

Central Lincolnshire Policy S51: Creation of New Open Space, Sports and Leisure Facilities Evidence Report

Formerly Policy S50

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 S51, which relates to the provision of new Open Space, Sports and Leisure Facilities and the proposed Open Space Standards set out in Appendix 3 of the Local Plan.

2. Policy Context

- 2.1. The preparation of the new Local Plan, including the review of open space, sport and leisure policy, has been influenced by national, strategic and local context and strategies, which are identified and discussed below.

National Policy and Guidance

- 2.2. 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 July 2021.
- 2.3. The main elements of the NPPF that influence open space, sport and leisure policy are contained within chapter 8, which promotes healthy and safe communities:

Paragraph 92 – Planning policies and decisions should aim to achieve healthy, inclusive and safe places which: ... enable and support healthy lifestyles, especially where this would address identified local health and well-being needs – for example through the provision of safe and accessible green infrastructure, sports facilities, local shops, access to healthier food, allotments and layouts that encourage walking and cycling.

Paragraph 93 – Planning policies and decisions should: plan positively for the provision and use of shared spaces, community facilities (such as...sports venues, open space...) and other local services to enhance the sustainability of communities and residential environments....ensure an integrated approach to considering the location of housing, economic uses and community facilities and services.

Paragraph 98 – Access to a network of high quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and physical activity is important for the health and well-being of communities, and can deliver wider benefits for nature and support efforts to address climate change. Planning policies should be based on robust and up-to-date assessments of the need for open space, sport and recreation facilities (including quantitative or qualitative deficits or surpluses) and opportunities for new provision. Information gained from the assessments should be used to determine what open space, sport and recreational provision is needed, which plans should then seek to accommodate.

Paragraph 99 – Existing open space, sports and recreational buildings and land, including playing fields, should not be built on unless certain criteria can be met.

Paragraph 100 – Planning policies and decisions should protect and enhance public rights of way and access, including taking opportunities to provide better facilities for users, for example by adding links to existing rights of way networks including National Trails

- 2.4. The Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) was first introduced in 2014 which offers 'live' government guidance, subject to regular review and updates. The PPG provides guidance to help in the implementation of policy in the NPPF and contains a number of sections relevant to the preparation of Local Plans.
- 2.5. Key guidance in relation to the open space, sport and recreation can be found under the following headings:
- 2.6. The following paragraphs offer useful guidance:
- Paragraph 001 - How should open space be taken into account in planning? (Ref ID: 37-001-20140306)
 - Paragraph 002 - How do local planning authorities and developers assess the needs for sports and recreation facilities? (Ref ID: 37-002-20140306)
 - Paragraph 004 - Where can I find information on public rights of way and National Trails? (Ref ID: 37-004-20140306)
- 2.7. Planning practice guidance reinforces the NPPF's requirement for open space to be considered when new development is planned or if any proposal arises which could affect existing open space. It places a requirement on local planning authorities to assess local needs and opportunities for new open space to be delivered. Open space may serve a wide area, extending beyond a local authority boundary and may need to be considered within duty to cooperate discussions. In relation to assessing the needs for sport and recreation facilities, it suggests local planning authorities may refer to Sport England's guidance.
- 2.8. The Government' Strategy for increasing participation in sport and reducing levels of inactivity is contained within Sporting Future: A New Strategy for an Active Nation¹ (December 2015). It focuses on five key outcomes that sport and physical activity can deliver: physical wellbeing, mental wellbeing, individual development, social and community development and economic development. Delivery of the outcomes will be driven through outputs around engagement in sport and physical activity, sporting success and a strong and resilient sport sector. Local authorities can support these targets through investment in sport and physical activity, including providing new and better facilities through planning policies.
- 2.9. Sport England's strategy Towards an Active Nation 2016-2021², sets out how it will put national policy into practice. The strategy sets out a vision for Sport England, who want everyone in England, regardless of age, background or level of ability to feel able to engage in sport and physical activity. Delivery of the strategy is supported by seven investment programmes, responding to the priorities set in the national strategy Sporting Future.
- 2.10. Also relevant to this policy area is Sport England's increased focus on the importance of active environments. Active Design³ is a combination of 10 principles that promote activity,

