

# Central Lincolnshire Policy S63: Green Wedges Evidence Report

Formerly Policy S62

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 S63: Green Wedges, which relates to the allocation, protection and enhancement of Green Wedges in 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 July 2021.
- 2.2. Green Wedges are a local designation that are not specifically covered within the NPPF or NPPG. However, the following paragraphs are particularly relevant to this policy area:

*Paragraph 20 - Strategic policies should set out an overall strategy for the pattern, scale and quality of development, and make sufficient provision for:...conservation and enhancement of the natural, built and historic environment, including landscapes and green infrastructure.*

*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 120 – Planning Policies and decisions should:...recognise that some undeveloped land can perform many functions, such as for wildlife, recreation, flood risk mitigation, cooling/shading, carbon storage or food production.*

*Paragraph 174 - Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:...recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services*

- 2.3. 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.
- 2.4. The following paragraphs offer useful guidance:
  - Paragraph 036 - How can planning policies conserve and enhance landscapes? (ref ID: 8-036-20190721)

### Local Policy

- 2.5. The adopted Central Lincolnshire Local Plan (April 2017) includes a specific policy, LP22 Green Wedges, which identifies 17 Green Wedges on the Policies Map (see **Table 2.1**) and sets out criteria for development proposals that fall within and adjacent to a Green Wedge. The policy states that the Green Wedges have been identified to fulfil one or more functions:

- Prevention of the physical merging of settlements, preserving their separate identity, local character and historic character;
- Creation of a multi-functional 'green lung' to offer communities a direct and continuous link to the open countryside beyond the urban area;
- Provision of an accessible recreational resource, with both formal and informal opportunities, close to where people live, where public access is maximised without compromising the integrity of the Green Wedge;
- Conservation and enhancement of local wildlife and protection of links between wildlife sites to support wildlife corridors.

**Table 2.1:** Existing Green Wedges in Central Lincolnshire

<b>Name of Green Wedge</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Total Area (ha)</b>
Canwick to Washingborough	City of Lincoln/North Kesteven/West Lindsey	548.18
Waddington to Bracebridge Heath	North Kesteven	434.62
Witham Valley	City of Lincoln/North Kesteven	662.14
Hykeham Pits	North Kesteven	224.22
Whisby Nature Park	North Kesteven	160.83
Birchwood to Skellingthorpe	City of Lincoln	67.02
Cinder Plot	North Kesteven	89.16
Skellingthorpe	North Kesteven	127.21
Western Flank (West Common and Hartsholme)	City of Lincoln	480.98
Burton to Nettleham	West Lindsey	738.54
Caistor/Nettleton	West Lindsey	14.97
Gainsborough/Lea	West Lindsey	12.88
Market Rasen/Middle Rasen	West Lindsey	71.33
Cherry Willingham/Reepham	West Lindsey	11.8
Upton/Kexby	West Lindsey	15.5
Welton/Dunholme	West Lindsey	45.14
Owmbly-by-Spital/Normanby-by-Spital	West Lindsey	6.42

### 3. Context and Evidence

- 3.1. Green Wedges are an important local designation with a long history within Central Lincolnshire. They were first introduced into local planning policy through the City of Lincoln Local Plan (1998). The concept was introduced more widely in the Lincolnshire Structure Plan (2000), and Green Wedges and Settlement Breaks were subsequently designated in the West Lindsey (2006) and North Kesteven (2007) Local Plans.
- 3.2. Green Wedges form part of the Central Lincolnshire green infrastructure network and local ecological network.

3.3. To inform the preparation of the adopted Central Lincolnshire Local Plan, the Central Lincolnshire Green Wedges and Settlement Breaks Review was published in April 2016. This report:

- Reviewed the role and function of the existing Green Wedges and Settlement Breaks;
- Reviewed the boundaries of the existing Green Wedges and Settlement Breaks and whether there was any scope or justification to amend them;
- Considered the justification for the retention of existing Green Wedges and Settlement Breaks;
- Considered what impact development within the boundary of existing Green Wedges and Settlement Breaks may have on their role and function;
- Assessed whether there were any new areas that should be identified as a Green Wedge or Settlement Break.

