



South Holland District Council

Review of

An Overview and Scrutiny Review undertaken by the Derelict and Untidy Sites
Task Group on behalf of the Policy Development Panel

10th April 2026

Contents

1. Introduction
2. Scope of the Review
3. Membership of Task Group
4. Background to Review
5. Method of Review
6. Summary of Findings
7. Conclusions and Recommendations
8. Financial implications of recommendations
9. Main Sources of Information and individuals contacted during the Review

1. **Introduction**

At the 23 September 2025 Policy Development Panel meeting, a discussion ensued around the potential formation of a new Task Group with the proposed aim of scrutinising the Derelict and Untidy Sites Policy.

The Derelict and Untidy Sites Policy was introduced by South Holland District Council in 2022 to address unsightly and neglected properties across the district. The policy aimed to proactively engage with landowners, provide guidance, and escalate enforcement where necessary.

However, at the Policy Development Panel meeting on 23 September 2025, concerns were raised about the policy's effectiveness, duplication of existing powers, and lack of demonstrable outcomes.

2. **Scope of the Review**

To assess the effectiveness, relevance, and future role of the Derelict and Untidy Sites Policy, and to make recommendations to the Policy Development Panel on whether the policy should be:

- Retired entirely;
- Retained and revised;

Or retained solely as an informative guidance document.

3. **Membership of Task Group**

Councillor David Ashby,
Councillor Margaret Geaney,
Councillor Mark Le Sage,
Councillor Paul Barnes,
Councillor J Reynolds

4. **Background to Review**

That the policy had originally been introduced to provide a structured approach to addressing untidy or neglected sites across the district in the post-COVID period.

The policy had proven largely duplicative of existing statutory powers already available to Planning, Environmental Health, Anti-Social Behaviour, and Building Control teams.

Those services routinely deployed legal mechanisms independently of the policy, which had not enhanced enforcement capability.

The policy did not fill a gap in service delivery or governance, nor did it introduce any new powers or frameworks beyond existing procedures. Its presence had not demonstrably improved outcomes or operational efficiency and was considered hollow in practical application.

- From a legislative standpoint, robust powers already existed under:
 - Section 215 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990
 - Environmental Protection Act 1990
 - Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014

These powers provided effective routes for intervention without the need for a supplementary policy.

Members were informed that if the Council wished to acquire a property or site, it could develop its own business case independently of the policy.

Councillors agreed that a task group should be established to assess whether the policy should be retired, retained, or repurposed as an informative document.

The signpost document (if implemented) would also link to a robust and detailed reporting mechanism where PMP and members could track progress with the relevant department.

5. Method of Review

The task group would:

1. Review the original aims and objectives of the Derelict and Untidy Sites Policy (2022).
2. Identify overlaps or duplication with existing council powers, departments, or enforcement mechanisms.
3. Assess the policy's value as an informative tool.
4. Make clear if the policy should be retained and revised or retired entirely.

In effecting the review, the Group took evidence from the officers listed in section 9.

Exclusions

The task group will not consider private disputes over land or property unless they fall within the remit of the policy.

The task group will not review unrelated planning or enforcement policies.

6. Summary of Findings

Members of the Group unanimously felt that the current 25-page policy was overly long, technical, and not user-friendly with the Group's preference being the production of a practical guidance document, not a policy.

7. Conclusions and Recommendations

The Task Group agreed the following recommendations.

- That the existing Derelict & Untidy Sites Policy should be retired and replaced with a robust guidance signpost document.
- A concise 2–3-page Member and Parish Council Guidance Signpost Document would be developed, covering:
 - How to identify relevant issues
 - What information to gather
 - Which service to contact
 - Realistic expectations of timescales
 - Links to public reporting methods

The guidance signpost document would be for internal use only.

This new guidance signpost document would enable Members and Parish Councillors to report issues from derelict and untidy sites to the direct department, officers would direct enquiries internally and provide regularly updates to the Member/Parish Council who had reported the issue.

That the Policy Development Panel agree to the Derelict and Untidy Sites Policy being retired and recommend such to Cabinet for approval.

8. Financial Implications of Recommendations

None

9. Main Sources of Information and individuals contacted during the Review

The Strategic and Operational Property Manager
The Planning Enforcement Team Leader
The Group Manager – Building Control
The Environment Protection Team Leader
Assistant Director – General Funds Assets