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/sporting-future-a-new-strategy-for-an-active-nation>

² <https://sportengland-production-files.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/sport-england-towards-an-active-nation.pdf?VersionId=zE6hDbFaa9dNK8tRqxP2HuVIM2Ls79HG>

³ <https://www.sportengland.org/how-we-can-help/facilities-and-planning/design-and-cost-guidance/active-design>

health and stronger communities through the way places are designed. The 10 principles are:

- Activity for all neighbourhoods
- Walkable communities
- Connected walking and cycling routes
- Co-location of community facilities
- Network of multifunctional open space
- High quality streets and spaces
- Appropriate infrastructure
- Active buildings
- Management, maintenance, monitoring & evaluation
- Activity promotion & local champions

2.11. Sport England works in partnership with local authorities to strategically plan for sports facilities and deliver activity outcomes through the planning system. It regards an assessment of need as core to developing and applying local planning policy for sporting provision. Sport England’s recommended approach for undertaking a comprehensive needs assessment can be found in Assessing Needs and Opportunities Guide for Indoor and Outdoor Sports Facilities⁴ (July 2014) and Playing Pitch Strategy Guidance⁵ (October 2013).

2.12. Sport England also provides two online calculators – the Sports Facility Calculator and Playing Pitch Calculator - that can help local authorities plan for delivering and funding new facilities. The calculators quantify both the additional demand for sports facilities created by new residential development and the cost of meeting this new demand at the time of the calculation.

Local Policy

2.13. The current approach to open space, sport and leisure facilities is set out in the adopted Central Lincolnshire Local Plan (April 2017), which includes a specific policy (LP24 Creation of New Open Space, Sports and Recreation Facilities).

2.14. Policy LP24 sets out the main provisions in relation to new open space, sport and leisure provision. Residential development will be required to provide new or enhanced provision of public open space, sports and recreation facilities in accordance with the standards set out in Appendix C of the Plan. Local Useable Greenspace may include the following types of open space: formal and informal play space, public parks and gardens, amenity space, informal kick about/ball game areas and natural and semi-natural greenspace.

Open Space Quantity Standards in Appendix C of Adopted Local Plan

Open Space Type	Quantity Standard
Strategic Formal Playing Fields	1.1 ha/1000 population
Local Usable Greenspace – Urban settlements (Level 1-2 of the settlement hierarchy)	1.8 ha/1000 population

⁴ https://sportengland-production-files.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/20140722-anog-published.pdf?_z9TwHG.HE_FzoNPhkFZyN_yrjq8WPC

⁵ https://sportengland-production-files.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/pps-guidance-october-2013-updated.pdf?VersionId=afnAz9cYWu47InVNn_t3QCSem9.uRnwg

Open Space Type	Quantity Standard
Local Usable Greenspace – Rural towns and villages (Level 3-6 of the settlement hierarchy)	1.5 ha/1000 population

Open Space Accessibility and Quality Standards in Appendix C of Adopted Local Plan

Open Space Type	Accessibility Standard	Quality Standard
Park and Garden	Local / Neighbourhood provision: 400m -1200m or 5 -15 minute walkable distance	Good and above, as defined by Green Flag standards or any locally agreed quality criteria.
Amenity Greenspace over 0.2 ha	Local: 400m or 5 minutes' walk	Good and above, as defined by Green Flag standards or locally agreed quality criteria.
Formal Equipped Play Areas	Local provision: Local Equipped Area of Play: 400m or 5 minute walk Neighbourhood Equipped Area of Play: 1200m or 15 minute walk	Good and above, as defined by Fields in Trust standards and/or any locally agreed quality criteria.
Playing Field provision	Local provision: 1200m or 15 minute walk Strategic provision: 15km distance or 15 minute drive	Good and above, as defined by Sport England Governing body standards or locally agreed quality criteria.
Natural/Semi Natural Greenspace (including access to Green corridor and Public Rights of Way networks)	Local provision (including access to Green corridor and Public Rights of Way networks): 400m or 5 minutes walkable distance. Strategic provision: 2km or 25 minute walkable distance	At least 2 ha locally accessible and 20ha strategically accessible. Quality good and above as defined by locally agreed criteria.
Civic Space, including cemetery provision	As locally identified	Good and above as defined by locally agreed quality criteria.
Allotments & Community Growing Spaces	As locally identified	Good and above as defined by locally developed criteria.

