

Policy LP20 Green Infrastructure Network 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 LP20, which relates to planning positively for the creation, protection, enhancement and management of the green infrastructure network.

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 Section 11 of the NPPF concerns "conserving and enhancing the natural environment" and there is a separate section on "Plan-making". The following points are particularly relevant:
 - Paragraph 114- Local planning authorities should set out a strategic approach in their Local Plans, planning positively for the creation, protection, enhancement and management of networks of biodiversity and green infrastructure.
 - Paragraph 157- Local Plans should set out a clear strategy for enhancing the natural environment.
 - Glossary – Green Infrastructure: A network of multi-functional green space, urban and rural, which is capable of delivering a wide range of environmental and quality of life benefits for local communities.
- 1.5 The above NPPF policy has been taken into account in preparing the Local Plan as a whole, and policy LP20 in particular.

2 Central Lincolnshire Context in Relation to Policy LP20

- 2.1 Green Infrastructure is a strategic network of multi-functional green spaces, and the connections between them, in both urban and rural areas, which is capable of delivering a range of environmental, economic, health and quality of life benefits for local communities. The network may comprise of spaces in public or private ownership, with or without public access.
- 2.2 Green Infrastructure within Central Lincolnshire comprises of many different types, functions, locations, sizes and levels of use, operating at every spatial scale and in all geographic areas within the area. From urban green spaces such as Hartsholme Country Park in Lincoln, to green spaces in the countryside, such as Willingham Woods on the edge of Market Rasen.

- 2.3 In 2011, a partnership of local organisations produced the Central Lincolnshire Green Infrastructure Study (2011), which sets out a Green Infrastructure Strategy and defines a green infrastructure network, for Central Lincolnshire. Using Natural England’s Accessible Natural Greenspace Standards, the study highlighted areas where there were deficiencies in green infrastructure at the strategic level and opportunities to enhance the network.
- 2.4 The Central Lincolnshire Green Infrastructure Study identifies the main priorities for the green infrastructure network to be:
- To focus investment in Green Infrastructure provision and management to address current deficits of provision/needs identified by the study;
 - To meet the needs of communities in Central Lincolnshire who are likely to experience major growth related pressures over the next 15-20 years;
 - To conserve and manage existing valuable Green Infrastructure assets that are under current or future pressure – including in particular core biodiversity areas, river valleys/wetlands and accessible natural greenspace.
- 2.5 More recently, at a local level, an Open Space Audit and Provision Standard Assessment (2015) has been undertaken for Central Lincolnshire which identifies existing provision of open space in terms of quantity, quality and accessibility and those areas where deficiencies in provision exist. These publicly accessible open space, sport and recreation facilities make a significant contribution to the green infrastructure network. Aside from the NPPF, the Green Infrastructure Study and Open Space Audit and Assessment are key pieces of evidence to support the Local Plan. Both of these studies can be viewed on the Central Lincolnshire website in the Planning Policy Library (www.central-lincs.org.uk).

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 Green Infrastructure that recognised the importance of protecting and enhancing the green infrastructure network for the benefit of residents, visitors and wildlife as identified by the evidence base.
- 3.2 Most people who responded were generally supportive of the policy as drafted in the Preliminary Draft Local Plan. However, the main concerns were:
- a request for the removal of wording that weakens the policy, such as ‘as appropriate’ and ‘where possible’;
 - the need to reference waterways in the policy; and
 - the need to recognise the benefit of green infrastructure in adapting to climate change.

4 Local Plan Policy: Further Draft

- 4.1 LP20 in the Further Draft version of the Local Plan (published for consultation in October-November 2015) was amended in response to comments received during the consultation on the Preliminary Draft Local Plan.
- 4.2 In addition, the policy was amended to reflect the fact that investment in the provision of new and enhanced Green Infrastructure is an essential part of planning for Central Lincolnshire’s future. Additional wording was added on the requirement for new development to contribute to the establishment, enhancement and on-going management of the green infrastructure network.

- 4.3 Most people who responded at the Further Draft Stage were generally supportive of the policy as drafted. The representations received during the consultation raised the following main issues:
- Concern was raised that it may not be suitable or viable for smaller schemes to contribute to the development of the strategic green infrastructure network and that the policy doesn't clearly set out how developments will be expected to contribute to this requirement;
 - The Environment Agency wished to see reference in the policy to the Central Lincolnshire Biodiversity Opportunity Mapping Study so that the policy is consistent with other policies in the Plan; and
 - Clarity was sought on the meaning of 'ecosystem services' in the policy.

5 Local Plan Policy: Proposed Submission

- 5.1 LP20 in the Proposed Submission Local Plan has been amended in response to comments received during the consultation on the Further Draft Local Plan.
- 5.2 Additional policy wording has been added to LP20 to clarify that developments will be expected to make a contribution to the green infrastructure network proportionate to their scale. Policy LP12 in the Proposed Submission Local Plan sets out the expectations in relation to the provision of infrastructure, which includes green infrastructure. Further guidance will be provided in a Developer Contributions Supplementary Planning Document which is being developed alongside the Local Plan.
- 5.3 The policy has been amended to include reference to the Opportunity Mapping Study.
- 5.4 The supporting text to the policy has also been amended to address the issues raised.

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.)
- 6.2 **Option 2:** To not have a specific Green Infrastructure policy and rely on policies designed to provide and protect open spaces. This policy approach was rejected as it would not meet the requirements of national policy to plan positively for the creation, protection, enhancement and management of networks of biodiversity and green infrastructure. It would most likely lead to missed opportunities to consider the opportunities and benefits individual open spaces can bring when considered together, including how they connect with one another.

7 Conclusion

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