



Policy LP4 Growth in Villages Evidence Report

**Proposed Submission
April 2016**

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1. Introduction and Policy Context

Introduction

- 1.1 A joint Local Plan for the Central Lincolnshire area is being produced which will set the framework for how development will be considered across the districts of the City of Lincoln, North Kesteven and West Lindsey to 2036.
- 1.2 This evidence report (which is one of a collection) provides background information and justification for policy LP4 (previously Policy LP24 in the Preliminary Draft version), which relates to growth levels to be delivered in smaller settlements in Central Lincolnshire.

National policy

- 1.3 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was published in March 2012 and the National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) was introduced in 2014 which offers 'live' government guidance.
- 1.4 Paragraph 28 of the NPPF states that '*planning policies should support economic growth in rural areas in order to create jobs and prosperity by taking a positive approach to sustainable development*'. By delivering growth in many rural areas this will help to promote the retention of rural businesses and services that rely on local population.
- 1.5 Paragraph 55 goes on to state that

'To promote sustainable development in rural areas, housing should be located where it will enhance or maintain the vitality of rural communities. For example, where there are groups of smaller settlements, development in one village may support services in a village nearby. Local planning authorities should avoid new isolated homes in the countryside...'

This further highlights the importance of delivering rural housing, whilst avoiding isolated dwellings and locating them where they can enhance the local community.

- 1.6 Paragraph 111 of the NPPF clarifies the importance of prioritising brownfield land:

'Planning policies and decisions should encourage the effective use of land by re-using land that has been previously developed (brownfield land), provided that it is not of high environmental value. Local planning authorities may continue to consider the case for setting a locally appropriate target for the use of brownfield land.'

- 1.7 The NPPG provides some additional guidance on how local authorities should support sustainable rural communities. It states that:

'A thriving rural community in a living, working countryside depends, in part, on retaining local services and community facilities such as schools, local shops, cultural venues, public houses and places of worship. Rural housing is essential to ensure viable use of these local facilities.'

Assessing housing need and allocating sites should be considered at a strategic level and through the Local Plan and/or neighbourhood plan process. However, all settlements can play a role in delivering sustainable development in rural areas...¹

The policy approach is considered to deliver on the requirements and guidance of the NPPF and NPPG in that it seeks to deliver some growth in rural areas to support rural services, but it is not so inflexible that sustainable development cannot come forward. It also enables local communities to add further detail into how growth can be delivered through the production of a neighbourhood plan.

2. Central Lincolnshire Context in Relation to Policy LP4

- 2.1 Under Policy LP2 the Local Plan includes a settlement hierarchy, with site allocations being included for settlements in the top four tiers. For these 26 settlements, which include the larger villages, market towns and the Lincoln urban area, there is a degree of certainty provided about the specific sites that will be developed in each of these locations during the plan period.
- 2.2 However, given that there are 135 villages that are not being allocated sites but are still expected to deliver some growth, it would be very difficult to undertake a detailed assessment of what the appropriate level of growth would be for each village taking into account the distinct constraints and opportunities of every settlement. There is also not one suitable growth figure that could be applied to every settlement, given that every settlement is distinct.
- 2.3 Given the housing target and proposed distribution of housing growth in Central Lincolnshire (as covered in policy LP3, which sets the overall housing need and apportions growth to broad areas), it would be inappropriate for the larger settlements to deliver all of the development. It is also important that many villages supply a small percentage of growth both to deliver a range of homes across a wider geographic area to provide choice, and to ensure villages remain vibrant and thriving communities.
- 2.4 The growth levels for each settlement have been tested against the overall growth targets and sufficient growth is delivered in all areas, when considered alongside the site allocations in the larger settlements.