- 2.15. The policy states a preference for on-site provision, which is multifunctional and supports health and outdoor recreation. A holistic approach to the design of new open space is expected and new provision should also aim to protect, enhance and manage integrated paths for active travel, including links to the wider countryside.

- 2.16. Policy in relation to existing open space is set out in LP15 Community Facilities. The policy states that the loss of existing community facility to provide an alternative land use will only be permitted if certain criteria can be met:
- The facility is demonstrably no longer fit for purpose and the site is not viable to be redeveloped for a new community facility; or
 - The service provided by the facility is met by alternative provision that exists within reasonable proximity: what is deemed as reasonable proximity will depend on the nature of the facility and its associated catchment area; or
 - The proposal includes the provision of a new community facility of similar nature and of a similar or greater size in a suitable on or offsite location.

Neighbourhood Plans

- 2.17. 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 and enhancing publicly accessible open spaces, sports and leisure facilities within their communities.

Other Local Strategies

- 2.18. Each of the Central Lincolnshire Authorities publish a corporate plan, outlining a vision and strategic priorities. These are regularly reviewed to ensure that they remain relevant.

The NK Plan 2020-2023

- 2.19. Outlines the vision and priorities for North Kesteven District Council. Relevant to this policy area is the strategic priority “Our Communities -To enhance the wellbeing, safety and health of all our communities; inspiring and supporting a sustainable and flourishing future”, with an overarching key ambition to “promote healthy lifestyles by providing a range of leisure and cultural opportunities”. Also relevant is the priority “Our Environment – To meet the challenge of climate change, delivering ambitions and creating opportunity across all out priorities”.

West Lindsey Corporate Plan 2019-2023

- 2.20. Outlines the vision and priorities for West Lindsey District Council. The council will focus on three key themes: Our Council, Our People and Our Place. Under Our People, the council has a strategic aim to “reduce health inequalities and promote wellbeing across the district through the promotion of healthy lifestyles”.

Lincoln’s Vision 2025

- 2.21. Outlines the vision and priorities for the City of Lincoln District Council. The document sets out five strategic priorities and aspirations that underpin each priority. Most relevant to this policy area is the strategic priority of “Let’s reduce all kinds of inequality” with the aspiration to “Let’s improve the health and quality of life for people living in Lincoln”, and the priority “Let’s enhance our remarkable place”, with the aspirations “Let’s cherish and enhance our natural environment” and “Let’s provide interesting, exciting and vibrant places to enjoy”.

Lincolnshire County Council Corporate Plan

- 2.22. Outlines the vision and priorities for Lincolnshire County Council. The document sets out four priorities: High aspirations, the opportunity to enjoy life to the full, thriving environments and good-value council services.

Climate Change Strategies and Action Plans

- 2.23. The Central Lincolnshire authorities, along with many other local authorities in the UK, recognise that there is a current and future climate emergency that requires urgent planning and action. North Kesteven has an approved Climate Emergency Strategy and Action Plan, and West Lindsey has recently published a draft Sustainability, Climate Change and Environmental Strategy for consultation. Both strategies recognise the importance of increasing green infrastructure to increase carbon capture and support biodiversity and ecosystems services.

Joint Health & Wellbeing Strategy for Lincolnshire (June 2018)

- 2.24. This strategy is prepared by Lincolnshire's Health and Wellbeing Board, which includes representatives from Lincolnshire County Council, NHS Clinical Commissioning Groups, District Councils in Lincolnshire, Healthwatch Lincolnshire and NHS England. The Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy aims to inform and influence decisions about the commissioning and delivery of health and care services in Lincolnshire, so that they are focused on the needs of the people who use them and tackle the factors that affect everyone's health and wellbeing.

