



Policy LP24 Creation of New Open Space, Sports and Recreation 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 LP24 which relates to the Creation of New Open Space, Sports and Recreation Facilities and the proposed standards required.
- 1.3 This report should be read in conjunction with the published Central Lincolnshire Open Space Audit and Provision Standard Assessment.

National policy

- 1.4 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.
- 1.5 Paragraph (73) states
"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. Planning policies should be based on and up-to-date assessments of the needs for open space, sports and recreation facilities and opportunities for new provision. The assessment should identify specific needs and quantitative or qualitative deficits or surpluses of open space, sports and recreational facilities in the local area. Information gained from the assessments should be used to determine what open space, sports and recreational provision is required."

National Standards

- 1.6 National Standards for open space provide the context for considering standards across Central Lincolnshire and have been used in the Central Lincolnshire Open Space Audit and Provision Standard Assessment. These are described in more detail in the assessment and summarised below in table 1.
- 1.7 **Formal playing fields:** Fields in Trust (FIT) is the operating name of the National Playing Fields Association. In 2008 FIT published "Planning and Design for Outdoor Sport and Play with benchmark standards". These benchmark standards are recommended as a tool for assisting the development of local standards. The total recommended FIT standard for outdoor sport is 1.6ha per 1,000 population.
- 1.8 Fields in Trust recommend playing field provision quality standards should make reference to the National Playing Fields Association publication "The Design and Maintenance Of Outdoor Sports Facilities" along with Sport England (National Governing Sports Body) guidance published on the Sport England Website.
- 1.9 Sport England publish guidance on the minimum standard pitch size requirements ("Comparative sizes of Sports pitches and Courts April 2011 update"). Sport England also publish National Governing Body quality standard guidance on the design, specification

and construction of different types of pitches (reference <http://www.sportengland.org/facilities-planning/tools-guidance/>)

- 1.10 Fields in Trust recommend that access to pitches should be within 1.2 KM of all dwellings in major residential areas
- 1.11 **Children’s Play Space:** In addition to quantity standards for outdoor sports provision, FIT also recommend standards for children’s playing space. Table 1 shows that benchmark standards of 0.8ha of children’s play space is recommended per 1,000 population. This is split into 0.25ha of designated equipped playing space (including fenced areas with play equipment) and a further 0.55ha of informal playing space, typically consisting of amenity space.
- 1.12 FIT published guidance “Planning and Design for Outdoor Sport and Play with benchmark standards” also outlines quality standard in respect of play area design and play value assessment.
- 1.13 **Parks and Gardens; Green Flag quality standard:**The **Green Flag Award** is the benchmark national standard for parks and green spaces in the United Kingdom. The scheme was set up in 1996 to recognize and reward green spaces in England and Wales that met the laid down high standards. It is also seen as a way of encouraging others to achieve the same high environmental standards, creating a benchmark of excellence in recreational green areas. Any free to enter public park or green space is eligible to apply for an Award. The scheme is owned by the Government through the Department for Communities and Local Government, though it is managed by other agents under contract. Parks and green spaces are judged in April and May each year and the winners are announced in July. Parks must apply each year to keep their Green Flag Award, and winning sites are eligible to fly a Green Flag in the park for a year.
- 1.14 Sites for a Green Flag Award are judged against eight key criteria:
- A welcoming place
 - Healthy, safe and secure
 - Clean and well maintained
 - Sustainability
 - Conservation and heritage
 - Community involvement
 - Marketing
 - Management
- 1.15 **Natural Greenspace:** Natural England believes that everyone should have access to good quality natural greenspace near to where they live and have produced ‘Nature Nearby’ Accessible Natural Greenspace Guidance” to help people make this a reality.
- 1.16 The guidance is aimed at parks and greenspace practitioners and their partners, particularly decision makers, planners and managers of green space. It describes the amount, quality and level of visitor services that Natural England believe everyone is entitled to.
- 1.17 The guidance proposes the adoption of three key standards by greenspace professionals that will deliver high quality and inspiring visitor experiences in green spaces close to where people live, and connect people with the natural environment. The standards include the Accessible Natural Greenspace Standard (ANGSt).

