

# Central Lincolnshire Policy S1: The Spatial Strategy and Settlement Hierarchy 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 S1, The Spatial Strategy and Settlement Hierarchy, which seeks to concentrate growth on the main urban areas of Lincoln, Gainsborough and Sleaford, and in settlements that support their roles. The hierarchy is split into 8 tiers.

## 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 11, of the NPPF states:

*Plans and decisions should apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development.*

*For plan-making this means that:*

- a) *plans should positively seek opportunities to meet the development needs of their area, and be sufficiently flexible to adapt to rapid change;*
- b) *strategic policies should, as a minimum, provide for objectively assessed needs for housing and other uses, as well as any needs that cannot be met within neighbouring areas<sup>5</sup>, unless:*
  - i. *the application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a strong reason for restricting the overall scale, type or distribution of development in the plan area; or*
  - ii. *any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole.*

- 2.3. Paragraph 17 of the NPPF states:

*The development plan must include strategic policies to address each local planning authority's priorities for the development and use of land in its area [Footnote: Section 19(1B-1E) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004]. These strategic policies can be produced in different ways, depending on the issues and opportunities facing each area. They can be contained in:*

- a) *joint or individual local plans, produced by authorities working together or independently (and which may also contain non-strategic policies); and/or*

- 2.4. Paragraph 20, of the NPPF states:

*Strategic policies should set out an overall strategy for the pattern, scale and quality of development, and make sufficient provision [Footnote: In line with the presumption in favour of sustainable development] for:*

- a) *housing (including affordable housing), employment, retail, leisure and other commercial development;*
- b) *infrastructure for transport, telecommunications, security, waste management, water supply, wastewater, flood risk and coastal change management, and the provision of minerals and energy (including heat);*
- c) *community facilities (such as health, education and cultural infrastructure); and*
- d) *conservation and enhancement of the natural, built and historic environment, including landscapes and green infrastructure, and planning measures to address climate change mitigation and adaptation.*

2.5. These paragraphs highlight that strategic planning policies can be produced in different ways to meet the local needs of the development plan area. Central Lincolnshire is a joint Local Plan with three other councils; City of Lincoln, North Kesteven and West Lindsey.

2.6. 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.

2.7. Planning Practice Guidance states:

*The development plan is at the heart of the planning system with a requirement set in law that planning decisions must be taken in line with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Plans set out a vision and a framework for the future development of the area, addressing needs and opportunities in relation to housing, the economy, community facilities and infrastructure – as well as a basis for conserving and enhancing the natural and historic environment, mitigating and adapting to climate change, and achieving well designed places. It is essential that plans are in place and kept up to date.*

*Section 19(1B) - (1E) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 sets out that each local planning authority must identify their strategic priorities and have policies to address these in their development plan documents (taken as a whole).*

*The development plan for an area is made up of the combination of strategic policies (which address the priorities for an area) and non-strategic policies (which deal with more detailed matters). Paragraphs 17 to 19 of the National Planning Policy Framework describe the plan-making framework which allows flexibility in the way policies for the development and use of land are produced.<sup>1</sup>*

2.8. Aligned to this guidance, policy S1 sets out the spatial strategy with a focus and vision of delivering sustainable growth for Central Lincolnshire that meets the needs of Central Lincolnshire.

### Local Policy

2.9. Policy LP2, The Spatial Strategy and Settlement Hierarchy in the adopted 2017 Central Lincolnshire Local Plan, sets out the approach for achieving sustainable growth which focuses on the main urban areas within Central Lincolnshire, with less growth being delivered in smaller settlements. This approach makes the most of existing services, facilities and infrastructure, and reducing the need to travel for more people, through

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<sup>1</sup> PPG Paragraph: 001 Reference ID: 61-001-20190315

focusing growth in these areas whilst also allowing for proportionate growth in the rural areas so as to avoid 'starving' these areas of growth.

- 2.10. Policy LP2 applied a settlement hierarchy which separated out the main urban areas (the City and the four towns) into the top three tiers – The Lincoln Urban Area, the Main Towns and the Market Towns. For all of the villages the number of dwellings in each village was used as a threshold to define which settlements would be in which tier. These tiers are as follows: Large Villages – 750 dwellings or more; Medium Villages – 250-750 dwellings; and Small Villages – 50-250 dwellings. Below the Small Villages, any grouping of dwellings was either categorised as a hamlet or as countryside but these were not named in the settlement hierarchy.
- 2.11. The 2017 Local Plan only allocates sites in the top four tiers of the settlement hierarchy and applies a percentage (working with Policy LP4 of the plan) to guide the amount of growth that will typically come forward in small and medium villages.
- 2.12. Policy LP2 also limits the size of sites that will come forward in these smaller settlements and the types of locations where sites can be delivered to make up the growth that is occurring.