3.4. The assessment of the existing Green Wedges and Settlement Breaks involved three stages. Stage 1 was a desk-based assessment of each Green Wedge and Settlement Break to gather factual information on land use, planning history and development pressures. Stage 2 involved site visits to gather further information around physical features, setting and character, landscape and visual impacts and threat of coalescence. A methodology was developed to assess landscape and visual impacts, including sensitivity testing to ascertain the relative ability of the landscape to respond to and accommodate change. Stage 3 brought the findings of Stage 1 and stage 2 together to evaluate each Green Wedge and Settlement Break against Green Wedge function criteria.

3.5. The review undertaken to inform the adopted Local Plan is considered to be thorough and robust and to continue to be applicable today. It is therefore felt that a revised Green Wedge review is not required at this time.

## 4. Issues and Options Consultation

4.1. The Issues and Options consultation identified the existing policy in the adopted Local Plan, LP22: Green Wedges, as a policy not intended to be changed. The comments in relation to this proposal can be summarised as follows:

- Support for the Green Wedges protection and extent;
- Green Wedges are an opportunity to deliver biodiversity net gains, and this should be reflected in the policy. Policy should also recognise the potential role for the creation of ecological networks and nature recovery networks, referenced in the GLNP's 25 year plan;
- Some greater clarity is required for uses acceptable in Green Wedges;
- Much has changed since the evidence supporting this policy was produced in 2016 and as such this policy and evidence should be reviewed – examples include the Lincoln Eastern Bypass and the closure of Canwick Golf Club;
- Parts of the Green Wedges are set within urban areas where they do not form part of an open and undeveloped landscape and do not contribute to an accessible recreational resource – as such the extent of the Green Wedges should be reviewed;

- The Green Wedges should be reassessed. Concerns raised about the accuracy of the areas during the last Local Plan process and debate at examination. Suggestion that a large area of urban land is within a Green Wedge.

## 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 supporting text and policy wording. Various comments suggesting the policy needs rewording, especially in relation to: specific mention of essential and renewable energy infrastructure in paragraph 1, paragraph 2 parts a), b) and d), suggested merging with policy S61 and specific reference to potential development that is suitable within a Green Wedge.
- Suggestion that the evidence behind the policy is lacking / weak, in relation to the date of the Green Wedge and Settlement Breaks Review.
- Concern around policy implementation.
- Current Green Wedges were objected to in part at: Hykeham Pits (various locations).
- New Green Wedge suggested at: Branston and Branston Booths.

5.2. Some respondents sought changes to the policy to make specific reference to potential development that is suitable, in principle, in the Green Wedges, including transport and highway infrastructure and renewables development. This issue arose in preparing the adopted Central Lincolnshire Local Plan and at the Examination in Public. The policy does not specify what type of development is considered acceptable in a Green Wedge as it was felt that this approach would make the policy excessively prescriptive.

5.3. A reasonable alternative policy approach was put forward in response to the Regulation 18 consultation to merge Green Wedge policy with the policy on the Lincolnshire Wolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and Area of Great Landscape Value (AGLV). This is considered further in section 7 below and in the Sustainability Appraisal which accompanies the Local Plan.

## 6. Proposed Approach in Draft Local Plan

6.1. The proposed policy approach in the Draft Local Plan remains the same as that set out in Policy LP22 Green Wedges of the adopted Local Plan.

6.2. Following the comments received during the Regulation 18 consultation, a minor change has been made to the policy wording to reference blue as well as green spaces within criterion e).

6.3. The boundary of the Hykeham Pits Green Wedge has been amended to the west of Station Road, North Hykeham, to reflect an employment development that has taken place and an additional minor amendment was made to the south of Strategic Employment Site E1 where, upon review, it appears that a more appropriate and robust boundary could be used. The area removed is shown in Appendix 1 of this report.

- 6.4. The boundary of the Witham Valley Green Wedge has been amended to the west of Palm Road, to reflect site NK/WAD/025 which has full planning permission for 20 dwellings and is therefore proposed as a housing allocation in the plan. The area removed is shown in Appendix 2 of this report.
- 6.5. There have been some further minor amendments to the Green Wedge boundaries to remove land where residential planning permission has been granted and development completed.