- 2.25. The key priorities of the strategy include physical activity and obesity, and relevant objectives to this policy area include: "Integrating physical activity into pathways and strategic planning" and "engage with spatial planning and design to develop places that support healthy individuals and communities".

North Kesteven Open Space Strategy (2018)

- 2.26. The Strategy aims "to deliver high quality public open spaces that meet local needs and aspirations". The Strategy sets out the following vision for open spaces in North Kesteven: "a healthy, active and environmentally sustainable district, with a broad and inclusive range of outdoor leisure opportunities".

- 2.27. The Strategy has four priorities designed to deliver the vision:

- To promote open spaces and encourage use by all;
- To deliver the type and quality of new open space that communities need;
- To use open space to increase biodiversity in NK;
- To effectively manage NK's existing open space assets.

- 2.28. In developing the Strategy, the Council surveyed residents, and Town and Parish Councils, in order to gain an understanding of how communities rate the quality and availability of open spaces in the district. The results of the survey showed that while overall satisfaction with open space in North Kesteven is generally high, there are disparities between those communities most and least satisfied with local provision.

North Kesteven Sport & Physical Activity Strategy

- 2.29. The Strategy sets a vision and strategy for sports and physical activity across North Kesteven. The council is committed to addressing low levels of physical activity to help its residents live healthier and more active lives. The vision is: "Inspiring everyone to be more active, more often". Underpinning the vision are four priority outcomes for sport and physical activity:

- Addressing obesity and risk of diabetes and heart disease by Inspiring Everyone to be More Active, More Often
- Engaging with specific groups and localities to expand the number of people involved and to increase the frequency they participate in physical activity

- Improving community cohesion through sport and physical activity
- Delivering a positive customer experience.

Football Facilities Plans

- 2.30. Local football facilities plans for City of Lincoln, North Kesteven and West Lindsey have been prepared in partnership by the Football Foundation, local authorities, sports clubs, schools and the county Football Association. The plans capture current football facility assets and identify opportunities and priority projects to target investment in football facilities across each local area. Investment priorities for each district in Central Lincolnshire have been identified around 3G football turf pitches, improved grass pitches, changing room pavilions/clubhouses and small-sided facilities.

3. Context and Evidence

- 3.1. The policy approach to open space, sport and leisure facilities has been developed based on key evidence base work and studies. In order to help inform the preparation of the Local Plan, and comply with the requirements in NPPF that local plans should be based on robust and up-to-date assessments of local needs for open space, sports and recreation facilities and opportunities for new provision, the following studies have been undertaken:

Open Space Audit Update (June 2021)

- 3.2. The Central Lincolnshire Open Space Audit and Provision Assessment April 2016⁶ (2016 Audit) was prepared to provide evidence for policy and open space standards within the adopted Central Lincolnshire Local Plan (April 2017). This evidence involved an audit of publicly accessible open space across Central Lincolnshire, to ascertain the amount and type of open space provision. Site surveys were undertaken within a selection of settlements to gather information on the quality of open space provision. An analysis was then undertaken of the provision of open space per 1,000 population and benchmarking against national open space standards.
- 3.3. The Open Space Audit Update June 2021⁷ (2021 Audit) has been prepared to provide an update on the provision of open spaces in Central Lincolnshire. It provides updated information on the quantity and accessibility of open space across Central Lincolnshire. It identifies those geographical areas deficit of certain types of open space when compared to the nationally derived open space standards and adopted Central Lincolnshire standards, using up-to-date population statistics. Updated quality assessments of open space have not been undertaken for the 2021 Audit. This is largely due to government coronavirus restrictions that have been in place over the last year. The Central Lincolnshire authorities hope to undertake this work in the near future.
- 3.4. All publicly accessible open space sites were included in the audit. Private outdoor sports facilities sites, education playing fields and natural and semi-natural greenspace sites not publicly accessible were also included, to present a complete picture of the different types of open space across Central Lincolnshire, but were not assigned standards. The 2021 Audit identified a total of 4,594 individual open space sites covering a total area of 18,063 hectares across Central Lincolnshire.

