

Policy LP22 Green Wedges Evidence Report

**Proposed Submission
April 2016**

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1. Introduction and Policy Context

Introduction

- 1.1. This Evidence Report (which is one of a collection) provides background information and justification for policy LP22, which relates to the allocation, protection and enhancement of Green Wedges in Central Lincolnshire. Please note the numbering for this policy has changed in the Proposed Submission Local Plan from LP21 (in the Further Draft) to LP22.

National Policy

- 1.2. 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. Green Wedges are a local designation that are not specifically covered within the NPPF or NPPG. However, the following are particularly relevant to this policy area:
- Para 35, "Plans should protect and exploit opportunities for the use of sustainable transport modes";
 - Para 58: "Local plans should develop robust and comprehensive policies that set out the quality of development that will be expected for the area";
 - Para 73, "Access to high quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and recreation can make an important contribution to the health and well-being of communities".
 - Para 94, "Local planning authorities should adopt proactive strategies to mitigate and adapt to climate change".
 - Para 109, states the planning system should contribute to and enhance the natural environment by "recognising the wider benefits of ecosystem services".
 - Paragraph 114, bullet point 1, highlights that a strategic approach should be taken in Local Plans which plans "positively for the creation, protection, enhancement and management of networks of biodiversity and green infrastructure".
 - Paragraph 157, bullet point 7 and 8, of the Plan Making section of the NPPF states that Local Plans should "identify land where development would be inappropriate, for instance because of its environmental or historic significance" and "contain a clear strategy for enhancing the natural, built and historic environment,".
- 1.3. The above NPPF policy has been taken into account in preparing the Local Plan as a whole, and policy LP22 in particular.

2. Central Lincolnshire Context in Relation to Policy LP22

- 2.1. Green Wedge designation and policy to protect strategically important areas of open land was introduced in Lincolnshire through the City of Lincoln Local Plan (1998). The concept was introduced more widely in the Lincolnshire Structure Plan (2000), and Green Wedges were subsequently designated in the West Lindsey (2006) and North Kesteven Local Plans (2007).

2.2. In the current adopted Local Plans, Central Lincolnshire has 10 Green Wedges focused around Lincoln and 7 Settlement Breaks in the district of West Lindsey (see **Table 2-1**). The primary functions of Central Lincolnshire’s Green Wedges / Settlement Breaks are:

- Preventing the coalescence or merging of settlements and preserving the separate identity and character of settlements;
- Providing a green lung into urban areas;
- A recreational resource;
- Protecting and enhancing ecological value and linkages.

Table 2-1: Existing Green Wedges and Settlement Breaks in Central Lincolnshire

Green Wedges around Lincoln	Settlement Breaks (West Lindsey)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Canwick to Washingborough • Canwick • Waddington to Bracebridge • Witham Valley • Hykeham Pits • Skellingthorpe to Birchwood • Skellingthorpe • Western Flank • Greetwell • Burton to Nettleham 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Caistor/Nettleton • Gainsborough/Lea • Market Rasen/Middle Rasen • Cherry Willingham/Reepham • Upton/Kexby • Welton/Dunholme • Owmbly-by-Spital/ Normanby-by-Spital

2.3. A key issue for the Local Plan which is relevant to Policy LP22 is balancing:

- the need to allocate land to meet future development requirements up to 2036 in the most sustainable locations;
- the need to preserve the separate identity and character of settlements;
- the need for multi-functional, publicly accessible links between urban settlements and the countryside.

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 protecting Lincoln’s setting and character (LP30) which proposed to maintain the principle of Green Wedges around Lincoln and set out criteria for the determination of planning applications within Green Wedge boundaries. There was no policy approach for the existing Settlement Breaks in West Lindsey.

3.2. Responses received during the Preliminary Draft consultation were generally very supportive of maintaining the Green Wedges around Lincoln. The key issues raised in relation to Green Wedges included:

- Planning permission shouldn’t be granted for new development within a Green Wedge;
- Green Wedges should be maintained in their present form as much as possible;
- Policy is too Lincoln focused. Also important to safeguard the setting and character of villages;
- Appropriate redevelopment of brownfield sites should be allowed within the Green Wedge.

4. Local Plan Policy: Further Draft

- 4.1. In response to issues raised during the Preliminary Draft consultation, the policy approach in the Further Draft Local Plan (published for consultation October-November 2015) was to have a Central Lincolnshire wide policy on Green Wedges, rather than just a Lincoln focus, and to identify Green Wedges on the Policies Map.

