are extensive, highly technical and presented in a level of detail that is extremely difficult for the Parish Council and members of the public to reasonably assess.

The volume and complexity of the material make it challenging for non-specialists to properly understand the implications of the proposed changes. The Parish Council is therefore concerned that the level of technical detail may limit meaningful public scrutiny.

Accordingly, the Parish Council confirms that its original comments and objections remain unchanged and should continue to be considered when determining the application.

UPDATES AND DECISIONS

25/01344/FUL 3 School Lane, Mepal - pending consideration

Construction of 1 no. detached self-build dwelling and extension to garden of N0.3

F/YR25/0905/F Northwest of Mepal AD Plant, Iretons Way, Chatteris - pending consideration

Construct an extension to existing anaerobic digester plant including 8x digesters, 4x post digesters with 4x technical buildings, 2x pump buildings and 10x feed hoppers, 1 x gas entry unit, 2 x process gas upgrade area, 2x separate bunkers, 1 x straw processing buildings, 1 x dry digestate storage building, 2 x flare stacks, 1 x site office and 2 x balancing ponds (part retrospective)

25/01303/FUL The Three Pickerals, 19 Bridge Road, Mepal - pending consideration

Erection of a single storey function room with the garden area of an existing hotel to replace temporary marquee

25/00421/OUT Horticultural Site between 8 and 14 Bridge Road, Mepal - pending consideration

Subdivision of an existing horticultural site to create a single self-build residential plot while retaining the remainder of the land for horticultural use - Pending consideration

250326/10

FINANCE

a) To approve payments and Bank Reconciliation up to 28.02.2026

b) Online and Income:

January	
National Broadband Network	£42.00
Lloyds Card - materials, parts and supplies	£174.64
British Gas - gas	£240.11
N Power - street light energy	£77.42
HMRC Wages and Expenses	£3746.63
Unity Bank Service Charge	£6.00
CPD Electric - Fire Alarm service	£176.00
Pest force - pest control pavilion	£78.00
February	
HMRC Wages and Expenses	£3839.69
Wave - water pavilion	£72.29
Wave - water allotment	£19.44
National Broadband - pavilion	£42.00
Lloyds - Card Various	£274.81
N Power - street light energy	£75.25
British Gas - pavilion	£247.51
Unity Bank - Service Charge	£6.00
Income	
OVO - Fit	£2707.34
Sutton Rangers - fees	£900.00
Pavilion Hire	£42.00
Allotment Fees	£20.00

All payment, income and bank reconciliations were unanimously approved. Motion carried.

Proposed LW Seconded TB

250326/11

DIARY DATES - 6th May 2026 6.30pm Annual Parish Meeting, following by Annual Meeting of the Parish Council 7pm (or immediately after the conclusion of APM)

Meeting closed at 19.20

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Karen Peck
Clerk & Responsible Finance Officer
Mepal Parish Council

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Lorna Williams
Chair
Mepal Parish Council

Issued: To be signed at the next meeting of the Parish Council, in draft format until the meeting.