⁶ <https://www.n-kesteven.gov.uk/central-lincolnshire/planning-policy-library/>

⁷ <https://www.n-kesteven.gov.uk/central-lincolnshire/local-plan-consultation-library/>

- 3.5. Each open space was categorised using an open space typology, initially developed in the 2016 Audit and reviewed and amended in the 2021 Audit. Open space serves a range of uses and functions. A hierarchy of open space provision was developed to help understand the different functions the sites perform and to distinguish between provisions of strategic, city/town/settlement, neighbourhood and local importance.
- 3.6. Some of the key findings from the quantity assessment were:
- The largest contributor to open space provision in Central Lincolnshire is natural and semi-natural greenspace (8,692.94 ha), accounting for 48.12% of total provision;
 - The smallest contributor is civic spaces (6.53ha), accounting for just 0.03% of total provision;
 - For the Amenity Space, Outdoor Sports Facilities (Private), Green Corridors, Publicly Accessible Natural and Semi-Natural Greenspace and Natural and Semi-Natural Greenspace typologies, the average provision in Central Lincolnshire is above the recommended Fields in Trust (FiT) standard. For Parks and Gardens, Provision for Children and Young People, Outdoor Sports Facilities (Public) and Outdoor Sports Facilities (Education) the average provision in Central Lincolnshire is below the recommended FiT standard. By 2043, the figures for Amenity Space and Green Corridors fall below the recommended standard.
- 3.7. Some of the key findings from the accessibility assessment were:
- The rural areas of Central Lincolnshire typically have poorer access to an allotment site, with some large villages that have no access;
 - Those areas with limited access to an amenity greenspace greater than 0.2 ha, are generally well served by other forms of open space that provide opportunities for informal recreation;
 - In the villages, playing fields and recreation grounds classified under the outdoor sports facilities (public) typology often provide multifunctional recreational opportunities;
 - There is a reasonably even spread of public outdoor sports facilities across the study area providing good access to such sites;
 - Strategic parks and gardens sites are concentrated in Lincoln, which are expected to serve a wide catchment area: a number of villages surrounding Lincoln have access to these sites;
 - Most settlements within Central Lincolnshire have reasonable access to a play area and/or youth space. However, there are some gaps in provision and some village have no access to a play area;
 - A good proportion of residents have the opportunity to access a natural greenspace close to where they live, however there are gaps in access within all three urban settlements and in some rural areas, although these settlements do have good access to the surrounding countryside and to the green corridors such as the River Witham.
- 3.8. Following the quantity and accessibility assessments, the 2021 Audit provides recommended updated quantity and access standards for open space for inclusion in the Local Plan. Quantity standards refer to the area of open space in hectares required for every 1,000 people. Accessibility standards refer to how far people travel from their home to reach a particular type of open space.

- 3.9. The standards put forward are the *minimum levels* of provision. If a geographical area enjoys levels of open space provision that exceeds the minimum recommended standards, this does not necessarily mean that there is a surplus of supply: all such provision may be well used, a site may be of strategic importance (such as a country park), or there may be lower provision in a neighbouring area and residents travel to use neighbouring open space. It is also important to note that the three types of standards should be used together and not considered in isolation. For example, even if there may be sufficient supply of a particular open space typology against the quantity standard, there may still be gaps in access, or the existing provision may be poor quality/not fit for purpose – and therefore there would still be shortfalls against the standards.

Open Space Area Supply Report (June 2021)

- 3.10. The Open Space Supply Report⁸ compares provision of publicly accessible open space against the proposed open space standards for Central Lincolnshire as set out in the 2021 Audit. The purpose of the report is to help planners and developers to identify whether there is a shortfall in publicly accessible open space in a local area within Central Lincolnshire. It is a snapshot in time and will be reviewed and published every two years on the Central Lincolnshire website, using monitoring data on the creation of new open space/open space losses and as new population data becomes available. This will ensure decisions are based on evidence which is as accurate as possible.