3. Local Plan Policy: Preliminary Draft

- 3.1 The Preliminary Draft version of the Local Plan (published for consultation in October – November 2014) included a policy on growth in villages (Policy LP24). The draft policy suggested a blanket 10% growth for villages in smaller villages.
- 3.2 A wide range of comments were received on the draft policy, and many of these viewpoints were conflicting with one another. The main issues raised in the Preliminary Draft consultation are included below:

¹ Paragraph: 001 Reference ID: 50-001-20140306

- The need for a level of local support for new development should apply to all hierarchy levels.
- Would only support the threshold approach if the current curtilage policy is abandoned.
- The existing curtilage policy is clear to all with regard to presumptions for and against development and object to abandoning it.
- Policy would be difficult to implement.
- Giving communities a veto over development without reference to what is or is not appropriate and is contrary to the presumption in favour of sustainable development.
- Assumed growth levels in villages might not deliver enough housing to meet the objectively assessed need for Central Lincolnshire.
- Other policies in the local plan will ensure that developments in villages will not lead to unrestrained and unsustainable development therefore this policy is unnecessary and restrictive.
- Parish/ Town councils may not represent the whole community.
- Some individuals in positions on Parish Councils may influence the recommendations associated with development for which they hold beneficial interests. Hence, a greater level of transparency is required with the proposed public consultations.
- The views of the local community are a material planning consideration which makes it unnecessary for community support to be built into policy.
- There is no definition of what a 'proportionate' consultation exercise would be.
- The Plan is placing a considerable responsibility on Neighbourhood Plans for the development of its rural areas, and this could result in a planning vacuum in rural areas.
- The role of neighbourhood planning is not to cap housing provision.
- Neighbourhood plans should be incorporated into the Local Plan.
- More weight should be given to Neighbourhood Plans from all villages and small towns, not just those in category 5 settlements.
- Policy does not explain how neighbourhood plans fit into the Local Plan.
- Not all communities will want or have the capacity to undertake a neighbourhood plan, but nevertheless will want to shape development. The policy should support approach for parish / community plans to be DPDs/SPDs.
- Concerned as to how 10% threshold has been derived.
- Suggest lower limit of 5%.
- Increasing the threshold to 20% is necessary to increase flexibility within the system.
- Policy needs clarifying as 10% of growth of whole village including allocations is good, 10% of windfall in addition to allocations is not so good but better than nothing.
- The policy is unworkable (and contrary to national policy) for brownfield sites. It could prevent the redevelopment of the Fenmarc brownfield site, where inevitably any development would exceed the threshold of a 10% increase in dwelling numbers or 1000sq.m floor area. Suggest as an alternative to deletion, it may be possible to make policy workable by excluding existing employment sites or brownfield land.
- The MOD has concerns with this policy in relation to how it would be applied to proposals for operational development for Defence purposes.
- Policy should be amended to allow flexibility for sports uses of greater than 0.5 hectares.

- 3.3 Specific comments were also received about individual settlements and these were also reviewed following the consultation.

4. Local Plan Policy: Further Draft

- 4.1 The policy was amended significantly in the Further Draft Local Plan both in response to the consultation responses and to ensure that it was consistent with other policies and evidence in the plan. This revised approach still followed a fact-based, simplistic approach, but in an effort to take account of the sustainability of growth in some villages a number of factors were taken into consideration when assigning a growth level for each village, including:
- Presence of key facilities within the village;
 - Proximity to one of the main service centres in Central Lincolnshire where a number of services and facilities are readily available via a short journey;
 - Proximity to a strategic employment area where additional job growth will be occurring;
 - Settlement within an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty;
 - Settlement is wholly at risk of flooding; and
 - A Neighbourhood Plan at an advanced stage is being produced for the settlement and is promoting a higher level of growth.
- 4.2 Where these factors were present, growth levels were amended accordingly. Full details of this policy approach is included in the Settlement Hierarchy and Growth Distribution Study available in the planning policy library on the Central Lincolnshire website.
- 4.3 This revised approach also sought to allow for village-specific circumstances to be considered and enable neighbourhood plans to decide how a village should grow. This proposed approach was considered to meet the balance of providing flexibility for sustainable growth to occur, whilst neither overwhelming nor starving villages.
- 4.4 During the Further Draft Local Plan consultation, which took place in October and November 2015, a range of issues were once again raised, but there was substantially more support for the approach than that in the Preliminary Draft. The key issues raised in the consultation about this policy were:
- Support for the sequential approach in villages of brownfield first;
 - Policy too inflexible and does not allow for local circumstances;
 - Policy too flexible and will not allow control/management of development;
 - Village curtilages should be retained to retain character and avoid sprawl;
 - No clarity of the delivery of infrastructure to support growth;
 - No breakdown of housing types needed to ensure a mix is delivered;
 - No consideration over relationship between settlements;
 - Growth level should be a minimum;
 - The sequential approach will stifle sustainable development;
 - Community support is desirable but should not be the deciding factor;

