



Policy LP7 A Sustainable Visitor Economy 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 LP7, which relates to the visitor economy.

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 is particularly relevant to this policy:
"To promote a strong rural economy, local and neighbourhood plans should: ... support sustainable rural tourism and leisure developments that benefit businesses in rural areas, communities and visitors, and which respect the character of the countryside. This should include supporting the provision and expansion of tourist and visitor facilities in appropriate locations where identified needs are not met by existing facilities in rural service centres..."
- 1.5 The above NPPF policy has been taken into account in preparing the Local Plan as a whole, and policy LP7 in particular.
- 1.6 The NPPG also includes specific guidance on planning for tourism. Paragraph 007 (reference ID 2b-007-20140306) advises that local planning authorities should, where appropriate, articulate a vision for tourism in their local plan, including identifying optimal locations for tourism. It highlights that opportunities for tourism to support local services and the vibrancy of the built environment should be examined.

2 Central Lincolnshire Context in Relation to Policy LP7

- 2.1 The visitor economy is one of the most important growth sectors for Central Lincolnshire: the statistics for Lincolnshire as a whole reveal that the visitor economy is worth over £1 billion each year to the area and employs around 39,000 people. The tourist economy encompasses not only traditional tourism, but also visitors to events, festivals, culture and heritage tourists, and visitors for business and education purposes¹.
- 2.2 The number of tourists who visited Lincolnshire in 2012 was 17.4 million, up from 17 million in 2011¹.
- 2.3 The visitor economy is therefore a significant contributor to Central Lincolnshire's economic activity and presents a significant opportunity to continue to build on the success of the area as a tourist destination. It is therefore imperative that the Central Lincolnshire

¹ Source: Greater Lincolnshire Local Enterprise Partnership
(<http://www.greaterlincolnshirelep.co.uk/growth/visitor-economy>)

authorities support the sustainable growth of the tourism sector, so as to secure further jobs and investment in facilities and infrastructure, which will benefit residents and visitors alike.

- 2.4 The Central Lincolnshire Authorities are responding to this opportunity by positively promoting tourism and holding events and festivals, such as the annual Lincoln Christmas Market and special events such as the British Cycling National Road Race Championships, to attract visitors to the area.

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 the visitor economy (formerly policy LP6).
- 3.2 The key issues raised in relation to this policy during the Preliminary Draft consultation included commentary that the policy was very brief and generic and is a missed opportunity; that it should be expanded to make reference to the wide visitor offers across the area; and that the reference to Lincoln only does not do justice to tourism in the rural area which also drives the visitor economy.
- 3.3 Others commented that the limited car parking and lack of Park and Ride facility needs addressing; that the support infrastructure that surrounds the visitor economy, namely caravan parks and other accommodation, should also be included in the policy or as a separate specific policy; and that the policy does not include criteria for the consideration of adverse impacts (with the example given that many sport and leisure activities such as power boating can be very noisy and disruptive, with the local community experiencing the adverse impacts, and visitors experiencing the benefits).
- 3.4 Another concern raised was that common high street retailers are not good for attracting visitors- need to promote more local shops.

4 Local Plan Policy: Further Draft

- 4.1 The policy in the Further Draft version of the Local Plan was amended from the original in response to comments received during the consultation on the Preliminary Draft version of the Local Plan and to further reflect national policy and guidance.
- 4.2 In addressing the issues summarised above, the introductory policy text was expanded, to better reflect the tourist opportunities presented by the wider Central Lincolnshire area, not just Lincoln. The policy itself was revised to incorporate reference to accommodation, given its importance to the visitor economy.
- 4.3 In order to prevent adverse impact, several criteria were added: furthermore, policy LP28 (Design and Amenity) of the Further Draft included detailed criteria which all proposals would have to comply with, which would prevent adverse impact upon amenity.
- 4.4 The issues of Park and Ride and parking are addressed in policy LP13 Accessibility and Transport: this policy would apply to all development, including development associated with tourism and therefore the policy principles were not been duplicated in this policy.
- 4.5 In relation to the concern regarding high street retailers, we were not able to address this concern within the policy as planning policy cannot control the occupation of retail premises.

- 4.6 Various other policies in the Local Plan were also particularly relevant to development associated with the visitor economy. In addition to the other policies already mentioned above, policies LP32 Protecting Lincoln's Setting and Character, LP34 Lincoln's Economy and LP38 Transport Priorities/ Movement Strategy apply to development in Lincoln, while policy LP57 Development in Rural Areas and the Countryside included criteria regarding residential and non-residential development in the countryside (policy references relate to Further Draft version of the Local Plan).
- 4.7 The revised policy LP7 was consulted on as part of the Further Draft Local Plan consultation which took place between October and November 2015.
- 4.8 There was mixed support and objection to the policy. The key points made and issues raised included:
- Particular support for criteria 'c'
 - Concern that the promotion of tourism presents a threat to heritage and culture
 - Objection that the policy (and Local Plan) makes no reference to Market Rasen Racecourse, with specific concern that the Local Plan does not afford the necessary protection of, and support for, the Racecourse's ongoing business and that the need for development proposals to be located within existing settlements or as part of planned urban extensions is an unnecessary barrier for developments within the Racecourse
 - Suggestion that development of sports facilities should be informed by a robust and upto date assessment of needs.

5 Local Plan Policy: Proposed Submission

- 5.1 The policy in the Proposed Submission version of the Local Plan has not been amended from the Further Draft version (other than to correct minor typing errors).
- 5.2 In relation to the key points summarised above, it is considered that the wider Local Plan policies, in particular LP17 Landscape, Townscape and Views, LP25 The Historic Environment, LP26 Design and Amenity and the Lincoln, Gainsborough and Sleaford Protecting Setting and Character policies, will protect the historic environment and valuable attributes of the area from adverse impact.
- 5.3 Whilst policy LP7, and indeed the wider Local Plan, does not make specific reference to Market Rasen Racecourse, the Local Plan does not preclude development within the racecourse. Rather, policy LP7 is indeed supportive of development proposals which contribute to the local economy, benefit local communities and visitors, respect the area, and are appropriate for the character of the area. Although the policy states that development should be within existing settlements or new sustainable urban extensions, the policy allows for exceptions to this, where such locations are unsuitable for the nature of the proposal. Given the positive stance of the policy and the desire, in line with national policy, to prepare a strategic rather than very detailed and prescriptive Local Plan, it is considered unnecessary to make specific reference to the racecourse.

6 Alternative Reasonable Options

- 6.1 The following alternative options have been considered for this policy. (Option 1 is the preferred policy approach.)
- 6.2 **Option 2:** A policy promoting new tourist, cultural and leisure facilities and attractions, with a focus on Lincoln. This option was discounted given the significant contribution that the wider Central Lincolnshire area makes to the visitor economy.

- 6.3 **Option 3:** No policy on a sustainable visitor economy, instead rely on other Local Plan policies and national policy. This option was discounted given the desire to encourage sustainable tourism in order to derive wider benefits such as the creation of jobs, conservation of historic environment, and improve services for visitors and residents alike.

7 Conclusion

- 7.1 This Evidence Report demonstrates the rationale for the proposed policy as contained in the April 2016 Proposed Submission Local Plan. We hope this helps demonstrate how we have responded to comments received during both the Preliminary and Further Draft consultations, as well as how the latest evidence and national guidance has been taken into account.