



Policy LP15 Community Facilities 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 LP15, which relates to Community Facilities.

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 The following NPPF points are particularly relevant:
 - Paragraph 7 states that the planning system in achieving sustainable development should *"create a high quality built environment, with accessible local services that reflect the community's needs and support its health, social and cultural well-being"*;
 - Paragraph 17, in listing 12 core planning principles, requires planning to *"take account of and support local strategies to improve health, social and cultural well-being for all, and deliver sufficient community and cultural facilities to meet local needs"*;
 - Paragraph 28 states that planning policies should support economic growth in rural areas by promoting *"the retention and development of local services and community facilities in villages, such as local shops, meeting places, sports venues, cultural buildings, public houses and places of worship"*;
 - Paragraphs 69 to 78 provide requirements for promoting healthy communities including the requirement for planning policies to *"plan positively for the provision and use of shared space, community facilities (such as local shops, meeting places, sports venues, cultural buildings, public houses and places of worship) and other local services to enhance the sustainability of communities and residential environments"* and *"guard against unnecessary loss of valued facilities and services, particularly where this would reduce the community's ability to meet its day-to-day needs"*;
 - Within the "plan-making" section there is a requirement for local planning authorities to include strategic policies to deliver *"the provision of health, security, community and cultural infrastructure and other local facilities"*.
- 1.5 The above NPPF policy has been taken into account in preparing the Local Plan as a whole, and policy LP15 in particular.

2 Central Lincolnshire Context in Relation to Policy LP15

- 2.1 Central Lincolnshire is a predominantly rural area containing many dispersed settlements. The provision of new community facilities, as well as protection of existing facilities, are essential for meeting the day-to-day needs of residents and businesses, and for the creation of sustainable and thriving communities.
- 2.2 There has been no specific Central Lincolnshire audit of community facilities (current or needed). Instead, the approach in this policy is to consider each proposal on a case by case basis.

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 Community Facilities.
- 3.2 Most comments received in response to the Preliminary Draft Local Plan expressed support for the policy and some offered wording amendments to strengthen the policy or supporting text whilst others questioned deliverability.

4 Local Plan Policy: Further Draft

- 4.1 The policy and text in the Further Draft version of the Local Plan have been amended in response to comments received as part of the Preliminary Draft consultation such as clarifying the nature of the facilities, clarifying when the loss of a facility may be acceptable and adding reference to libraries. The Further Draft Local Plan was published for consultation in October – November 2015.
- 4.2 Various comments were received as part of the Further Draft Local Plan consultation supporting the policy or elements of it, including reference to open spaces whilst others specifically requested the removal of reference to open spaces and libraries.
- 4.3 There were various detailed suggestions made to improve clarity of policy wording including:
 - adding public houses and places of worship as potential multi use community facilities
 - the need to reference crematoriums;
 - the need to require the future proofing of buildings and for them to cater for all ages; and
 - the need to find alternative locations for any proposal if it has a detrimental effect on local residents.
- 4.4 There were comments suggesting that the policy needed substantial or significant rewording, particularly in relation to:
 - the need to strengthen the protection of existing facilities although others felt it was vague and lacked detail,

- the need to strengthen the requirement for early delivery and stress the importance of securing long term funding and maintenance plans whilst others felt that this was unreasonable and onerous, may affect viability and should be removed altogether
- the approach between the policy, Developer Contributions SPD and infrastructure Delivery Plan were inconsistent; and
- that the lack of and need for large scale leisure facilities should be included.

4.5 Some felt that the offer of facilities should give development proposals more weight whilst others felt that this indicated that planning permission could be bought.

4.6 Others felt that the evidence behind the policy was either lacking, particularly in terms of locally specific need or was weak, where draft evidence needs to be updated and completed. Some felt that the policy was not NPPF compliant whilst others felt that it directly met the requirements of the NPPF. It was suggested that community facility sites should be allocated within the plan and that it should be made clear that the importance of such uses should be included in any Neighbourhood Plan.

5 Local Plan Policy: Proposed Submission

5.1 Whilst all responses have been carefully considered, only limited changes are made for the Proposed Submission Local Plan. Reference to public houses and places of worship have been acknowledged and added to the policy wording, whilst open spaces and play areas have been removed as these are specifically referenced elsewhere in the Local Plan in policy LP24: Creation of New Open Space, Sports and recreation facilities and in the open space provision standards in Appendix C.

5.2 It is felt that the policy now strikes the correct balance between protecting existing facilities and promoting new facilities without being too onerous or prescriptive, particularly when supported by other documents such as the Community Infrastructure levy and Developer Contribution SPD, which are considered complementary. The policy does not preclude the development of a large scale leisure facilities, crematoriums or identification of local need within neighbourhood plans and relevant evidence has been updated where necessary.

5.3 The policy and deliverability is also supported by other policies in the Local Plan including:

- LP9 – Health and Wellbeing states that, where appropriate, developers will be expected to consult with health care commissioners at an early stage in order to understand the need for new or enhanced health care infrastructure and improved access;
- LP20 – Green Infrastructure Network requires the need to protect and enhance the green infrastructure network and ensure it is considered early in the development design process;
- LP24 – Creation of New Open Space, Sports and Recreation Facilities requires development to provide new or enhanced provision of public open space, sports and recreation facilities and is supported by standards set out in Appendix C;
- LP28 – Sustainable Urban Extensions provides the overarching policy that details what all SUE's will be expected to provide, including community facility requirements;

- Lincoln, Gainsborough and Sleaford Area chapters include specific policies for each of the proposed SUEs and what they will be expected to provide.

6 Alternative Reasonable Options

- 6.1 The following alternative options have been considered for this policy (**Option 1** is the preferred policy approach which has been included in the Proposed Submission version of the Local Plan).
- 6.2 **Option 2:** To have no policy in the Local Plan and rely on national policy. However, considering the importance of community facilities to supporting sustainable communities, this approach is felt to provide insufficient policy framework and not to reflect the particular character, problems and potential solutions for Central Lincolnshire. The NPPF is also quite clear in stating that planning policies should promote the “retention and development of local services and community facilities in villages” and “plan positively for the provision and use of shared space, community facilities... and other local services to enhance the sustainability of communities and residential environments” and to guard against their unnecessary loss.
- 6.3 **Option 3:** To identify and safeguard community facilities (through the identification of specific sites/ facilities). This approach would provide clear protection for existing or known planned facilities but would be less likely to support spontaneous provision or to be able to respond to changed circumstances over time. It would also be a time consuming and onerous task to gather such information and provide a policy framework for it (though a Neighbourhood Plan could take on that role, for a particular area). Overall, this option has been rejected.

7 Conclusion

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