### 3. Context and Evidence

- 3.1. Central Lincolnshire has a varied range of settlement types and sizes ranging from Lincoln itself which is a regional hub, to smaller towns such as Gainsborough, Sleaford and Market Rasen, to large villages with a range of services and down to smaller villages where fewer services are typically available.
- 3.2. Many of these settlements (particularly the smaller ones) do not function in isolation and instead form clusters where services and facilities are shared across a wider geography. Around the main settlements satellite villages also rely heavily on the jobs, services and facilities provided in the urban areas.
- 3.3. Beyond Central Lincolnshire there are also a many settlements which relate to settlements within the area. These include the likes of Grantham, Newark, Scunthorpe, Grimsby, Louth, Boston and many villages. All of these settlement combine to form a complex network of communities.
- 3.4. The 2017 Local Plan strategy and settlement hierarchy, whilst it has only been in place since 2017, has been functioning well with many allocated sites obtaining planning permission and starting to deliver on the ground. Housing delivery has also steadily increased since the plan was adopted and more allocated sites obtain permission. This is all suggestive that the settlement hierarchy and general strategy of the 2017 Local Plan was broadly appropriate from a housing market perspective.
- 3.5. One of the key objectives of the new Local Plan is to facilitate the delivery of a net zero carbon Central Lincolnshire. Consultants were appointed in 2020 to undertake a review of how Central Lincolnshire might achieve this goal and how the Local Plan can contribute.
- 3.6. This work included Task B: Carbon Emissions from Spatial Growth Options (Ref: CLC003). This assessment looked at the carbon implications of 5 options for the

distribution of growth that are set out in the Central Lincolnshire Growth Options Paper (Ref: STA011). This identified, somewhat unsurprisingly, in paragraph 1.3 that:

*In terms of choice of spatial locations for growth, the urban locations have the lowest overall carbon emissions (city centre, urban and suburban) whereas the more remote locations have higher overall carbon emissions (village well connected and village less well connected). This is predominantly because total carbon emissions are dominated by transport, particularly if zero carbon building policies are deployed. Transport in more rural and less connected locations has a far greater use of private cars and over longer distances, consequently with higher associated carbon emissions – at least until the vast majority of cars on the road are ultra-low emissions, which is not likely to happen within the plan period.*

- 3.7. This clearly identifies that focusing development in the larger urban areas will have a greater impact towards reducing carbon being used in Central Lincolnshire.
- 3.8. The Settlement Hierarchy Methodology Report (ref STA006) sets out in detail the approach proposed to be taken in the Settlement Hierarchy.

## 4. Issues and Options Consultation

- 4.1. The Issues and Options Consultation sought respondents' views on proposals relating to the settlement hierarchy under proposal 5. There were a number of questions asked around proposal 5.
- 4.2. There were a number of other questions posed in the Issues and Options consultation including:
- Q5b –Defining the Tiers of the Hierarchy. Do you think that the number of houses in a settlement should be used to define what tier of the hierarchy it is within? If not, please provide details of what you think should be used.
  - Q5c Threshold for Tiers in the Hierarchy. Do you think the dwelling number thresholds (i.e. 750+ for Large Villages, 250-749 for medium Villages, etc.) for what tier of the hierarchy a village is within should be retained?
  - Q5d-Allocations in the Hierarchy. In what tiers do you think housing sites should be allocated in the new Local Plan?
  - Q5e- Settlements in the Hierarchy. Are there any comments you would like to make about the proposed Settlement Hierarchy provided in Appendix A? Please provide details.

### **PROPOSAL 5 – Settlement Hierarchy**

The current 2017 Local Plan includes the following tiers using the corresponding thresholds for what is included in each category:

1. Lincoln Urban Area – defined as the current built up area of Lincoln, which includes the City of Lincoln, North Hykeham, South Hykeham Fosseway, Waddington Low Fields and any other developed land adjoining these areas;
2. Main Towns – Gainsborough and Sleaford and any developed areas adjoining these areas;
3. Market Towns – Market Rasen and Caistor and any developed areas adjoining

these areas;

4. Large Villages – settlements with 750 or more dwellings;
5. Medium Villages – settlements of 250-749 dwellings;
6. Small Villages – settlements of 50-249 dwellings;
7. Hamlets – settlements of between 15 and 49 dwellings which are clustered together to form a single developed footprint; and
8. Countryside – all other areas not covered above.

Sites were allocated in the top 4 tiers of the hierarchy in the 2017 Local Plan when the minimum allocation size was 25 dwellings (this is now proposed to be reduced to 10 dwellings – see Q9a for details).

Appendix A to this document includes the settlement hierarchy if the proposed methodology were applied.

Q5a. Do you think the 8 tiers of the Settlement Hierarchy should be retained in the new Local Plan? If not, please provide details of what changes you think should be made.

4.3. There was a good level of support for retaining the 8 tiers in the hierarchy with 82% of respondents supporting it. There were a number of comments received in response to the question and the key issues can be summarised as follows:

- Agree with the tiers contained within the Settlement Hierarchy and believe that this establishes a clear and reasoned approach for directing new development to the most sustainable and accessible locations;
- 8 levels is good. One suggested an annex listing the hamlets would help planning and another suggested any problems were with implementation;
- Development in 1-6. Leave the countryside alone. In line with previous comment about regenerating brown sites, not building on green;
- Question definition of countryside;
- There is too much over development in villages they will no longer be villages if too many houses are built and they lose their identity;
- Focussing too much on Lincoln is probably not the right way to go. Cities and towns will be most impacted by the effects of climate change according to the CCC Climate Change Risk Assessment 2 report;
- De-carbonisation should be applied equally rigorously across all 8 tiers;
- The levels should be increased. e.g. medium village will by default become large and have more housing by %. Continued growth is not necessarily sustainable. e.g. foul disposal is not addressed in infrastructure but is necessary;
- Hamlets should be defined as 6-19 houses whilst small villages as 20-249 houses;
- Tiers 1-3 should remain as is. Combine Large & Medium Villages into Tier 4 and Small Villages, Hamlets & Countryside into Tier 5;
- Category 4, 5 and 6 should be split indicating either no facilities in the village, limited facilities or full facilities. This enables development in areas with facilities reducing carbon emissions;
- Definition does not describe a hamlet. 15 - 49 houses clustered together is a village whereas a hamlet by nature is a sparse collection of housing in the landscape without a defined developed footprint. What is the reasoning for 15 houses?
- The village of Evedon has 39 dwellings. It is shown in the document as having 51 and therefore becomes a Small Village with all that that entails. The Parish Council are not happy with this re-designation.