Further Draft Consultation

- 4.2. Numerous comments were received in relation to policy LP22 (though it was then labelled LP21) and the Policies Map during the consultation on the Further Draft Local Plan. Many of these were broadly supportive of the policy or elements of the policy. The key issues raised included:
- The policy should provide a more positive framework within which to achieve sustainable rural businesses and communities;
 - Local Green Spaces have a higher level of protection than Green Wedges;
 - Lack of robust evidence supporting the extent of the Green Wedges and current countryside gap designations;
 - Policy should be clearer on what type of development is considered acceptable in a Green Wedge;
 - Historic character should be inserted into the first bullet point of the policy and into criteria 'C'.
- 4.3. New Green Wedges/extensions to existing Green Wedges were suggested at/near:
- Between route of the Lincoln Eastern Bypass, Heighington and Branston;
 - Between the A158 and Fiskerton Road;
 - West of Cherry Willingham between the village and Greetwell;
 - East of Cherry Willingham towards Fiskerton;
 - Between Heighington and Washingborough, and Heighington and Branston;
 - North Greetwell;
 - Between Heighington and Canwick;
 - Between Metheringham and Dunston;
 - Between Welton and Dunston;
 - Between every settlement.
- 4.4. Proposed Green Wedges/extensions to existing Green Wedges were supported in part of whole at the following:
- Between Welton and Dunholme;
 - Riseholme;
 - South Hykeham;
 - Skellingthorpe.
- 4.5. Proposed Green Wedges/extensions to existing Green Wedges were objected to in part of whole at the following:
- Witham Valley (various locations);
 - Waddington to Bracebridge Heath (various locations);
 - Burton to Nettleham (various locations);
 - Dunholme to Welton;
 - Caistor to Nettleton;
 - Canwick to Washingborough (various locations);
 - Hykeham Pits (various locations).

5. Local Plan Policy: Proposed Submission

- 5.1. Further detailed consideration of the proposed Green Wedges took place over the winter 2015/16, assisted by the comments made during the Further Draft consultation. Minor amendments have been made to the wording of policy LP22. The first bullet point and criteria 'C' have been amended to make reference to historic character. The policy has not been amended to specify what type of development is considered acceptable in a Green Wedge as it was felt this would make the policy excessively prescriptive.
- 5.2. The following key changes have been made to the Green Wedges on the Proposed Submission Policies Map (there have also been some minor boundary changes to improve alignment with defensible features, such as roads, field boundaries etc). Where new Green Wedges were suggested during the Further Draft consultation, and boundaries were clearly described or suggestions were accompanied by a map showing the boundaries of the proposed Green Wedge, these were assessed and evaluated against the Green Wedge function criteria. See section 2.2 above and **Appendix 1** for further details:
- The following Green Wedges have been extended:
 - Canwick to Washingborough;
 - Welton to Dunholme
 - The following Green Wedges have been amended, compared with the Further Draft, to remove land from the Green Wedge:
 - Witham Valley; land removed at Boultham Park to accommodate residential allocation CL572 which has planning permission;
 - Canwick to Washingborough; land removed south of Cherry Willingham as planning permission has been granted for a marina and associated leisure and tourism uses at Eastfield Rise Farm;
 - Caistor to Nettleton; land removed along the northern boundary;
 - Burton to Nettleham, Green Wedge between the built up area of Lincoln and the A46 and A158 has been removed.
- 5.3. Policy LP22 is accompanied by the designation of the proposed Green Wedges on the Central Lincolnshire Policies Map and is supported by an assessment of the existing and proposed Green Wedges and Settlement Breaks within Central Lincolnshire (see **Appendix 1** for further details).

6. Alternative Reasonable Options

- 6.1. Three alternative approaches have been identified and assessed for policy LP22. The preferred policy (Option 1) is a combination of Options 3 and 4. To have no policy protection for Green Wedges is not considered to be a reasonable alternative and therefore has not been subject to IIA. Without a policy which clearly sets out the role and function of Green Wedges and sets out criteria for the determination of planning applications, there is a risk of inappropriate development coming forward, within or adjacent to the Green Wedges, which could impact on their role and function, and risk adverse impacts on the separate identity and character of settlements within Central Lincolnshire.
- 6.2. **Option 2:** Maintain protection of the open character of open space and countryside around Lincoln identified as Green Wedges in the adopted Local Plans with no change to the boundaries. This option has not been taken forward as part of the preferred approach. The Proposed Submission Local Plan identifies Lincoln as the principal focus for new

development in Central Lincolnshire over the plan period. This means that existing land designations, such as Green Wedges, need to be reviewed to see if there is scope to accommodate future development in a sustainable way.

- 6.3. **Option 3:** Maintain protection of the open character of areas around Lincoln identified as Green Wedges, but allowing changes to the boundaries to accommodate some new development and extensions to the Green Wedge network. This option allows some adjustment to the Green Wedges if deemed necessary to accommodate housing and/or employment allocations to meet identified need to 2036.
- 6.4. **Option 4:** Maintain protection of the open and rural character of the countryside between Central Lincolnshire's villages by identifying Green Wedges. This option is a continuation of the approach set out in the adopted Local Plans to protect land between settlements. This option would rename Settlement Breaks as Green Wedges.

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 both the Preliminary and Further Draft consultations, as well as how the latest evidence and national guidance has been taken into account.