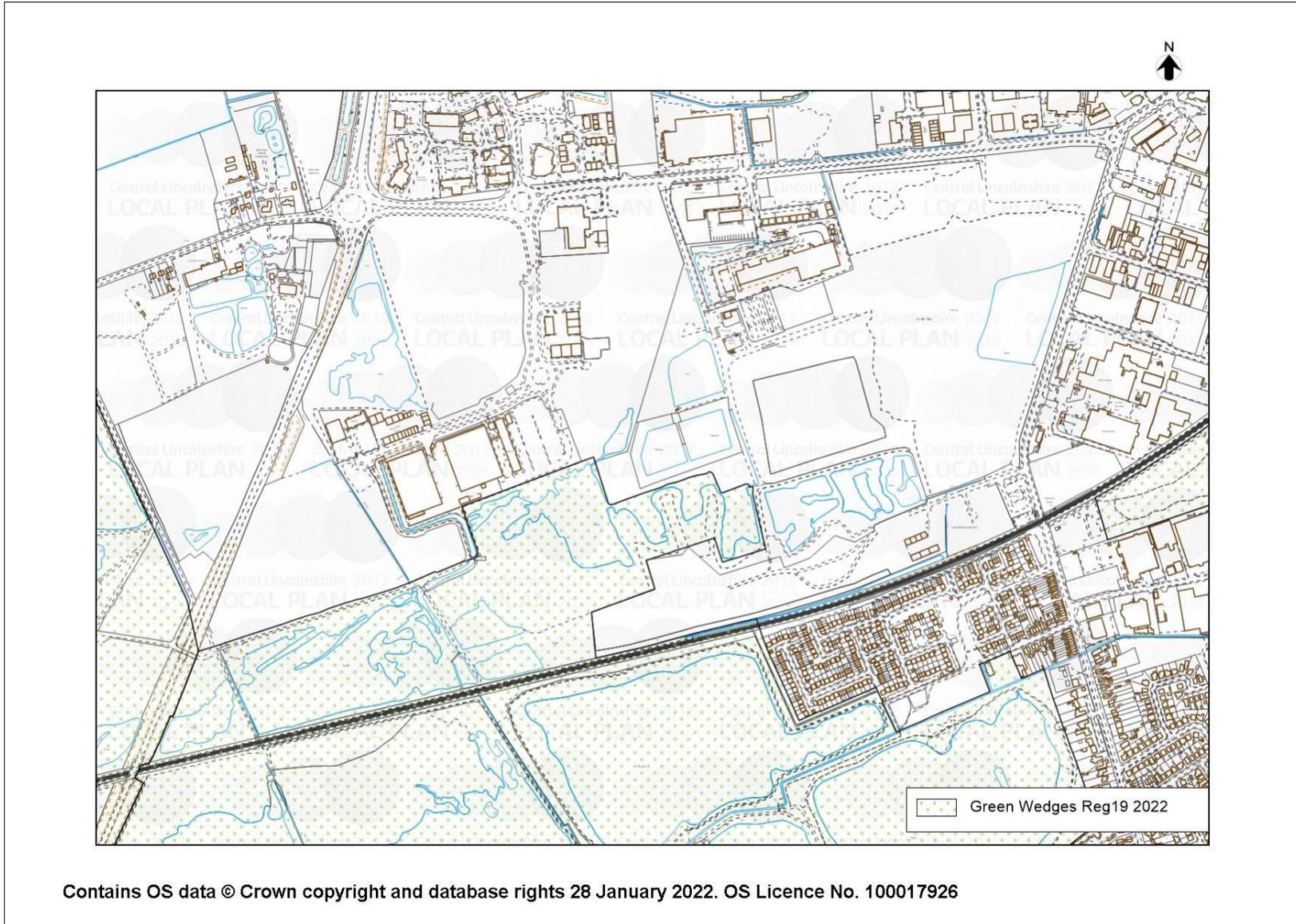
## 7. Reasonable Alternative Options

- 7.1. The following alternative options have been considered for this policy (option 1 being the preferred option within the Draft Local Plan).
- 7.2. Option 2: Do not maintain and enhance open space and countryside identified as Green Wedges in the adopted Local Plan and allow development applications in these areas to be assessed free of any Green Wedge designations, relying on other policies in the Local Plan and national policy. This option has been discounted, as whilst other Local Plan policies and national policy would restrict development in the countryside to some extent, Green Wedge designations provide an additional level of protection for specific areas around and between settlements that in particular are experiencing pressure for development. This option is likely to result in some negative effects on the sustainability appraisal objectives, including major negative effects in relation to SA5 Landscape and Townscape.
- 7.3. Option 3: Merge the Green Wedge policy with policy on the Lincolnshire Wolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and Area of Great Landscape Value (AGLV) under a single policy relating to landscape character and setting, creating and protecting views and cumulative impacts. This option has been discounted. Whilst it is recognised that some of the Green Wedges within Central Lincolnshire have a sole purpose of preventing the merging of settlements, others, particularly around Lincoln, are multi-functional. This requires a policy response that is more than landscape character focused. Whilst this policy option performs reasonably well in the sustainability appraisal, there are a number of mixed minor positive uncertain effects in relation to objectives on health and well – being, biodiversity and green infrastructure, natural resources and climate change adaptation.