- Riseholme should be 'Open Countryside' as per Inspector's report;
- The review provides an opportunity to consider and perhaps refine the approach. Suggestion that larger villages be paired with market towns under a Market Towns and key centres category. Suggest that Tier 4 settlements were identified as those with a larger population (e.g. in excess of 1500) and that a proportionately larger share of development was guided towards those larger settlements, which will often contain a fuller range of services and communities. Alternatively Tier 4 could be split into tiers 4A and 4B, with proportionately larger elements of growth directed to the Tier 4A villages;
- Identifying the tier in which a settlement fits in is a useful reference point. However consideration must be given to the rurality of parts of the Central Lincolnshire and as such understanding the functional geography and economic interdependence of clusters of villages is equally as important in order to allow communities to meet their needs and evolve sustainably, should also consider the population, its composition and available infrastructure. Some specific examples given;
- Concern that any new development does not have an adverse impact on ancient woodland or veteran trees;
- Reference to the methodology involved in assessing Grayingham's position;
- All types of settlement should be able to have and encompass and include appropriate development that helps sustain them, rather than them being stymied and allowed to wither and become dormitory or even worse - sedentary and only lived in on weekends or summer months;
- The criteria for development within 'Hamlets' should be more realistic and representative of the historic formation of Hamlets or be removed in its entirety.
- Whilst the size of the settlement (in terms of the number of dwellings) might provide a starting point for the hierarchy, this should then be re-examined. E.g. Skellingthorpe is more 'sustainable' than other identified 'large villages' by virtue of its proximity to Lincoln and the range of services and amenities within the Village;
- The tiers and associated development quantum are overly prescriptive. They can prevent sustainable development by limiting development in a village to a specified number on the basis of the current size/ level of services within a settlement, when additional housing may support new or improved service provision;
- Note that the Lincoln Urban Area is not defined by a boundary on the policies map and should maybe include some other parcels of land;
- People should be located nearer to work;
- The Lincoln Urban Area is logical and justified and its location at the top of the Hierarchy is eminently sensible. The role of the Lincoln Strategy Area (LSA) in the Hierarchy is less clear however, as Sleaford and Gainsborough, the two towns in the next tier down, each have individual targets. The role of the strategy area and the implication for individual settlement should be explored;
- The inclusion of individual settlements in a particular tier should not simply be one of accountancy (how many homes, shops, schools, employers, etc.), or proximity to larger settlements (such as Lincoln or Sleaford). It should also acknowledge the wider role of the settlement in serving a wider hinterland;
- More thought should be given to the housing demands of workers in rural industries;
- Bardney is a large village at the first crossing of the River Witham to the east of Lincoln. It provides a significant level of employment due to the location of the British Sugar Factory and a number of other businesses, together with a primary school, a range of shops and a GP surgery. The settlement will, therefore, serve a wider hinterland to the north and south of the Witham;
- Sleaford is one of the most sustainable settlements in the area and one that can support the necessary level of growth;



- Billingham provides a number of key services to support the wider community, including a health centre, shops, primary school, sports and leisure facilities, workplaces and pubs all of which demonstrates that there is no doubting the role of Billingham in supporting a significant catchment of surrounding villages. Billingham should be identified at least as a Large Village.
- Navenby and Wellingore and Washingborough and Heighington are settlements that have grown into single urban areas, albeit with separate centres, and the impact of this joint mass, together with their proximity to Lincoln, should lead to them being treated as single settlements.
- Should acknowledge the wider role of the settlement in serving a wider hinterland. The specific features of Market Rasen and Caistor have been acknowledged: hence their inclusion in a separate tier in the Plan's Hierarchy as Market Towns. Despite having a lower population than some of the settlements, the Market Towns provide a wider range of services for the wider community;
- Branston is a large settlement, containing a number of services and a secondary school, close to Lincoln, and arguably plays a more significant role than many other 'large villages' in the settlement hierarchy and should be a major focus for growth to meet the needs of Lincoln;
- Swinderby is part of a wider network of settlements with Witham St Hughes to the south, Eagle and North Scarle to the north and Collingham and South Scarle to the west. This network of settlements provides a range of services to support the local communities and, as such, no settlement should be considered individually.
- Swinderby also benefits from proximity to Lincoln to the east and Newark to the west, both of which will support local communities and reinforce the sustainability of development along the A46. Swinderby and Saxilby are the only settlements to the west of Lincoln that benefit from a regular rail service. On a numerical basis alone, placing Swinderby in the Medium Villages section of the Settlement Hierarchy may be justified, but, in reality, its proximity to larger settlements and the access to key facilities, such as the railway station, indicates a higher position in the Settlement Hierarchy could be justified.
- Starving villages of services will in turn result in an imbalance of population. Traditional settlement hierarchies as in the existing policies LP2 and LP4 limit the ability to attract services, facilities or investment due to limited growth options. This results in a slow process of decline, loss of services and facilities over the years, and means that the demographics of rural villages do not represent a balanced community. Older and younger people are leaving rural villages, and the type and amount of housing is not available to accommodate young families nor older persons wishing to remain in the community. There is no requirement for a village to have any services of its own, let alone any services of any specified kind. Communities cannot give a meaningful response until they know how robust or vulnerable their existing infrastructure and services exactly are, which means engaging with the forward strategy of the NHS, Education authority, the Post Office, local shopkeepers etc. Suggestion for a Neighbourhood Plan policy and interpretation of community support.

