

# Central Lincolnshire Policy S53 Design and Amenity Evidence Report

Formerly Policy S52

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 S53, which relates to the design and amenity considerations of developments.

## 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. Policy S52: Design and Amenity touches on and includes wide range of specific areas from the NPPF. Paragraph 8 of the NPPF sets out:
  - 2.3. *“Achieving sustainable development means that the planning system has three overarching objectives, which are interdependent and need to be pursued in mutually supportive ways (so that opportunities can be taken to secure net gains across each of the different objectives):*
    - ... b) *a social objective – to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by ensuring that a sufficient number and range of homes can be provided to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by fostering well-designed, beautiful and safe places, with accessible services and open spaces that reflect current and future needs and support communities’ health, social and cultural well-being; and...*
- 2.4. In addition, the following paragraphs are also of relevance:
  - Paragraph 92 - Planning policies and decisions should aim to achieve healthy, inclusive and safe places which:... b) are safe and accessible, so that crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine the quality of life or community cohesion – for example through the use of attractive, well-designed, clear and legible pedestrian and cycle routes, and high quality public space, which encourage the active and continual use of public areas; and c) 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 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...
  - Paragraph 104 - Transport issues should be considered from the earliest stages of plan-making and development proposals, so that: e) patterns of movement, streets, parking and other transport considerations are integral to the design of schemes, and contribute to making high quality places.

- Paragraph 106 - Planning policies should: d) provide for high quality walking and cycling networks and supporting facilities such as cycle parking (drawing on Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans);
- Paragraph 126 - The creation of high quality buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities. Being clear about design expectations, and how these will be tested, is essential for achieving this...
- Paragraph 130 - Planning policies and decisions should ensure that developments: a) will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development; b) are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping; c) are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities); d) establish or maintain a strong sense of place, using the arrangement of streets, spaces, building types and materials to create attractive, welcoming and distinctive places to live, work and visit; e) optimise the potential of the site to accommodate and sustain an appropriate amount and mix of development (including green and other public space) and support local facilities and transport networks; and f) create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible and which promote health and well-being, with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users; and where crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine the quality of life or community cohesion and resilience.
- Paragraph 185 - Planning policies and decisions should also ensure that new development is appropriate for its location taking into account the likely effects (including cumulative effects) of pollution on health, living conditions and the natural environment, as well as the potential sensitivity of the site or the wider area to impacts that could arise from the development. In doing so they should: a) mitigate and reduce to a minimum potential adverse impacts resulting from noise from new development – and avoid noise giving rise to significant adverse impacts on health and the quality of life<sup>60</sup>; b) identify and protect tranquil areas which have remained relatively undisturbed by noise and are prized for their recreational and amenity value for this reason; and c) limit the impact of light pollution from artificial light on local amenity, intrinsically dark landscapes and nature conservation.

2.5. 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.

2.6. The PPG contains a specific section in relation to design – Design: Process and Tools which sets out details of how well-designed places can be planned for in Local Plans, the tools available and the importance of engaging on design.

2.7. This section also links to the National Design Guide which was published in 2019. In particular this section of the PPG states:

*“Well-designed places can be achieved by taking a proactive and collaborative approach at all stages of the planning process, from policy and plan formulation through to the determination of planning applications and the post approval stage. This guidance explains the processes and tools that can be used through the planning system and how to engage local communities effectively.*

*To be read alongside this guidance, the National Design Guide sets out the characteristics of well-designed places and demonstrates what good design means in practice....*

*Good design is set out in the National Design Guide under the following 10 characteristics:*

- *context*
- *identity*
- *built form*
- *movement*
- *nature*
- *public spaces*
- *uses*
- *homes and buildings*
- *resources*
- *lifespan*

*The National Design Guide can be used by all those involved in shaping places including in plan-making and decision making.” (Paragraph: 001 Reference ID: 26-001-20191001)*

2.8. The National Design Guide and the subsequently published National Model Design Code (2021) have provided a substantial basis for assessing and considering design under ten characteristics. They provide a helpful framework for developing policy, assessing schemes and empowering communities to develop their own design guidance and design code specific to the local area.