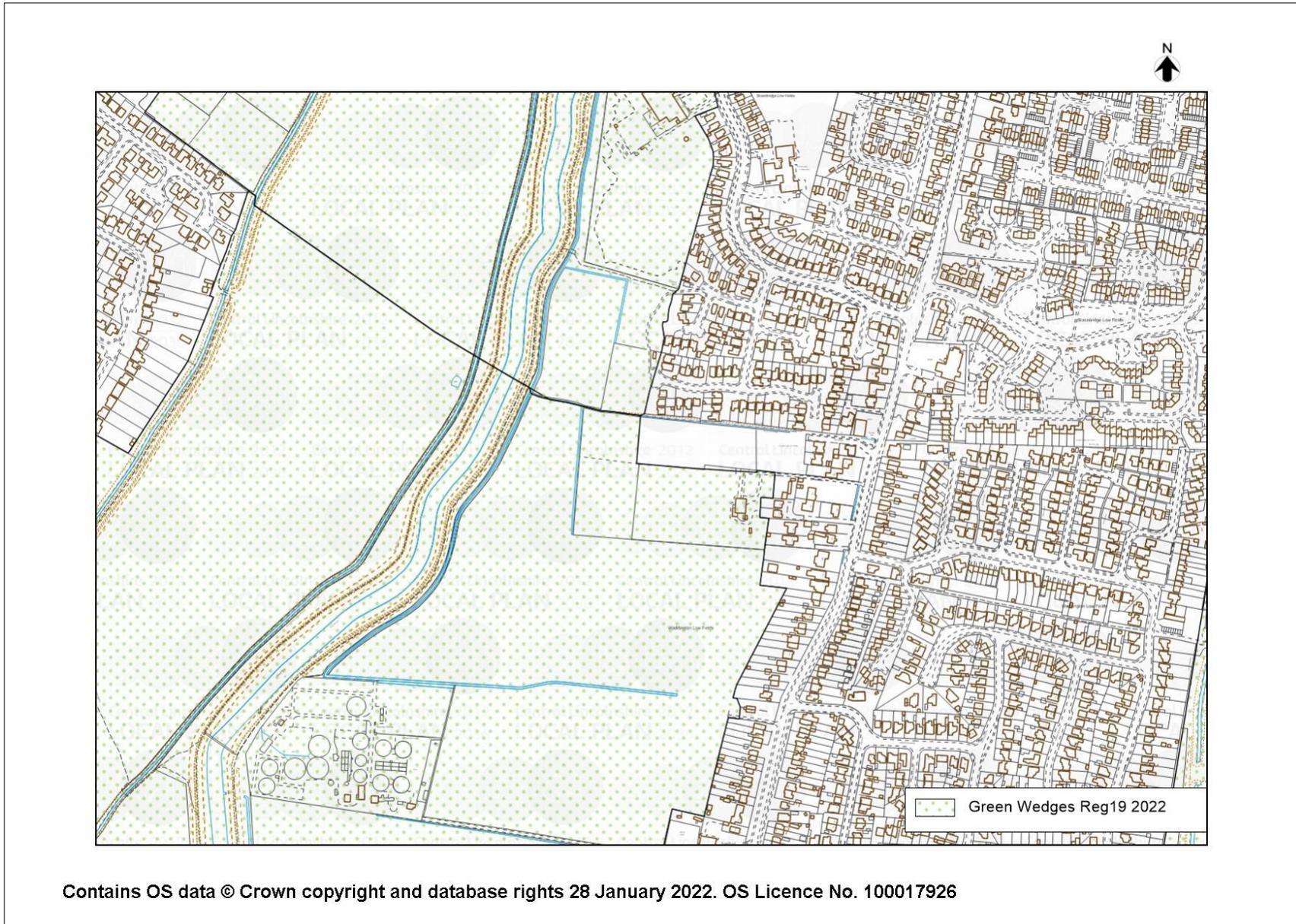
## 8. Conclusion

- 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.

## Appendix 1: Hykeham Pits Green Wedge – amendment of boundary



## Appendix 2: Witham Valley Green Wedge – amendment of boundary



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