#### **Q5b – Defining the Tiers of the Hierarchy**

**Do you think that the number of houses in a settlement should be used to define what tier of the hierarchy it is within? If not, please provide details of what you think should be used.**

- 4.4. There was some support for using dwellings to define the tiers in the settlement hierarchy with 68% of respondents supporting it. One general theme from those who opposed the approach was that the presence of services and facilities should also be taken into account.
- 4.5. There were a number of comments received in response to the question and the key issues can be summarised as follows:
- Facilities should also be used to define a tier - schools, shops, doctors, etc. to sustain the parishioners living within the Parish boundaries;
  - Housing should be used but not just the number of housing that is too arbitrary what should also be considered is the facilities in proportion to the size of the village: public house's, shops, the amount of local employment available and the type i.e. average wage, the state of transport i.e. number of busses per day gaps between buses and other transport available and its frequency (particularly important for smaller rural settlements), internet, schools, health, green spaces and leisure facilities. Plus within 2km of Lincoln;
  - Use house numbers allied to amenities to create a 'House Points' score to consider likelihood of visitors, traffic, etc. (e.g. GP Surgery = +20 HP, Primary School = +25 HP, No Retail outlets = -30HP, Distance in x Miles to Nr Large Town = -x HP);
  - Significantly more emphasis should be given to direct access to employment, transport accessibility e.g. direct A road access minimum;
  - A large village should have a shop, a pub, etc. not just a lot of houses;
  - Geographical area is important. A medium village cannot necessarily be made larger automatically by size alone;
  - 'Urbanness', whether by Governmental Urban/ Rural measures (RUC2011);
  - Houses are being constantly built at quite a fast rate and current data can therefore not be used for this purpose;
  - Houses should be the measure and not the number of council tax payers.
  - This is only OK if the address data used is accurate;
  - Huge capacity will need to be added to a few areas which will remain unflooded - this must be the key priority as immense infrastructure will also be needed;
  - The hierarchy should be based on areas that are least susceptible to flooding, and where communities can be highly resilient to the effects of climate change;
  - The 750 threshold is too low for large villages. The majority of villages in this category have more than 1000 houses with some in excess of 2000/ 2500 houses;
  - Policies can move a settlement from one tier to another, muddying the waters;
  - Need to consider total carbon footprint; carbon footprint per capita;
  - The form and core shape of the settlement should also be reviewed, as some villages can accommodate growth without greatly altering the form and character of the settlement and others cannot without going beyond the developed footprint;
  - Consider Thorpe on the Hill may be categorised as a medium village which performs well in terms of its own services and facilities and has excellent access to the main principal urban area of Lincoln;
  - It doesn't necessarily represent how villages function together and provided complimentary facilities/ services. Would be beneficial to consider a cluster model alongside existing hierarchy.
  - The hierarchy needs to reflect the role of the settlement. Earlier evidence utilised a typology of settlement (as a 'supporter' or 'attractor') to assess its sustainability and role within a hierarchy. E.g. 'Little Cherry' contains a substantial number of dwellings but benefits from no services itself and relies entirely on provision elsewhere;

- Some 'medium' villages have far more facilities to them than others in the same class, i.e. Waddington compared to Welbourn. Similarly, some 'small' villages have just as many facilities as those classed as 'medium'. Distance from main facilities and availability of public transport should also be taken into consideration;
- Clusters are a great way of creating sustainability for small communities.
- Scothern, Nettleham, Sudbrooke, Dunholme and Welton are a cluster which is close to Lincoln, with good road access to the city via the A46 and A158. This cluster also has excellent access to the A15 corridor, along which lies the Riseholme Campus of the University of Lincoln, the Lincolnshire Showground and RAF Scampton that provide employment opportunities. The completion of the Lincoln Eastern Bypass will provide expeditious links to the south of the city and RAF Waddington;
- Communities should be able to absorb any growth and where a community has facilities we must be mindful not to overburden them;
- The methodology used for calculating housing numbers is questioned and need for it to be more transparent;
- Any cost /Tax implications should have to be declared in planning applications and those affected informed prior to those plans being granted as any changes will instantly make them stakeholders in the process;
- Area of a parish could be a better indicator? - but if all settlements were allowed further appropriate development (perhaps as a parish as well as existing numbers of houses) then the definition would be less reliant on just the number of houses;
- A settlement's position in the hierarchy is regularly reviewed, taking into account growth which is delivered throughout the plan period and the consultation document did not provide sufficient information on how this would be done;
- A bespoke assessment should be made for each village, with the starting point being the current level of service provision, and whether housing and/ or other types of development can improve service provision. Local housing needs, including affordable housing need, should also be considered. Paragraph 50-001 of the PPG requires a bottom-up approach to assessing need on a village-by-village basis, rather than basing growth upon the size and facilities of settlement at the present;
- If using number of homes to define tiers, the address data must be accurate. We suggest the proposed new methodology must not rely on one database alone it clearly needs a second different database to be considered for cross-reference, to enable correction of any errors & then ensure the data used is proved accurate;
- Bassingham and Sturton by Stow are examples which 'punch above their weight' and should be further up the hierarchy. Give approach taken by East Hampshire Council for the East Hampshire District Local Plan Regulation 18 consultation undertaken in December 2018 as a good example which could be transferable;
- Should consider where the viability of existing facilities is threatened, such as where a primary school is suffering falling numbers due to a village's aging populations;
- We would expect a full Sustainability Appraisal to be undertaken as part of the Local Plan review to establish whether any settlements should be reclassified;
- There is no reference to the functional relationship to the countryside and the businesses that operate there;
- Welcome the inclusion of RAF Digby as a large settlement within the settlement hierarchy. The exclusion of the RAF bases from the settlement hierarchy has been a significant omission from previous local plans. Acknowledging the bases as settlements will provide greater certainty for the promotion of developments necessary to maintain the sustainability of the bases, and allow for the impact of the bases on the local economy and the function of the surrounding settlements;
- Saxilby is a large settlement that is close to both Lincoln and Gainsborough. The settlement provides several key services including shops, employment a medical

