

Central Lincolnshire Policy S57 Protecting Lincoln, Gainsborough and Sleaford's Setting and Character 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 S57, which relates to protecting the setting and character of Lincoln, Gainsborough and Sleaford.

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. Section 12 of the NPPF concerns “achieving well-designed places” which seeks the creation of high quality buildings and places. Paragraph 127 is of particular relevance and states that:

“Planning policies and decisions should ensure that developments:

- a) will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development;*
- b) are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping;*
- c) are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities);*
- d) establish or maintain a strong sense of place, using the arrangement of streets, spaces, building types and materials to create attractive, welcoming and distinctive places to live, work and visit;*
- e) optimise the potential of the site to accommodate and sustain an appropriate amount and mix of development (including green and other public space) and support local facilities and transport networks; and*
- f) create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible and which promote health and well-being, with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users⁴⁶; and where crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine the quality of life or community cohesion and resilience.”*

- 2.3. Section 16 refers to “conserving and enhancing the historic environment” where paragraph 185 requires ...

- “c) the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness; and*
- d) opportunities to draw on the contribution made by the historic environment to the character of a place.”*

With paragraphs 189 – 192 requiring similar consideration for heritage assets.

- 2.4. 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.
- 2.5. The PPG includes a section on the natural environment regarding implementing policy to protect and enhance the natural environment and states that:

“... plans should recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and that strategic policies should provide for the conservation and enhancement of landscapes. This can include nationally and locally-designated landscapes but also the wider countryside.”

- 2.6. In the section on the historic environment, guidance is provided on the setting of heritage assets and how they are to be taken into account.

Local Policy

- 2.7. The Adopted Local Plan contains policy LP29 which seeks to protect the setting and character of Lincoln, policy LP38 which seeks to protect the setting and character of Gainsborough and policy LP43 which seeks to protect the setting and character of Sleaford.

3. Context and Evidence

- 3.1. The character and setting of settlements are made up of a variety of individual elements which combine together to create a distinctive place. This can include key views; street patterns; townscapes; roofscapes; how the settlement has evolved and what triggered key changes and when; design, materials, orientation and uses of buildings; and the presence of and relationship to green and blue spaces. The three main urban areas have some distinct characteristics that need to be considered and addressed.
- 3.2. Lincoln Cathedral is one of the most important medieval buildings in Europe and its prominent, visually dominating position on the edge of the Witham Gap along the Lincoln Cliff makes it one of the country's finest sights. Lincoln's natural and historic environment and the relationship between the City and surrounding villages is a key element to the visitor economy and the Cathedral towering over the city is an important symbol for the area. Lincoln's special character arises in large part from its unique setting, with important views in and out of the City, principally to and from the Lincoln Ridge, which supports spectacular views of the cathedral, castle and uphill Lincoln. This character has evolved in part from the alignment of roman roads, location and nature of common land and physical restrictions of flood risk and ground conditions.
- 3.3. Views across and along open spaces are closely linked to the Green Wedges around the City and will be an important consideration particularly for development around the edge of Lincoln where there is currently a clear separation between the City and its satellite villages which retain their character as individual settlements.
- 3.4. The Brayford Pool and the waterways around Lincoln have been an important feature of the City for centuries. In recent years the Brayford Pool has grown in importance as the focus for boating and boating activities, with direct waterway connections to the River Trent to the west and to the sea at Boston. The Brayford Pool and the banks of Lincoln's waterways have also recently provided the focus for cultural, leisure and educational

development. The revival of the area is to be welcomed, but unchecked over-development spilling out from the banks into the Pool and waterways is in danger of causing them to lose their essential open character.