Sports Facility Assessments (December 2020)

- 3.11. The Central Lincolnshire authorities commissioned consultants LK2 to undertake, for each district area, an assessment of existing provision of grass pitches, artificial turf pitches, and ancillary sports facilities based on Sport England guidance. A separate report was prepared for each district. The assessments made the following recommendations:

City of Lincoln

- The provision of sporting venues and playing pitches across the City is currently disparate.
- There are currently four 3G FTPs in Lincoln. On this basis, there is sufficient supply relative to affiliated demand. However, two of these; Lincoln Christs Hospital School and Lincoln City Football Club currently offer only limited community use. Taking this into account, there is a shortfall of two full-sized 3G FTPs.
- The assessment recommends a tiered system should be developed for the provision of pitch based sports in the City: Tier one – Large single site with multiple indoor and outdoor sport offerings with full community access; Tier two - Single site with multiple sport offerings with managed or agreed community access; Tier three - Small single site with separate sports / activity offerings; Tier four - Small single site with only one sport / activity offering. Tier one facilities should be strategically located across the City to provide a 'geographical split' based on demand, population density and available associated facilities. The remaining tiered facilities (2,3,4) are then chosen to support the principal site in that sub-region.

North Kesteven

⁸ <https://www.n-kesteven.gov.uk/central-lincolnshire/local-plan-consultation-library/>

- There is adequate sports pitch provision currently across the local authority with the current population in North Kesteven, based on team numbers and current stock of pitches.
- There will be need for future pitches based upon the latest population projections available and the current team numbers.
- Football accounts for the highest growth requirements with a total of 18 grass pitches and 2 artificial (full size) needed up to 2040.
- Rugby requires 2 full size pitches and 2 junior pitch. Cricket requires a further 2 pitches and hockey a further 1 sand based artificial pitch.
- The assessment recommends further and more detailed supply and demand work to identify the quality of the pitches.

West Lindsey

- There is adequate sports pitch provision currently across the local authority with the current population in West Lindsey, based on team numbers and current stock of pitches.
- There will be need for future pitches based upon the latest population projections available and the current team numbers.
- Football accounts for the highest growth requirements with a total of 13.64 grass pitches and 0.7 artificial (full size) needed up to 2040.
- Rugby requires 2.07 full size pitches. Cricket requires a further 3.15 pitches.
- Based on future population projections there is no demand for additional hockey pitch space within West Lindsey.
- The assessment recommends further and more detailed supply and demand work to identify the quality of the pitches.

3.12. These assessments focused on the quantity of need against the population growth to provide a strategic assessment of what would be needed across the plan period to support a growing population.

3.13. It is recognised that these documents do not satisfy all of the Sport England requirements to be considered a Playing Pitch Strategy. In discussion with Sport England in late 2021, it has been agreed that a full Playing Pitch Strategy will be progressed, working alongside Sport England in advance of the next review of this Local Plan in order that its findings can fully inform the next plan.

4. Issues and Options Consultation

4.1. The first, formal stage of the Local Plan review was the Issues and Options consultation that took place in June and July 2019.

4.2. The main issues arising relation to open space, sport and leisure were:

- concern that the Policy LP24 Creation of New Open Space, Sport and Recreation Facilities was to be amended with no details of how;
- the evidence base for sport – playing pitches, outdoor sport and built sport facilities that is used to inform the Local Plan is considered to be out of date, and that further evidence base work is needed to underpin the review and implementation of the Local Plan;
- support for retention of green spaces;
- need to maximise green space and vegetation to help mitigate greenhouse gas emissions;

- school fields should be retained as green space, even if no longer used;
- we need more, and larger, green spaces;
- recreational green spaces should be an integral part of a housing estate;
- builders should be putting money into the area they build in, not just restricted to infrastructure, but facilities like village halls and play areas;
- playing fields, and playing field land (as defined in the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015, of any type need to be protected in line with NPPF Paragraph 97;
- allotments should never be built on, derelict allotments can be made productive again;
- support for the continued protection of community facilities.