- Does not account for recent growth in villages;
- Comments about the clarity of the policy and how specific cases will be considered;
- Concern about some elements of the detailed policy wording;
- Concern that the policy is not consistent with the National Planning Policy Framework and the Planning Practice Guidance;
- Concern that the policy contradicts the evidence base;
- Policy should give protection to Large Villages too;
- Support for limiting the growth in villages to ensure they remain ‘villages’;
- Support for the potential to exceed growth levels with local community support.

4.5 Further to this a number of respondents provided support, or objected to, the level of growth in specific villages, with some villages receiving both support and objection. There were also some questions raised about how the growth levels were ascertained and questioning the evidence.

5. Local Plan Policy: Proposed Submission

- 5.1 Following the Further Draft Local Plan consultation the comments received were reviewed, but, whilst some minor amendments were made to the wording of the policy and the supporting text, no substantial changes were made to the general thrust of the policy.
- 5.2 Partly in response to some comments received during the consultation, some of the background evidence underpinning the work was reviewed. As a result of this review, some of the sites moved up or down tiers in the settlement hierarchy (details available in the evidence report for policy LP2 on the Central Lincolnshire website).
- 5.3 Some additional work was also undertaken on reviewing monitoring data, which resulted in some amendments being made to the baseline data for development completions and commitments in some villages since 2012. The revised data is contained in the summary table in Appendix B of the Proposed Submission Local Plan.
- 5.4 Furthermore, the further draft version of policy LP4 had a specific level of growth for Fiskerton as it was advised that the neighbourhood plan in this location was at an advanced stage and was seeking additional growth. Following the consultation, the Local Plan team were updated on the status of the neighbourhood plan in Fiskerton. This update suggested that the level of growth included in the Further Draft Local Plan was less certain than previously thought. As such, the growth level for Fiskerton was revised to follow the basic sustainability considerations as in other villages. This change will not prevent Fiskerton from delivering additional growth, but it means that there is no reliance on this level being achieved in the Local Plan.

6. Alternative Reasonable Options

- 6.1 The following alternative options have been considered for this policy (with Option 1 being the preferred policy in the plan).
- 6.2 **Option 2:** No policy on Growth in Villages. This option would lead to uncertainty in villages with no clarity over what development will occur in each area and could lead to unbalanced growth in these areas possibly not delivering enough growth to meet objectively assessed

need and possibly delivering far too much. The uncertainty would not assist in delivering infrastructure.

- 6.3 **Option 3:** Include a policy with higher thresholds. This approach would deliver additional growth in rural areas but it would often be beyond what is needed to maintain or enhance existing services and could result in the urbanisation of many villages. It may also result in a lack of investment in the main urban areas which are more sustainable than the rural areas.
- 6.4 **Option 4:** Include a policy which has a rigid threshold for growth beyond which no growth can occur in the plan period. This approach would provide a great deal of certainty for villages, land owners, developers and infrastructure providers, however, it would be unresponsive to changes to the Central Lincolnshire context in the plan period. It would also restrict communities from delivering greater growth in their area, should they want to do so.

7. Conclusion

- 7.1 This Evidence Report demonstrates the rationale for the proposed policy LP4 in the Proposed Submission Local Plan. In combination with the *Settlement Hierarchy and Growth Distribution Study* (Ref E018), it helps demonstrate how we have responded to comments received during the Preliminary Draft and Further Draft consultations, as well as how the latest evidence and national guidance has been taken into account.