- 3.5. Lincoln and its surrounding area has a particularly rich and diverse natural and built environment including a varied landscape at the meeting point of five National Character Areas; a rich and varied biodiversity reflecting the range of geological and ecological conditions that form one of Central Lincolnshire's biodiversity 'hotspots'; a rich townscape with a large number of listed buildings and conservation areas and archaeology of international significance. It is crucial that this heritage is conserved as part of the growth of Lincoln and that development helps to protect and enhance these environmental assets. The Lincoln Townscape Assessment (now incorporated into the City of Lincoln's online heritage management system – ARCADE) describes the local context for defining distinctiveness and as a means of assessing the impact of proposals on Lincoln's setting and character.
- 3.6. Gainsborough is located on the eastern banks of the River Trent, extending its urban area eastwards into an undulating and often wooded landscape. Gainsborough's historic core is protected by three conservation areas, namely the Britannia Conservation Area, Riverside Conservation Area and Gainsborough Town Conservation Area.
- 3.7. Gainsborough benefits from a number of buildings of architectural and historical merit. Historic street patterns and passageways can still be identified within the traditional town centre area, connecting the existing town to its vibrant past. Parts of the riverside, from Chapel Staithe to the Old Hall have unique significance to the town's medieval heritage, with mill and warehouse buildings a reminder of Gainsborough's later role as an important inland trading port. Integrating these assets into regeneration proposals is vital to ensure that the town's rich history is conserved and enhanced.
- 3.8. The town centre also has a number of special assets and visitor attractions, however, these places and assets, as well as the major asset of the River Trent, are poorly connected and their settings are undervalued. The growth of Gainsborough over the next 20 years will bring opportunities to improve the quality of the townscape by revitalising the urban fabric, reducing the number of heritage assets on the Lincolnshire Heritage at Risk Register and making the best use of key landmarks, social and heritage assets. At the same time, there will be a need to protect the town's wider setting in the landscape.
- 3.9. Sleaford's historic centre and land alongside the River Slea are covered by a Conservation Area. The town centre has a number of heritage and townscape assets and visitor attractions, particularly on Northgate and in and around the Market Place, which help to create a sense of place and a special identity. However in some cases, these are hidden and difficult to access. In others, their settings are undervalued. The growth of Sleaford over the next 20 years will bring opportunities to improve the quality of the townscape by revitalising the urban fabric including through funding interventions, reducing the number of heritage assets on the Lincolnshire Heritage at Risk Register and making the best use of key landmarks, social and heritage assets.
- 3.10. The Sleaford Masterplan identified a need to focus on public realm improvements within Sleaford to create better links for pedestrians and improved settings for key attractions and heritage assets.
- 3.11. There are a number of key local views of Sleaford, both within and outside of the town, that have been identified in the Sleaford Masterplan and adopted Sleaford Conservation

Appraisal. Perhaps one of the most dominant views in the Sleaford area is of the Bass Maltings complex which includes the largest group of malt houses in England. The site is listed as Grade II* on Historic England's National Heritage List for England and Heritage at Risk Register.

- 3.12. The Central Lincolnshire Green Infrastructure Study identifies a deficiency in natural green space sites in the Sleaford area, particularly to the east and west of the town. The Sleaford Masterplan proposes an East West Leisure Link running east to west along the River Slea through the town centre and connecting the urban area to the countryside and surrounding villages. This provides a range of opportunities to improve the Green Infrastructure network, leisure and tourism offer, including improved pedestrian and cycle movement and access, and habitat creation. Lincolnshire Rivers Trust have produced an Urban Opportunities Study of the water environment in Sleaford. The study identifies opportunities to enhance the habitat along the River Slea and its tributaries in and around Sleaford.

4. Issues and Options Consultation

- 4.1. The Issues and Options consultation identified existing policies LP29: Protecting Lincoln's Setting and Character, LP38: Protecting Gainsborough's Setting and Character and LP43: Protecting Sleaford's Setting and Character as policies not intended to be changed. There were no objections to this approach.

5. Proposed Approach in Draft Local Plan

- 5.1. The Draft Local Plan no longer contains separate chapters for Lincoln, Gainsborough and Sleaford instead containing policies by subject area. The three existing policies have therefore been combined into a single policy that seeks to make a positive contribution to protecting the setting and character and views into and out of each of the three main settlements, with sections within the policy that carry forward the identification of the unique character and features of each.

6. Reasonable Alternative Options

- 6.1. The following alternative option has been considered for this policy (option 1 being the preferred option).
- 6.2. Option 2: to have no local policy, but to rely on general Central Lincolnshire green infrastructure, heritage and other Local Plan policies or national policy. This option was discounted as although it would offer some protection it would not offer the positive protection tailored to the specific setting and character of each settlement.

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.