centre and employment and has direct access to the A57 that links to Lincoln and the A158 to Gainsborough. Saxilby supports a wide hinterland and as such plays a significant role in this part of Central Lincolnshire. It is well placed to support new development due to the range of services and its geographic location;

- Object to approach taken to determining whether settlements are Small Villages or Hamlets with particular regard to North Rauceby that should remain a Small Village, if not considered jointly with South Rauceby. The Methodology only makes reference to clusters at 2.12 without proper clarification as to how this might apply to more complex settlement patterns.

#### **Q5c – Threshold for Tiers in the Hierarchy**

**Do you think the dwelling number thresholds (i.e. 750+ for Large Villages, 250-749 for Medium Villages, etc.) for what tier of the hierarchy a village is within should be retained?**

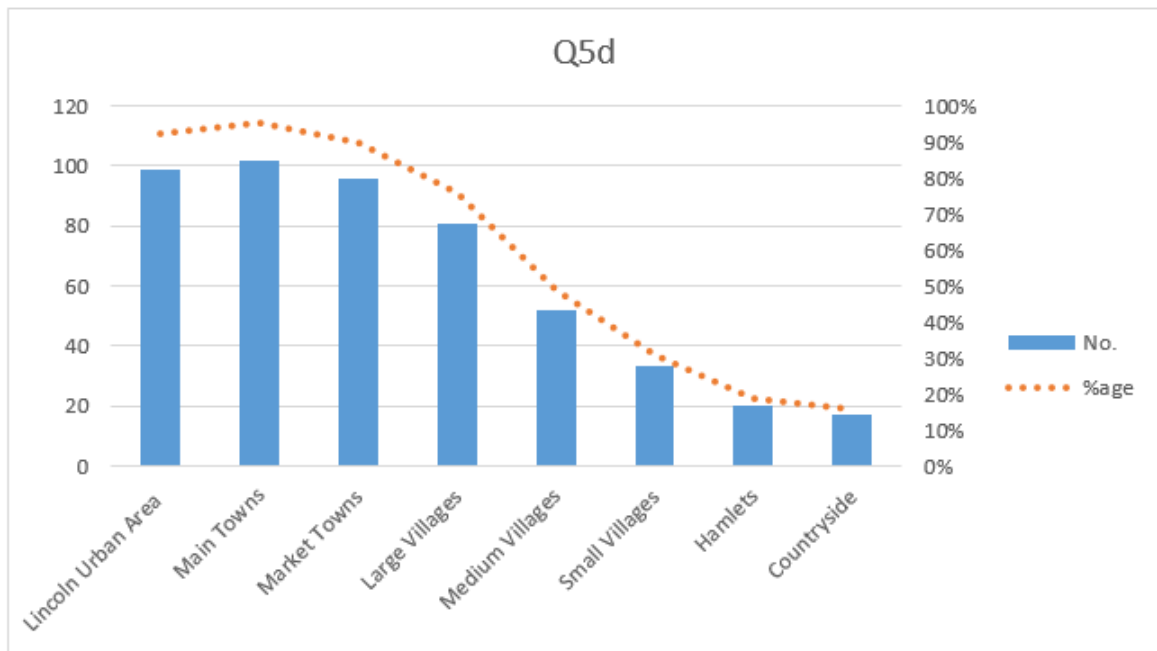
- 4.6. Similarly to Question 5b, there was good support for the current thresholds being retained with 76% of respondents supporting their retention. For those objecting, general issues revolved around the importance of taking account of recent growth and taking account of the presence of services and facilities.
- 4.7. There were a number of comments received in response to the question and the key issues can be summarised as follows:
- Possibly, maybe needs refining;
  - The number of non-residential buildings and businesses should also be considered;
  - Settlements will automatically fall into a higher bracket with the % development expected to be higher. This is not sustainable in many cases. Villages need to be villages not small towns;
  - Given some of the development that was allowed in the previous decade or so (Faldingworth, for example, essentially doubling in size) an uplift of 50-100 properties on the upper bound of tiers 4,5,& 6 would mitigate 'accidental growth';
  - Propose that whilst the size of the settlement (in terms of the number of dwellings) might provide a starting point for the hierarchy, this should then be re-examined, to ensure that settlements which perform well in respect of their range of services, facilities or accessibility to a larger town are not placed lower within the hierarchy owing to their lower number of dwellings (and vice versa);
  - The number of households within a location does not necessarily indicate how urban or rural an area is;
  - Capacity to take climate refugees must be the overriding factor;
  - Carbon footprint per settlement & per capita needs to be considered;
  - Accept that there will not be a return to settlement boundaries, however, further detail on the rationale for inclusion/ exclusion welcomed and understanding of the relationship between larger and smaller settlements which function together, for example: Osgodby, Kingerby & Kirkby Also Riby was a small village but is now considered not and has been split;
  - Whilst the Settlement Hierarchy Methodology sets out the baseline settlement numbers, there is no background information made available to establish how the dwelling thresholds for each tier have been determined. This information should be publicly available as there appears to be no justification for the thresholds;