- 1.18 ANGSt recommends that everyone, wherever they live, should have accessible natural greenspace:
- of at least 2 hectares in size, no more than 300 metres (5 minutes' walk) from home;
 - at least one accessible 20 hectare site within two kilometre of home;
 - one accessible 100 hectare site within five kilometres of home; and
 - one accessible 500 hectare site within ten kilometres of home; plus
 - A minimum of one hectare of statutory Local Nature Reserves per thousand population.
- 1.19 **Allotments:** the benefits of allotments are well established:
- providing a sustainable food supply
 - giving a healthy activity for people of all ages
 - fostering community development and cohesiveness
 - acting as an educational resource
 - providing access to nature and wildlife, and acting as a resource for biodiversity
 - giving open spaces for local communities
 - Reducing carbon emissions by avoiding the long-distance transport of food.
- 1.20 The National Society of Allotment and Leisure Gardeners (NSALG) has produced a national allotment standard for a minimum provision of 20 standard plots of 250 square metres per 1,000 households or 0.5ha per 1,000 households.
- 1.21 **A green infrastructure approach:** A multi-functional approach to public open space is a key aspect recognised within the Green Flag quality standard criteria and FIT guidance. Opportunities for open space to provide value in terms of biodiversity and ecosystem services such as flood management mitigation and temperature control is well documented nationally and is supported locally by the Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust, Greater Lincolnshire Nature Partnership and the Lead Local Flood Authority as documented in the Central Lincolnshire green infrastructure 2011.
- 1.22 The table overleaf captures a summary of all of the national standards as described above and have, in addition to the NPPF, been taken into account in preparing the Local Plan as a whole, and policy LP24 in particular.

| Table 1 Summary of National provision standard guidance | | | |
|---|--|--|---------------------------------------|
| National Guidance | Related type of open space | Quantity /area required per 1000 pop | Accessibility (distance) standard (m) |
| Playing Field Provision (Fields in Trust) | Formal sports pitches | 1.2 ha/1000 | 1200m |
| | All outdoor sport | 1.6 ha/1000 | 1200m |
| Play area provision (Fields in Trust) | Children and young people's equipped play | .25 ha/1000 | 240-600 m |
| | Informal Play space | 0.55 ha /1000 | 600 m |
| | Total children's play space | 0.8 ha /1000 | 600 m |
| Accessible natural green space provision (Natural England Angst) | 2 Ha of accessible natural green space within 300 m | 2.7ha /1000 urban area – (59ha/1000 rural) | 300 m |
| | 20 ha accessible natural greenspace site within 2 KM | | 2 KM |
| The national society of Allotment and Leisure Gardens (NSALG) | 20 plots per 1000 households. Standard plot 250m2 | 0.5ha/1000 | N/A |
| Green Flag Quality standard | ----- | ----- | ----- |

2 Central Lincolnshire Context in Relation to Policy LP24

- 2.1 To support the development of Policy LP24 an open space audit and provision standard assessment has been undertaken (2015-16), which has made reference to the guidance developed by Greenspace Scotland and Scottish Natural Heritage. The approach is based on the objective that everyone should have access to a minimum standard of accessible quality usable space which is safe, welcoming, appealing, distinctive and well connected.
- 2.2 A GIS based audit of all open space site typologies across Central Lincolnshire has been completed for usable greenspace across a range of different open space types and gives an indicative picture of the current baseline level of provision. This mapped data set has been used to benchmark against the quantity, accessibility and quality standards set out in national guidance and identify the patterns of open space provision within Central Lincolnshire.
- 2.3 Due to the size of the Central Lincolnshire area and resource and time constraints, the assessment has been focussed on a sample of 30 settlements. The settlements prioritised for growth have been used as identified from the top four settlement hierarches in the Central Lincolnshire Local Plan. This approach is considered to be robust for considering provision standard patterns across the main growth areas proposed for Central Lincolnshire.
- 2.4 The assessment of the City of Lincoln has been based on the urban extent within the line of the bypass, and has included audited data from the following settlements areas; City of Lincoln; North Hykeham; South Hykeham Fosse way; Bracebridge Heath; Waddington Low Field; and Canwick.
- 2.5 Site quality audits have been undertaken between May and June 2015 across the settlements using criteria based on Field in Trust (FIT) standard approach for Play areas and Green Flag standard approach for all other spaces. This data provides an indicative picture of the quality of the current open space provision within these settlements.
- 2.6 In addition to the audit, reference to other evidence from locally published documents has been used (such as the Central Lincolnshire Playing Pitch Assessment 2013; The City of Lincoln Play Strategy 2012; City of Lincoln Allotment Strategy 2012) and through Local Authority Officer and Environmental Partner organisation consultation.
- 2.7 The assessment has identified quantitative benchmark standards for Strategic Playing Fields and Local Useable Greenspace across Central Lincolnshire. Typology accessibility and quality standards have also been identified based on national standards.
- 2.8 It is viewed that the application of these standards alongside the mapped open space database will ensure open space provision within new developments within Central Lincolnshire will be of an appropriate quantity, accessibility and quality to meet the needs of new residents.
- 2.9 Further detail about the audit and approach is outlined in the Central Lincolnshire Open Space Audit and Provision Standard Assessment. Application of the standards is further outlined in the (currently draft, as at April 2016) Developer Contribution SPD, both available to download from the Local Plan website.

