

Central Lincolnshire Policy S42 Sustainable Urban Tourism Evidence Report

Formerly Policy S41

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 S42, which relates to tourism developments in the urban areas of Central Lincolnshire.

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 a further update in July 2021.

- 2.2. Paragraph 7 of the NPPF explains that:

“The purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. At a very high level, the objective of sustainable development can be summarised as meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.”

- 2.3. Paragraph 93 relates to social, recreational and cultural facilities, which encompass tourism facilities, and states:

“To provide the social, recreational and cultural facilities and services the community needs, planning policies and decisions should:

- a) plan positively for the provision and use of shared spaces, community facilities (such as local shops, meeting places, sports venues, open space, cultural buildings, public houses and places of worship) and other local services to enhance the sustainability of communities and residential environments;*
- b) take into account and support the delivery of local strategies to improve health, social and cultural well-being for all sections of the community;*
- c) guard against the unnecessary loss of valued facilities and services, particularly where this would reduce the community’s ability to meet its day-to-day needs;*
- d) ensure that established shops, facilities and services are able to develop and modernise, and are retained for the benefit of the community; and*
- e) ensure an integrated approach to considering the location of housing, economic uses and community facilities and services.”*

- 2.4. A significant proportion of tourism activity, especially in urban areas, relates to the historic environment. Chapter 16 addresses “Conserving and enhancing the historic environment”. Paragraph 190 is particularly relevant, stating:

“Plans should set out a positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment, including heritage assets most at risk through neglect, decay or other threats. This strategy should take into account:

- a) the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets, and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;*
- b) the wider social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits that conservation of the historic environment can bring;*
- 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.”*

Local Policy

- 2.5. The adopted Local Plan contains a single policy in relation to tourism, Policy LP7: A Sustainable Visitor Economy, which seeks to support existing and new development and activities, and also direct related development to the most appropriate locations.
- 2.6. This policy does not differentiate between the urban and rural visitor attractions and economy.

3. Context and Evidence

- 3.1. Within Lincoln, the Cathedral and Cultural Quarters, along with the High Street and Brayford Waterfront provide a variety of visitor attractions within a relatively compact area. These attractions range from the Castle and Cathedral, to art galleries and lesser known attractions such as the Cheese Society and Arboretum.
- 3.2. The continued growth of both the University of Lincoln and Bishop Grosseteste University further add to the increase in visitors to the city each year.
- 3.3. The visitor economy is one of the most important sectors of Central Lincolnshire's economy. Lincoln is one of England's key heritage cities, and the principal visitor destination in Central Lincolnshire. The city attracts over 3 million visitors a year, generating over £190 million and supporting 2,000 jobs. The Visit Lincoln Partnership considers that, by comparison with similar historic towns and cities, there is potential for Lincoln's visitor economy to grow.
- 3.4. Tourism naturally extends beyond the urban area of Lincoln, with Gainsborough, Sleaford, Market Rasen, Caistor, and rural Central Lincolnshire also making a significant contribution to the visitor economy. Many visitors are attracted to the waterways, walking and cycling routes, the many aviation and other attractions across the area which are varied and numerous. The Lincolnshire Wolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) is a popular visitor destination for walkers. The AONB extends into Central Lincolnshire between Market Rasen and Caistor and is surrounded by a locally designated Area of Great Landscape Value.
- 3.5. In addition to the varied range of visitor attractions within Central Lincolnshire, there is also a wide range of serviced and un-serviced tourist accommodation across the area. The provision of a sufficient level and range of holiday accommodation is essential for supporting the contribution made by the tourism sector to the local economy.
- 3.6. Lincoln is not a seasonal destination, with a traditional August peak for visitors, like many. The city is busy all year round, with visitor accommodation, especially hotels, enjoying year round occupancy. Visitors to Lincoln, and the wider Central Lincolnshire area, arrive

for both business, education and leisure purposes. The continuing growth in population, investment by businesses, fast growing universities and investment in and rejuvenation of tourist destinations will continue to attract increasing numbers of visitors to the area. Within Lincoln, room occupancy rates are very high (80%) with hotels frequently full and turning business away.

- 3.7. Rural Central Lincolnshire has a range of tourist accommodation in the form of Bed & Breakfasts, self-catering cottages, lodges, and caravan, camping and glamping sites for all year round and seasonal uses, in a range of permanent and temporary buildings of different sizes. This variation compliments the provision of visitor accommodation in Lincoln, which in addition to hotels, includes bed & breakfast and self-catering accommodation.
- 3.8. The Covid-19 pandemic has hit tourism hard in Lincoln and, whilst the full effects remain unknown, it is hoped that with more people holidaying in the UK there will be short-term increases in visitors which will help the sector to bounce back.

4. Issues and Options Consultation

- 4.1. The Issues and Options consultation identified the existing tourism policy, LP7: A Sustainable Visitor Economy amongst the policies not intended to be changed. A number of comments were received on this proposal to not change the policy. These were:
 - This policy is urban-centric and is silent on development in the countryside, especially non-dwellings and caravan parks where development would not be allowed under LP2.
 - The wording of this policy could be expanded upon regarding how it contributes to the local economy, visitors and the local community.
 - Should be amended to limit the number of holiday homes or caravans to 10 where the need can be demonstrated.
 - Should be a third criterion for 'new' tourism ventures to be considered positively – there is current ambiguity in relation to this.

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. Only a small number of comments were received in relation to this policy, all of which were broadly in support of the policy.

6. Proposed Approach in Draft Local Plan

- 6.1. Rather than the single policy contained within the adopted Local Plan, the Draft Local Plan includes two policies one focussing on the urban area and one on the rural areas in relation to tourism and the visitor economy and supporting its sustainable growth. The two new policies relate to "Sustainable Urban Tourism" and "Sustainable Rural Tourism. This report is concerned with the policy on Sustainable Urban Tourism.

7. Reasonable Alternative Options

7.1. The following alternative options have been considered for this policy (option 1 being the preferred option).

Option 2: A general Central Lincolnshire wide policy promoting sustainable tourism, leisure and cultural facilities and directing development to existing settlements. This option was discounted, as it was considered that one single policy would not be as effective in addressing and supporting the different aspects of sustainable tourism as having separate, specific policies.

Option 3: No policy, rely on other Local Plan policies and national policy. This option was discounted, as it will not provide the same level of protection for existing destinations and facilities, nor will it ensure the most appropriate development for Central Lincolnshire in the same way a local policy will.

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.