- To enable growth, residential development should be spread more equitably across all lower tier villages and hamlets, depending on their sustainability;
- Any threshold is of necessity arbitrary. Where a settlement is close to the threshold, amenities could be used to place it above or below the threshold. A settlement of 740 dwellings with amenities is likely to be able to sustain growth more easily than a settlement of 760 without them;
- Merge hamlets and countryside;
- Hamlets should be 6 to 19 dwellings, small villages 20 to 249 houses;
- 250-749 is too broad a range;
- Large villages could be 1,500+ dwellings, medium 900-1499, small 100-899, hamlets 15 to 99 - for example this would make Navenby a medium village but retain Cherry Willingham as a large village which is reflective of the amenities & growth available at both subject to any obvious 'anomalies';
- Consideration should be given to increasing the size threshold for larger villages to 1500. Alternatively Tier 4 could be split into two - Tier 4A being those above the 1500 threshold and 4B between 750- 1500. The level of growth steered towards those settlements within Tier 4A would be proportionately greater to take account of the ability and opportunity available at those larger settlements (e.g. Ruskington);
- Unsure that 750 is an appropriate level for an area to become a 'Large Village. There are a number of places where the number of dwellings is very close to this, but it is not felt that they will change hugely with the addition of a few properties;
- The criteria for identifying a medium village is disproportionately broad. As such, the settlements identified within this tier of the Settlement Hierarchy will be extremely varied. To assign growth to all medium villages in the same manner, taking only the number of dwellings within that settlement into consideration, is not considered appropriate in this respect. Suggest that the upper number of dwellings used to identify Medium Villages (749) is reduced to 549 in order to ensure that the growth directed to medium and large villages is more representative of the size of the existing settlement. The criteria used to identify Large Villages should therefore be reduced to 550+. This will contribute towards achieving both local and national aspirations of boosting housing growth, particularly in those villages within rural areas which are best suited to accommodate such levels of growth.
- The threshold for Large Villages results in a significant variation in the size of settlements within one tier of the hierarchy. It is therefore suggested that the threshold for Large Villages be amended to 750-1999 dwellings;
- Suggest increasing the start point of the next tier by 1, e.g. a Small Village becomes 51 to 250 & no settlement will move groups because of this ceiling being reduced;
- Employment and food will determine where people choose to live.

#### **Q5d – Allocations in the Hierarchy**

**In what tiers do you think housing sites should be allocated in the new Local Plan?**

- 4.8. This question sought views on which tiers in the settlement hierarchy sites should be considered for allocation. The graph below, taken from the Issues and Options Consultation Report, shows that there was strong support of 75%+ for allocating sites in the top 4 tiers (Large Villages and above) as was the case in the 2017 Local Plan. There was then a substantial drop off for people who felt that sites should be allocated in Medium Villages (approx. 50% of respondents), and Small Villages (approx. 30%).



4.9. Many of the objections to allocating in lower tiers were supported by comments suggesting that impact on character and infrastructure were main concerns and that qualitative consideration was needed, rather than a blanket decision to allocate in all settlements in a given village.

4.10. There were a number of comments received in response to the question and the key issues can be summarised as follows:

- Many large villages have not got the facilities they need;
- Brownfield sites should be built on, not countryside, it's impossible to reverse;
- The countryside should not be built on. Development should be focussed in the towns. Developers feel they can pressurise LPAs into granting development in villages rather than in the towns because LPAs have not been robust enough in rejecting village developments the past. If the PA stands up to the developers, then they will have to develop where the community wants to have development, and not where they think they can make the most profit per unit;
- If small to medium villages grow too big they stop being villages and are towns without shops;
- Enough development has already been allocated to the smaller categories, with some not yet built. The distinctive character of the 4 smaller categories should be retained or the distinctive nature of the Lincolnshire countryside will be spoilt;
- Allocations (even small sites) should be in big places with policies to allow development elsewhere;
- Allocate across all at the appropriate scale, but new infrastructure is required first;
- Hierarchy down to Small Villages should be considered for allocations, given site threshold of 10 units now applies. Allocation size should reflect settlement status;
- Hamlets and countryside are a hive of economic activity where people need to live on site 24/7;
- Greater significance should be given to appropriate rural applications in hamlets and countryside in an attempt to support economic development, create a consistency of decisions and allow the single dwelling essential to economic development;

