

Central Lincolnshire Policy S15 Protecting Renewable Energy Infrastructure Evidence Report

Formerly Policy S14

March 2022



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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 S15, which relates to protecting renewable energy infrastructure: specifically, the policy prevents development that would significantly harm the technical performance of an existing or approved renewable energy generation facility; the potential optimisation of installations; or the availability of any resources needed by such installations.

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 and again in July 2021.
- 2.2. Chapter 2 of the NPPF sets out national policy for achieving sustainable development, and separates it out into three objectives – economic, social and environmental. Within the environmental objective, “*mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy*” forms a key part of achieving sustainable development – a key goal of the planning system.
- 2.3. Paragraph 20 of the NPPF sets out the strategic matters that should be addressed through strategic policies, including “*planning measures to address climate change mitigation and adaptation.*”
- 2.4. Chapter 14 of the NPPF provides national planning policy relating to climate change. It provides some clarity for the expectations of how Local Plans should address the challenges of climate change in paragraph 152 where it says:

“The planning system should support the transition to a low carbon future in a changing climate, taking full account of flood risk and coastal change. It should help to: shape places in ways that contribute to radical reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, minimise vulnerability and improve resilience; encourage the reuse of existing resources, including the conversion of existing buildings; and support renewable and low carbon energy and associated infrastructure.”
- 2.5. Paragraph 155 of the NPPF goes onto state that to increase the use and supply of renewable energy, plans should:
 - a) *provide a positive strategy for energy from these sources, that maximises the potential for suitable development, while ensuring that adverse impacts are addressed satisfactorily (including cumulative landscape and visual impacts);*
 - b) *consider identifying suitable areas for renewable and low carbon energy sources, and supporting infrastructure, where this would help secure their development; and*
 - c) *identify opportunities for development to draw its energy supply from decentralised, renewable or low carbon energy supply systems and for co-locating potential heat customers and suppliers.*

- 2.6. This all makes it clear that there is a duty for Local Plans to proactively plan to deliver a renewable and low carbon energy future.
- 2.7. The Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) was first introduced in 2014 and offers 'live' government guidance. The PPG provides guidance to help in the implementation of policy in the NPPF.
- 2.8. The PPG includes a section of guidance titled [Renewable and low carbon energy](#). In this section it provides guidance on how Local Planning Authorities should plan for renewable and low carbon energy including setting out its importance:

“Increasing the amount of energy from renewable and low carbon technologies will help to make sure the UK has a secure energy supply, reduce greenhouse gas emissions to slow down climate change and stimulate investment in new jobs and businesses. Planning has an important role in the delivery of new renewable and low carbon energy infrastructure in locations where the local environmental impact is acceptable.”¹

Local Policy

- 2.9. The current Local Plan (2017) does not contain any policy criteria that seek to prevent significant harm upon the technical performance of existing or approved renewable energy infrastructure; the optimisation of strategic renewable energy installations; or the availability of resource for installations dependent on energy flow.

3. Context and Evidence

- 3.1. Consultants were appointed in July 2020 to investigate the scale of Central Lincolnshire's contribution to greenhouse gas emissions and climate change, and the opportunities that exist to tackle these problems locally, including through the Local Plan.
- 3.2. This work set out the overarching context for Central Lincolnshire identifying what would need to be done in order to achieve a carbon neutral Central Lincolnshire by 2050 (and 2041 to align to the science-based approach) to accord with the Paris Agreement. This research painted a very challenging picture to achieve these goals.
- 3.3. The Central Lincolnshire Local Plan is striving to deliver a carbon neutral Central Lincolnshire: Policy S15 is essential to ensure that renewable energy infrastructure that contributes towards achievement of this goal is not jeopardised.

4. Issues and Options Consultation

- 4.1. The Issues and Options Consultation in 2019 did not include any specific question around the protection of existing and approved renewable energy infrastructure.

¹ PPG Reference ID: 5-001-20140306

5. Regulation 18 Consultation

- 5.1. A Consultation Draft of the Local Plan was published for consultation between 30 June and 24 August 2021. During this eight week consultation comments were received on the plan, the policies within the plan, and supporting information and evidence.
- 5.2. Very few comments were received in relation to this draft policy. Most comments were generic, in support or opposition to the approach set out in the Energy, Climate Change and Flooding section as a whole.
- 5.3. Comments made in support of the policy included highlighting the potential for improved network resilience and flexible management of energy needs.

6. Proposed Approach in Proposed Submission Local Plan

- 6.1. The policy proposed in the Local Plan, and the policy supporting text, remains unaltered from the earlier Consultation Draft. The decision to retain the policy as per the earlier draft was informed by the support received during the Regulation 18 Consultation, and the lack of major objections raised.
- 6.2. The proposed policy approach is a standalone policy that explicitly prevents development that would result in significant harm to existing or approved renewable energy infrastructure. The harm is identified as impact upon technical performance; upon the potential for optimisation; or upon the availability of necessary resource.

7. Reasonable Alternative Options

- 7.1. One reasonable policy alternative was identified and appraised as part of the sustainability appraisal process. The alternative- 'option 2'- was to have no local level policy on this matter, and instead rely on national policy and guidance.
- 7.2. This alternative option scored poorly in the sustainability appraisal compared to the preferred option, with option 2 resulting in neutral or negligible effects in relation to many objectives, and uncertain, or uncertain negative effects in relation to a few of the sustainability objectives.
- 7.3. The preferred policy option will deliver significant benefits in relation to reducing greenhouse gas emissions, reducing dependency on fossil fuels, minimising vulnerability and improving resilience.

8. Conclusion

- 8.1. This Evidence Report demonstrates the rationale for the proposed policy as contained in the Proposed Submission Draft Central Lincolnshire Local Plan. 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.