2.9. Paragraph 9 of the National Design Guide sets out its broad purpose:

*“The National Design Guide addresses the question of how we recognise well-designed places, by outlining and illustrating the Government’s priorities for well-designed places in the form of ten characteristics.”*

2.10. The key to a well-designed place (the ten characteristics) is set out on page 8 of the National Design Guide, replicated below:



*The ten characteristics of well-designed places*

## Local Policy

- 2.11. The Adopted Local Plan contains a specific policy relating to Design and Amenity. This policy sets out the criteria that development proposals will be assessed against in order to ensure that new developments are of a high quality in terms of design and amenity considerations.

## 3. Context and Evidence

- 3.1. Central Lincolnshire is made up of many locally distinctive places including high streets, market squares, industrial estates, urban neighbourhoods, rural villages, historic environments and landscapes, which, in combination with a variety of natural forms and features, contribute to the rich and varied character. Securing good design in all development is essential to preserving and enhancing the quality and appeal of the Central Lincolnshire built environment.
- 3.2. The specific challenge facing the Central Lincolnshire authorities is the need to protect the intrinsic qualities of the landscape and built environment whilst delivering the housing, employment growth, and infrastructure necessary to meet local needs, deliver economic growth, and to make existing communities more sustainable.
- 3.3. The Central Lincolnshire Authorities will respond to this challenge through the development management system using the design policy in combination with the wider suite of policies in the local plan where relevant which all contribute to ensuring that

development coming forward is truly sustainable and contributes positively to Central Lincolnshire.

- 3.4. Given the scale and diversity of Central Lincolnshire it would be extremely challenging, and potentially inappropriate, to assess every single village, town, suburb or other geography and create bespoke policies for each.

## 4. Issues and Options Consultation

- 4.1. The Issues and Options consultation identified existing policy LP26: Design and Amenity as a policy not intended to be changed. A very small number of comments were received on this proposal not to change the policy. The comments are set out below:

- This policy would benefit from review to ensure it is not too prescriptive – it could be the hook for a suite of detailed supplementary design guidance.
- Energy efficiency should also be incorporated into this policy.

## 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. A number of comments were made on this policy. These comments have been summarised as follows

- Various comments broadly supporting the policy.
- Various comments suggesting the policy needs substantial or significant rewording, especially in relation to the amenity value of trees, and biodiversity and habitats
- The evidence behind the policy is lacking / weak.
- Concern that the policy does not allow for flexibility where appropriate.
- Various comments stating the importance of design and quality.

- 5.3. Following the comments received during the consultation, and the publication of the National Design Guide and National Model Design Code, amendments have been made to the policy to provide clarity.

- 5.4. Additional text, in relation to design codes, has been added to the end of the second paragraph of the policy. This additional text reads as follows: “Design Codes may be produced for parts of Central Lincolnshire or in support of specific developments. The approach taken in these Design Codes should be informed by the National Model Design Code and where these codes have been adopted, developments will be expected to adhere to the Code.”

- 5.5. Section 4 criterion c of the policy has been amended, removing the following text from the end of the sentence “and people with conditions such as dementia or sight impairment for example”.

- 5.6. Section 5 criterion b amended to make reference to biodiversity net gain, and now reads “... achieve wider goals for biodiversity net gain, climate change mitigation...”

## 6. Proposed Approach in Draft Local Plan

- 6.1. The design policy in the adopted Local Plan has functioned well and the principles of the policy remain relevant today, but with the substantial change in national context from the publication of the National Design Guide and National Model Design Code it is necessary to update the policy.
- 6.2. The Draft Local Plan includes a specific policy in relation to design and amenity based around the ten characteristics set out in the National Design Guide, placing good design at the centre of good planning. The policy provides adequate criteria to enable schemes to be considered on their merits against the attributes of design quality set out in the policy, but also allows for local planning authorities or communities to develop design guides or design codes that are specific to a very small geography or site that can better inform on what is considered to be appropriate or otherwise in a given area.

## 7. Reasonable Alternative Options

- 7.1. The following alternative options have been considered for this policy (option 1 being the preferred option).
- 7.2. Option 2: Retain the design policy in the adopted local plan. This option was discounted as it would not take into account the Government’s new design guidance or introduction of design codes.
- 7.3. Option 3: To not have a design and amenity policy and rely on national policy. This option was discounted, as it would not take into account the Governments new design guidance, nor would it provide any degree of certainty in approach for new development proposals and residents.

## 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.