- There should be a proportional level of housing developments in each tier: In a hamlet of 3 properties a development of 15 dwellings will have a significant impact. The countryside and green spaces available are a huge asset and resource to the county and should be recognised as such – we have a responsibility to nurture the countryside, not destroy it for profit and ease of problem solving;
- Allocations in the large and medium villages in particular should take into account the current infrastructure and shops/ healthcare/ schooling availability. This would also apply to the larger urban extensions and particular regard should be paid to road networks/relief road construction and doctors/healthcare provision;
- All villages should be assessed on the merits of the individual village instead of generic % growth rate. Taking into account of any Neighbourhood Plan that has been adopted or is in preparation;
- If a wider spread approach was to be used allocating sites in smaller settlements too, additional improvements are still anticipated to be required, resulting in a need to promote and deliver more schemes this could be costly and result in potential delays to developments;
- They should be allocated where there are sustainable facilities not just by the number of houses;
- Large housing sites need a basic level of facilities that can be expanded to serve the increased population;
- Whilst large allocations are likely to require capacity improvements to accommodate the development, there is opportunity to deliver this strategically and effectively, through early consultation and engagement with the design and development of master plans and phasing plans;
- Mixed housing so that young people may stay close to family;
- Only tiers 1-3 for housing allocation;
- Depends on transport links;
- Housing allocations should only be applied on Lincoln urban area and the main towns, market towns do not have the jobs facilities or wider infrastructure to take the sites that have already been allocated never mind any additional allocated sites;
- Allocation in tiers 4, 5, 6, etc would add too much of an admin burden to all and would change often;
- Some towns like Sleaford do not have the facilities to cope with large housing development;
- No objections to the principles outlined within the Settlement Hierarchy or the proposals to allocate sites within the larger settlements (Tiers 1 - 4);
- Make larger scale allocations within the Lincoln Urban Area, Main Towns and Market Towns, which have good access to a range of employment and education options, as well as all other day-to-day facilities and services. Mid – large scale allocations should also be made at the large villages as appropriate. In addition, however, the medium and small villages should also accommodate commensurate small scale allocations, including sites of 1 ha in size as appropriate;
- Housing Sites should not be allocated in the bottom 4. & defiantly not in Hamlets or Small Villages particularly given their likely infrastructure constraints and should continue to have no minimum growth level set & only see sustainable limited infill;
- Only in places where infrastructure is adequate e.g. Drainage, bus routes, schools;
- Individual houses on a one off basis could be allocated within villages of all sizes;
- The opportunity that exists for greater levels of growth at the larger settlements such as Ruskington should be recognised;
- Settlements should be ranked with carbon footprint & carbon footprint per capita;
- Care needs to be taken so that new building evolves slowly in order to maintain the character of communities;



- Maintain allocations to levels 1-4;
- Support the opportunity to allocate sites in small and medium villages. This approach recognises the rurality of the area, maintains a planned growth approach whilst helping sustain existing facilities such as village schools and ensure the community remains vibrant;
- Where growth within settlements is regarded to be appropriate, allocations should be brought forward in appropriate locations that support village form, function and material consideration such as heritage. If housing allocations are not provided to meet the housing requirement in full, then a positive policy approach is needed to allow for infill, rounding off and sustainable extension of existing settlements;
- This will be dependent upon the housing requirement figure for the area, and the need to identify a sufficient supply and mix of sites to meet the figure. However, given the need for certainty in relation to delivery, it is likely that allocations would at least be necessary in Lincoln, Main Towns, Market Towns, and Large Villages;
- Allocating sites in any tier, regardless of how small the population size, if the settlement is sustainable should not be ruled out. The proposed approach to development beyond settlement boundaries is considered too restrictive and should be revised. Suggest a changed emphasis to a criteria-based approach to support sustainable development at suitable locations. Refer to Policy HOU5 of the adopted Ashford Local Plan;
- The NPPF states that there should be special houses only in the countryside;
- We have no real evidence to suggest this policy is working or not. In sustainability terms allocating in the first 4 tiers of the hierarchy makes good policy sense and we would question if specific allocations below this are required;
- For housing to be provided in suitable locations, a Sustainability Assessment for each settlement will need to be undertaken as part of the Local Plan Review process as not all settlements within same tier will be capable of accommodating the same levels of housing. This will ensure that the allocation of new housing sites is robust, justified and based on up to date evidence as required by the NPPF;
- Support for the proposed spatial strategy which seeks to focus development at locations with good levels of services and facilities including the Large Villages such as Branston and Cherry Willingham.

#### **Q5e – Settlements in the Hierarchy**

**Are there any comments you would like to make about the proposed Settlement Hierarchy provided in Appendix A? Please provide details**

4.11. This question sought general views about specific settlements in the hierarchy. 39 respondents provided comments on question 5e and these can be summarised as follows:

- Topography needs to be taken more seriously. Local landmarks are disappearing. Medieval ridge and furrow is not protected. It should be. Lincolnshire is losing its agricultural heritage and valuable landscapes;
- Mixed housing so that young people may stay close to family;
- Do not over develop villages;
- Parish boundaries should be used as part of determining where a settlement starts when it affects a large village that abuts a market town or any other higher level settlement in the hierarchy. This prevents unwanted development of a large scale taking place in villages that are close to market towns or large towns etc. as has already been the case in Middle Rasen. 100m gap is in most cases



acceptable in the case of hamlets a less ridged approach should be taken. E.g. in a hamlet if there is a grass strip but multiple dwellings are on the same side of the road and clearly connected to wider development it should be considered part of the wider hamlet/ small village. If it is locally considered that the area is part of the wider small village/ hamlet it should be taken into consideration;