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 Open Space, Sports and Recreation Facilities but did not include any recommended standards at that stage.

3.2 Comments received included:

- More open space needed and opportunities to access the countryside.
- Difficult to make appropriate provision or policy statements without evidence on open space deficiencies and information on standards of existing provision.
- Open Space Study is essential to identifying areas of need for open space, sports and recreation.
- The Gainsborough Town Plan will set out standards for sports, recreational spaces and public parks within the town.
- Important to develop other green spaces as well as protecting existing.
- Lincoln, in comparative terms, is short of such areas – what we have must be preserved and enhanced.
- New sports facilities, linked to schools or otherwise, should be of benefit to the entire community and not exclusive to ‘members’ who can afford it.
- Support and welcome recognition that open spaces can make an important contribution to biodiversity.
- Promotion of multifunctional open space welcomed.
- On site or contribution to nearby site if there are already facilities in the area.
- Natural England’s Accessible Natural Greenspace Standards should be used to ensure that there is sufficient natural greenspace accessible to residents and available for wildlife.

4 Local Plan Policy: Further Draft

4.1 The policy in the Further Draft version of the Local Plan was amended from the original Preliminary Draft in response to the assessed evidence and comments received during the consultation.

4.2 In response to comments raised on the need for evidenced based standard setting, the Central Lincolnshire Open Space Audit and Provision Standard Assessment has been undertaken. This along with the Central Lincolnshire playing pitch need assessment and City of Lincoln Allotment Strategy assessment and reference to national standards has informed Local Plan Policy standards.

4.3 In response to comments that open space provision in new developments should be considered in the context of existing local need and the impact of development on such, the standards have been set to facilitate a flexible approach to application.

4.4 In response to issues raised supporting the need for multifunctional open spaces and recognising that such make a positive contribution to biodiversity, the standards and the proposed application have been drafted with this as a key objective.

4.5 In response to the comment suggesting the use of Natural England’s Accessible Natural Greenspace Standards these have been considered and proposed for inclusion within the standards.

4.6 The following summarises comments received at the Further Draft stage:

- Various comments broadly supporting elements of the policy.

- Concern the policy is not in conformity with the NPPF.
- Various detailed suggestions to improve the clarity of policy wording/strengthen policy wording.
- The policy is too vague/unclear.
- Concern the policy as written would add a further cost burden on developers, which could make development unviable.
- The evidence behind the policy is lacking/weak.
- Various comments suggesting the policy needs substantial or significant rewording, especially in relation to protection of existing facilities, developer contributions and the standards set out in Appendix C.
- Support for reasonable alternative option 2, i.e. “Business as usual, continuation of open space standards in saved local Plans with emphasis on quantity of provision”.
- Objection to standards set out in Appendix C, especially in relation to different standards in rural and urban settlements.

5 Local Plan Policy: Proposed Submission

- 5.1 The policy in the Proposed Submission Local Plan has been slightly amended from the Further Draft version in response to the comments received during the consultation, though these amendments do not fundamentally change the policy approach.
- 5.2 The title of the policy has changed by adding the words “Creation of new...” at the start of the policy, to clarify that the policy is primarily about creating new open space, rather than protecting existing open space (with protection of existing space covered by Policy LP23).
- 5.3 In response to comments received to the Open Space Standards proposed in appendix C, the standards have been reviewed and further clarified and an updated Central Lincolnshire Open Space Audit and Provision Standard Assessment has been published alongside the Proposed Submission Draft Plan.
- 5.4 In response to Further Draft comments questioning the need for differential use of Usable Greenspace standards between rural and urban areas, it is proposed that the different rates are retained. The evidence shows that there is generally a higher per capita quantity of open space within the urban settlements than rural currently. This pattern is presumed to be due to the greater concentration of all open space typologies and increased amount of ‘strategic’ open space within urban areas which by definition provides for open space needs beyond the local area. To ensure new development does not impact negatively on the current levels of provision it is proposed that the existing quantity standards are maintained in future new developments within Central Lincolnshire.
- 5.5 In response to the Further Draft comment objecting to the use of a sample of Growth villages as being representative of Central Lincolnshire provision it is felt that there is no evidence to substantiate the objection. The use of sampling is standard in other District Assessments and supported in open space assessment good practice guidance.
- 5.6 In response to Sport England’s concerns that application of generic standards in respect of sports provision will not deliver provision adequately and that such standards should be based on specific need and delivery strategies, it is considered that the evidenced standards based approach outlined in the assessment is necessary to provide clarity for developers and development managers in the provision of open space within new development. The use of the access and quality standards alongside other evidence such as the Neil Allen 2013 Playing Pitch Assessment are flexible enough to deliver any specifically identified local site need. The assessment of the Strategic Playing Field standard for Central Lincolnshire, has been based on a detailed assessment of need

