

Central Lincolnshire Policy S63 Local Green Space Evidence Report

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1. Introduction

- 1.1. The Central Lincolnshire Local Plan is being updated since the first Local Plan for Central Lincolnshire, an area covering the districts of City of Lincoln, North Kesteven and West Lindsey, was adopted in April 2017.
- 1.2. This Evidence Report (which is one of a collection) provides background information and justification for Policy S63, which relates to Local Green Spaces.

2. Policy Context

National Policy and Guidance

- 2.1. Since the Central Lincolnshire Plan was adopted the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was updated in July 2018 with subsequent additional changes being published in February 2019.

- 2.2. Paragraph's 99 and 100 of the NPPF specifically relate to Local Green Spaces. Paragraph 99 states:

“The designation of land as Local Green Space through local and neighbourhood plans allows communities to identify and protect green areas of particular importance to them. Designating land as Local Green Space should be consistent with the local planning of sustainable development and complement investment in sufficient homes, jobs and other essential services. Local Green Spaces should only be designated when a plan is prepared or updated, and be capable of enduring beyond the end of the plan period.”

- 2.3. Paragraph 100 goes on to set out the criteria to be used when designating Local Green Space:

“The Local Green Space designation should only be used where the green space is:
a) in reasonably close proximity to the community it serves;
b) demonstrably special to a local community and holds a particular local significance, for example because of its beauty, historic significance, recreational value (including as a playing field), tranquillity or richness of its wildlife; and
c) local in character and is not an extensive tract of land.”

- 2.4. Paragraph 101 states:

“Policies for managing development within a Local Green Space should be consistent with those for Green Belts.”

- 2.5. The Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) was first introduced in 2014 which offers 'live' government guidance. The PPG provides guidance to help in the implementation of policy in the NPPF.

- 2.6. The PPG includes a section on Local Green Space, providing additional guidance in relation to the NPPF. The following paragraphs are particularly relevant:

“Designating any Local Green Space will need to be consistent with local planning for sustainable development in the area. In particular, plans must identify sufficient land in suitable locations to meet identified development needs and the Local Green Space

designation should not be used in a way that undermines this aim of plan making.”

Paragraph: 007 Reference ID: 37-007-20140306

“Local Green Spaces may be designated where those spaces are demonstrably special to the local community, whether in a village or in a neighbourhood in a town or city.”

Paragraph: 009 Reference ID: 37-009-20140306

Local Policy

- 2.7. The adopted Local Plan contains a specific policy in relation to Local Green Space that designates areas identified on the Policies Map as such. This policy also addresses Important Open Spaces.

Neighbourhood Plans

- 2.8. A neighbourhood plan gives communities direct power to develop a shared vision for their neighbourhood and shape the development and growth of their local area. Many of the made neighbourhood plans across Central Lincolnshire recognise the importance of protecting areas of open space. A number of these Neighbourhood Plans have designated areas of open space as Local Green Spaces, where they meet the criteria set out in the NPPF.

3. Context and Evidence

- 3.1. Open spaces make a significant contribution to local communities and the environment within Central Lincolnshire. Accessible, good quality open spaces provide opportunities for physical exercise and places to meet, impacting positively on health and wellbeing and social cohesion. Open spaces also have environmental benefits, including supporting biodiversity, flood risk management and contributing to landscape and townscape character and the setting of the built environment.
- 3.2. The ability to designate demonstrably special areas of open space as Local Green Space was introduced in the previous version of the NPPF (2012). The adopted Local Plan, therefore, was the first for the area to make such designations. The drafting process for the adopted Local Plan undertook a call for sites for possible Local Green Spaces. As a result of this a thorough and robust appraisal of each site submitted for consideration was undertaken, a significant number of sites were designated as Local Green Space within the adopted Local Plan.
- 3.3. The Local Green Spaces Evidence Paper sets out the methodology that was used to appraise the sites submitted as possible green spaces during the preparation of the adopted local plan. This methodology was also used to appraise the small number of sites suggested during the issues and options consultation. The appraisal process of these suggested sites is also set out within the evidence paper.
- 3.4. Within Central Lincolnshire, in particular in and around the larger settlements, a key issue will be balancing the need for growth with the need for high quality open spaces. Maintaining the Local Green Space designation within the Local Plan will ensure those areas of value to local residents are protected and remain available.

4. Issues and Options Consultation

4.1. The Issues and Options consultation sought respondents' views on whether existing LGS designations should be carried forward, and also whether there were any suggestions for new Local Green Spaces that would meet national policy.