- Re RAF bases, the policy makes sense but it leaves a lot to be desired as evidenced by RAF Scampton being included in Scampton village figures;
- Needs to have an annex of the agreed hamlets to assist planning decisions;
- Grayingham is in the wrong tier. Address data must be up to date, robust & accurate if it is to be used;
- Welbourn drainage is definitely not up to supporting more houses;
- Riseholme is in open countryside;
- Strongly oppose Sudbrooke being changed to large village. There hasn't been much change to the village in terms of housing and certainly not the facilities available. It is unrealistic to classify Sudbrooke with larger villages such as Welton and Nettleham, Cherry Willingham and the facilities they have;
- The changed status of Scampton will adversely affect countryside traffic in the area. It is essential that the two single track roads that bisect Broxholme be designated as residents and farm traffic only;
- The issues is with the thresholds;
- Rank/ re-position settlements according to carbon footprint & per capita;
- Support retaining Coleby in tier 6;
- Greater understanding as to how the village boundaries and numbers have been calculated in relation to address points with specific reference to Middle Rasen, Riby and Sudbrooke;
- Some communities require a boundary review to create a more equitable solution for communities. (i.e.) Market Rasen and Middle Rasen;
- Villages have most likely increased as a consequence of recent development. They should not change position in order to reflect this;
- Local infrastructure and facilities should also be considered;
- Suggested that Swinderby retains its status as a Medium Village;
- Torksey Lock should be included as a medium village;
- The nature of the settlement should be taken into consideration;
- Middle Rasen adjoins the higher order settlement of Market Rasen and benefits from access to a wide range of shops, services and facilities. It is a more suitable location to accommodate housing growth than many larger but more isolated settlements which have poorer access to shops, services and public transport and its inhabitants will be far more reliant upon travel by private car. It should be reclassified, either as part of the market town of Market Rasen or alternatively, as a Large Village;
- Policy should be genuinely 'rural proofed';
- Parish boundaries alone can be problematic. Much of the development to the north of Market Rasen is actually in Middle Rasen parish, separated from Middle Rasen by extensive swathes of 'open' farmland;
- The Lincolnshire Wolds AONB Management Plan recognises the need for some sustainable development within the Lincolnshire Wolds, but stresses the need for development to be of a scale, type and location that can enhance the special qualities of the AONB landscape. Any limited new housing proposals should also be of exceptional design and build, and wherever possible include a proportion of affordable market housing;

- Keelby has traditionally been a service centre for the surrounding villages including Brocklesby, Great Limber and Riby. The proposed removal of Riby's Small Village status would not only be detrimental to that parish, but would also have an adverse impact on the sustainability of Keelby. Riby is only two miles from Keelby and the villages are linked by an hourly bus service;
- Not sufficient vision of 2050 +;
- Kirkby la Thorpe is clearly a small settlement and its proximity to Sleaford, together with the primary school, restaurant and employment opportunities, makes the settlement a sustainable location for a limited level of growth;
- Object to the absence of a settlement by settlement clarification as to the changes to household numbers and a list of settlements in the hamlets category. There is also no mention of the potential for the number of households to increase as a result of yet to be implemented planning permissions, whereby there is potential for a settlement to move from one classification to another by household number during the lifetime of the plan.

4.12. The following next steps were identified on page 30 of the Issues and Consultation Report, "There has been significant diversity of opinion in relation to how to treat the settlement hierarchy in the new local plan. It is proposed that the existing 8 tiers of the hierarchy will be retained but that further work be undertaken to understand which villages should be in each category and what growth will be sustainable in each settlement taking into account the comments received and other evidence being developed."

## 5. Proposed Approach in Draft Local Plan

- 5.1. The approach to this policy cannot be viewed in isolation as it is linked closely with Policies S2, S3, S4, S5 and the sites being allocated in this plan. It is also closely linked to the employment hierarchy in Policies S27-S33 and the retail hierarchy in Policies S34-S39.
- 5.2. This suite of policies seeks to deliver a balanced approach to growth with an urban focus at the larger settlements with greater facilities, services and employment available. However, it also seeks to ensure that a reasonable amount of growth will take places at well-connected villages or villages that have good provision of services and facilities, as investigated in the Village Profiles set out in the Site Allocation Settlement Analysis (Ref: STA008).
- 5.3. The tiers remain the same<sup>2</sup>, using dwelling numbers to define the tier for each village, but with allocations now being made down to the sixth tier of the hierarchy (Small Villages) the presence of services and facilities and connectivity with main urban areas is also now taken into account in deciding which sites to allocate.
- 5.4. The hierarchy approach and other connected policies also allow neighbourhood plans significant opportunity and flexibility to tailor the approach for development in their area, using the Local Plan as an overarching framework.

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<sup>2</sup> However, the boundaries of the tiers have been amended to provide complete clarity, i.e. for Medium Villages it is now 250-749 dwellings as opposed to 250-750 in the 2017 Local Plan, with Large Villages starting at 750.

## 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: A strategy which identifies a settlement hierarchy but distributes growth more evenly across smaller settlements.
- 6.3. Option 3: A strategy which does not include a settlement hierarchy.

## 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.