within the Plan period and is viewed as being compliant with the requirements of the NPPF. In addition the identified Accessibility and Quality standards for Playing fields at both a strategic and local level are proposed to support a holistic and multi-functional approach to the design of new open space which concurs with the recommendations of Sport England's recent publications 'Active Design'.

- 5.7 Greenspace provision is recognised as being hierarchical serving both wider strategic area and local /neighbourhood areas. The audit and assessment has been undertaken on this basis.
- 5.8 Quantative provision at the strategic level is relatively good across Central Lincolnshire and apart from the playing field typology no other need for further strategic sites have currently been identified
- 5.9 A quantity standard at a strategic level has only been set for Formal playing fields at 1.1 ha per 1000 population. This standard is below the Fields in Trust recommended standard but is on evidence of required need as identified in the published Central Lincolnshire Playing Field Assessment 2013.
- 5.10 Accessibility and quality standards have been set at the strategic level for; formal playing fields; Parks and Gardens and Natural and Semi Natural Greenspace including strategic Green Corridors based on the recommended national standards.
- 5.11 Open space at the local level is aimed at meeting the needs for; informal play (kick about areas, cycle play); Formal play; Informal recreation (dog walking, cycling); food growing and burial.
- 5.12 The quantities and distribution of local types of open space vary greatly across Central Lincolnshire. In developing the standards for Central Lincolnshire a general Local Greenspace standard of provision has been identified from the audited evidence of existing average levels of open space within sample settlements. Compliance with this standard should ensure that the average amount of useable greenspace will be maintained in new developments. The use of accessibility and quality standards alongside mapped sites will also help to identify and prioritise the type of provision that should be included in the Local Greenspace provided.
- 5.13 The audit assessment has indicated that at the local level a bench mark quantity provision standard of 1.8ha/1000 for urban and 1.5ha/1000 for rural areas is an appropriate quantity benchmark for use in Central Lincolnshire with respect to new developments.
- 5.14 This level of provision is comparable with existing levels and those that has been viably secured on new development sites across the Districts over the previous plan periods. This standard in conjunction with the proposed local accessibility and quality standards will allow a flexible approach to the types of open space to be provided within new developments in response to any identified local deficiencies.
- 5.15 At a local level the assessment has evidenced that there is generally good access to a range of open space types of at least 0.2 has of greenspace across Central Lincolnshire, although a wide variance across settlements in accessibility to individual open space typologies.
- 5.16 The quality of open spaces is generally of a lower standard across most typologies than national recommendations. Opportunities for improving accessibility to and quality of existing provision needs to be given priority in the delivery of new developments within Central Lincolnshire.

- 5.17 More detail on the benchmark access and quality standards for individual typologies based on national benchmark standards, local audit and evidence are outlined in the published Central Lincolnshire Open Space Audit and Provision Standard Assessment.

6 Alternative Reasonable Options

- 6.1 The following alternative options have been considered for this policy (Option 1 being the preferred policy).
- 6.2 **Option 2:** No policy on Creation of New Open Space, Sport and recreation facilities. This option would not be compliant with the NPPF, it is clear that developers and the public require clear and tested open space standards within a development plan document.
- 6.3 **Option 3:** Use of National standards without reference to local need. This option would not be NPPF compliant and risks over or under estimating local space need in terms of quantity quality and accessibility.

7 Conclusion

- 7.1 This Evidence Report demonstrates the rationale for the proposed policy as contained in the September 2015 Further Draft Local Plan. 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.