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. The comments received have been summarised as follows:

- Various comments broadly supporting the policy or elements of the policy.
- Various detailed suggestions to improve the clarity of policy wording.
- Concern that the policy is too prescriptive.
- Various comments suggesting the policy needs rewording, especially in relation to: the preference for on-site open space creation, application of a 10 dwelling threshold and funding mechanisms.
- Concern that the policy is not in conformity with The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 or the NPPG.
- The evidence behind the policy is lacking/weak, especially in relation to: assessment of existing supply to understand need and up to date Playing Pitch Strategies for each Local Authority.
- Concern raised around policy implementation.

6. Proposed Approach in Draft Local Plan

6.1. The proposed policy approach in the Draft Local Plan remains broadly the same as that set out in policy LP24 New Open Space, Sport and Recreation Facilities of the adopted Local Plan in terms of policy wording, with the overall aim of seeking to; reduce deficiency in publicly accessible open space, sports and leisure facilities; ensure new development provides an appropriate amount of new open space, sports and leisure facilities to meet need; and, improve the quality of, and access to, existing open spaces, sports and leisure facilities. The preference for on-site provision in a suitable location is carried forward, as well as the requirement for open space to be designed to be multifunctional.

6.2. The policy has been amended slightly. For clarity, a threshold of 10 dwellings has been applied for the provision of new or enhanced publicly accessible open space, sport and leisure facilities. There is also a greater emphasis on the need for development proposals to design open space which maximises green infrastructure benefits and which takes opportunities to link into the wider green infrastructure network and deliver a biodiversity net gain.

- 6.3. The open space standards are set out in Appendix 3 to the Local Plan. Here the approach has changed from the adopted Local Plan, with standards set out by open space type as opposed to being grouped together as 'Local Usable Greenspace'.
- 6.4. 3.56ha/1,000 population is the overall total provision recommended in the new standards. This is compared to the current adopted standards of 1.8ha/1000 population in the urban settlements and 1.5ha/1,000 population in the market towns and villages. The new recommended standards include allotments and parks and gardens, which were not included in the adopted standards. The evidence within the 2021 Audit shows that there is a need for new allotment provision to meet the needs of the projected 2043 population, with waiting lists demonstrating current demand for an allotment plot is high. Similarly, there is a need for new parks and gardens provision, with current supply only meeting FiT standards in Lincoln and the whole of Central Lincolnshire falling below the standard by 2043 if there was no new provision.
- 6.5. However, it is important to note that standards should not be simply added together to generate a total requirement for open space. This is because it may be possible to provide some open space types within the boundary of another. For example, a neighbourhood park may be multi-functional and contain one or a number of the other open space types.
- 6.6. Further changes have been made to the quantity, quality and accessibility standards for outdoor sports facilities in Appendix 3 as a result of discussions with Sport England in late 2021. In order to allow for the findings of an up to date Playing Pitch Strategy reference has been added to these standards so they can be applied at the earliest opportunity.
- 6.7. Sport England have confirmed that their preference is to have an up to date Playing Pitch Strategy that fully accords with the Sport England guidance in place to support the plan, but they have confirmed that the list of sites and quantity assessment undertaken matches their records. Central Lincolnshire has committed to undertaking a revised Playing Pitch Strategy in partnership with Sport England in advance of the next Local Plan review.

7. Reasonable Alternative Options

- 7.1. The following alternative options have been considered for this policy (with Option 1 being the preferred policy in the Draft Local Plan).
- 7.2. Option 2: Have no policy on open space standards in the Local Plan. This option has been discounted, as there would be no requirements for new open space provision set out in the Local Plan. Any open space secured through new development would be that which is promoted by the applicant. This creates uncertainty for local communities around how and when new open space will be provided.
- 7.3. Option 3: Rely on national policy and guidance and adopt nationally recommended benchmark open space standards. Although standards set by Fields in Trust (FiT), for example, are long standing and nationally recognised, this option has not been taken forward into the Local Plan. Best practice guidance recommends setting locally derived open space standards based on local assessments of need. The FiT standards are generic standards for the whole country, and do not take into account local characteristics or issues. Additionally, FiT guidance states that the quantity guidelines "should not be interpreted as maximum levels of provision, and it is recommended that these are adjusted to take into account of local circumstances".

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.