4.2. Question 18a asked "Do you agree that the Local Green Spaces in the 2017 Local Plan should be carried forward in the new Local Plan? If no, please provide details." There were 102 responses to this question, 95 supported the proposal, and 7 disagreed. The additional comments made are set out below:

- Designation at Swaton should be revoked;
- Designations in Neighbourhood Plans should be respected;
- Support for retention of green spaces;
- Any green space policy should be written to ensure that alteration of green spaces to provide flood risk benefits will be supported providing no significant impact on primary use;
- Need to maximise green space and vegetation to help mitigate GHG emissions;
- Various expressions of support;
- There should be greater conservation and protection of existing green belts between towns and villages, along with greater network of foot/cycle paths;
- Designation of Local Green Spaces including land alongside canals and rivers, such as towpaths will not be supported due to potential detrimental impact upon use of canals and rivers;
- Additional sites should be identified;
- Sites should be retained and actively enhanced through good environmental management and added to, to deliver net gain.
- An updated Biodiversity Opportunity Map identifying Nature Recovery networks would be beneficial and ensure NPPF (Para 31) compliance;
- Use wording which ensures that greenspace is usable with accessible points of access;
- There should be opportunities for landowners to challenge proposed/defined Local Green Spaces that do not meet NPPF criteria;
- In some specific cases, biodiversity and public access are incompatible, definition needed for public;
- Green Belts and agricultural set aside strips are considered by dog walkers as commons and shortcuts between formal paths with no, or little, enforcement.

4.3. Question 18b asked "Additional Local Green Spaces. Do you have any suggested additional Local Green Spaces which you think meet national policy criteria, and therefore should be designated?" The responses are set out below.

- A number of general areas identified, including:
 - Trentside River Environs;
 - Southern Woods;
 - Land to the west and east of Sturton by Stow;
 - Orchards in rural villages;
 - Protection to the open countryside between Thurlby and Bassingham;
 - A green wedge needs to be retained between the city and NKDC particularly because of the topography of the area and its unsuitability for housing;
- Ridge and furrow fields should be protected or built on as a last resort.
- A number of specific sites identified, including:

- The Playing field, Ewerby
 - The triangle of land at Chapel Street/ Linwood Road, Market Rasen. Owned by Tesco, would make a good natural garden/orchard area;
 - The space in front of the church in Norton Disney, south of Main street;
 - Protection to the green spaces between Thurlby and Witham St Hughes – specifically to the west of Haddington Road and both sides of Moor Lane.
 - Protection to both sides of River Witham between Thurlby Road Bridge and Old Mill Bridge, Aubourn;
 - Current IOS 'The Croft', Greyingham – map supplied;
 - Specific sites within Fiskerton – map supplied
 - The area known as the 'Hillies' (crossing from Cross O'Cliff Court to Coningsby Crescent
 - Land at the now defunct Canwick Golf Club.
 - Green wedge from Bomber Command, Lincoln to Whitehall farm Bracebridge Heath;
- A review should consider this, especially for the new towns;
 - Should be green corridors/buffer zones surrounding and within all new developments in Heckington;
 - Should be explored in detail with Parish and Town Councils;
 - An updated Biodiversity Opportunity Map that identified Nature Recovery Networks would enable this;
 - Sites identified in Neighbourhood Plans
 - Policy should include (or highlight) lanes or bridleways, as there are many;
 - Create urban green space

5. Proposed Approach in Draft Local Plan

- 5.1. The Draft Local Plan proposes to retain the Local Green Space designation. In order to do so, and provide clarity between the different open space designations, the draft plan has broken adopted policy LP23: Local Green Spaces and other Important Open Spaces down into two separate policies.
- 5.2. The policy within the Draft Local Plan seeks to protect those areas designated as Local Green Space, either within the Local Plan or an adopted Neighbourhood Plan, from development in line with the NPPF. The assessment of newly proposed Local Green Space is set out in the Local Green Space Evidence Paper (SOS002).

6. Reasonable Alternative Options

- 6.1. The following alternative options have been considered for this policy (option 1 being the preferred option within the Draft Local Plan).
- 6.2. Option 2: Do not protect Local Green Spaces within the Local Plan, leave their identification and protection to Neighbourhood Plans. This option was discounted, as while Neighbourhood Plans can, and do, make designations for Local Green Space, not every Parish or settlement have prepared a Plan, this would leave a large number of the previously designated Local Green Spaces without protection. This could potentially result in their loss.

- 6.3. Option 3: Local policy which protects Local Green Spaces on the Policies Map in line with the NPPF, which rules out development on these sites other than in very special circumstances, and which protects other existing Important Open Space (as per adopted plan). This option would provide the same protection for Local Green Space sites as the preferred option, however, it was discounted, as it was considered that having two separate policies for the two different types of designation, as per option 1 would give rise to less confusion in relation to type and level of protection.

7. Conclusion

- 7.1. This Evidence Report demonstrates the rationale for the proposed policy as contained in the Draft Central Lincolnshire Local Plan January 2021. This report will be updated following responses received during the Regulation 18 consultation prior to finalising the Local Plan for submission. This helps bring together relevant evidence that has informed this policy and how we have responded to comments received during the plan making process, as well as how the latest evidence and national guidance has been taken into account.