



# **Policy LP29 Protecting Lincoln’s Setting and Character 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 LP29, which relates to protecting Lincoln's setting and character.

## 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 7 of the NPPF requires the consideration of good design, section 11 seeks to conserve and enhance the natural environment, while section 12 seeks to ensure that the historic environment is conserved and enhanced, and the separate section on plan-making are all relevant to policy LP29. In particular:
  - In stating that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development, paragraph 9 states that "pursuing sustainable development involves seeking positive improvements in the quality of the built, natural and historic environment, as well as in people's quality of life, including (but not limited to): ...moving from a net loss of bio-diversity to achieving net gains for nature; replacing poor design with better design;" and "improving the conditions in which people live, work, travel and take leisure..."
  - In listing 12 core planning principles, paragraph 17 requires planning to "take account of the different roles and character of different areas..." and "conserve heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance, so that they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the quality of life of this and future generations".
  - Paragraph 58 of section 7 states that "local and neighbourhood plans should develop robust and comprehensive policies that set out the quality of development that will be expected for the area" and that planning policies and decisions should aim to ensure that developments "respond to local character and history, and reflect the identity of local surroundings and materials".
  - Within section 11, paragraph 109 requires the planning system to contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by "protecting and enhancing valued landscapes..." and paragraph 114 states that 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 126 of section 12 requires local planning authorities to set out in their Local Plan a "positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment" and in doing so, "they should recognise that heritage assets are an

irreplaceable resource and conserve them in a manner appropriate to their significance” and should take into account “opportunities to draw on the contribution made by the historic environment to the character of a place”.

- Para 157 of the plan-making section states that Local Plans should “contain a clear strategy for enhancing the natural, built and historic environment...”

1.5 The NPPG includes guidance on good design and how it can help to achieve local character including landscape setting objectives (Reference ID: 26-007-20140306) states that “development should seek to promote character in townscape and landscape by responding to and reinforcing locally distinctive patterns of development”.

1.6 The above NPPF policy and NPPG guidance has been taken into account in preparing the Local Plan as a whole, and policy LP29 in particular.

## 2 Central Lincolnshire Context in Relation to Policy LP29

2.1 Lincoln Cathedral is one of the most important medieval buildings in Europe and its prominent, visually dominating position, towering over the City is an important symbol for the area. There are also important views into and out of the City, principally to and from the Lincoln Ridge, all fundamental to the City’s setting and character. This character has evolved in part from the alignment of roman roads, location and nature of common land and physical restrictions of flood risk and ground conditions. Potential impacts can include views being blocked by development, poor design and insensitive positioning.

2.2 Views across and along open spaces are closely linked to the Green Wedges around the City and will be an important consideration, particularly for development around the edge of Lincoln. It is expected that substantial linear open spaces will be retained to safeguard views of the Lincoln Edge and the historic City, providing land for formal and casual recreation as well as maintaining linkages between sites of known nature conservation interest. Green Wedges extending out from the City will help to protect the setting and character of Lincoln as well as the separate and distinct character of its surrounding settlements and communities.

2.3 The Brayford Pool and the waterways around Lincoln have been an important feature of the City for centuries and have also recently provided the focus for cultural, leisure and educational development. The revival of the area is to be welcomed, but unchecked over-development spilling out from the banks into the Pool and waterways is in danger of causing them to lose their essential open character.

2.4 It is recognised that a high quality public environment can have a significant impact on the economic life of urban centres and is an essential part of any regeneration strategy, such as improvements to former churchyards and new and existing squares.

2.5 Lincoln and its surrounding area has a particularly rich and diverse natural and built environment including a varied landscape at the meeting point of five National Character Areas; a rich and varied biodiversity reflecting the range of geological and ecological conditions that form one of Central Lincolnshire’s biodiversity ‘hotspots’; a rich townscape with a large number of listed buildings and conservation areas and archaeology of

international significance. The Lincoln Townscape Assessment (2012) describes the local context for defining distinctiveness and as a means of assessing the impact of proposals on Lincoln's setting and character. The Lincolnshire Biodiversity Action Plan 2011 sets out the vision and aims for maintaining and enhancing a network of habitats, species, wildlife sites and their linkages and the Central Lincolnshire Biodiversity Opportunity Mapping Study identifies opportunities for targeted local landscape scale habitat improvements.

### 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.
- 3.2 The majority of comments received during the consultation on the Preliminary Draft version of the Local Plan supported the protection of Lincoln's setting and character and the concept of Green Wedges. Some felt that the policy was overly Lincoln centric and should protect the villages surrounding Lincoln; that Green Wedges in themselves were not sufficient to protect Lincoln's setting and character; and that appropriate redevelopment of brownfield sites within Green Wedges should be permitted.
- 3.3 The issue of Green Wedges, including their history in Central Lincolnshire and proposals to adjust them, is covered in Evidence Report PS.EVR22 available in the planning policy library. Green wedges have been successfully used for some time to protect Lincoln's character and setting and in protecting the important green lungs that stretch into the heart of the City as well as protecting the distinct and separate character and setting of surrounding villages.

### 4 Local Plan Policy: Further Draft

- 4.1 As the Local Plan evolved, following public consultation, the Green Wedge concept was extended beyond the Lincoln area to include other important green spaces throughout the Central Lincolnshire area, such as settlement breaks, and this resulted in a generic Green Wedge policy being included elsewhere in the plan. It was also acknowledged that Lincoln's setting and character relied on more than the Green Wedge network and the directing of development pressures alone. Therefore, in response to advice and comments received, the policy was extended to include heritage, landscapes and townscapes. 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 most of which broadly or strongly supporting the policy. Various detailed suggestions were made to improve clarity of policy wording including adding more detail on character and the public realm and reference to the Lincoln Urban Opportunity Study. Some concern was expressed that the policy was not in conformity with the NPPF in that landscape, biodiversity and the historic environment are not fully consistent with a presumption in favour of sustainable development or that it is not made clear that some harm may be acceptable where it is outweighed by the benefits of the development.
- 4.3 Sustainable development is the golden thread running through the NPPF and NPPG. Both provide guidance on the economic, social and environmental sustainability required of the planning system and the policy is considered to meet the requirements of NPPF and NPPG

as stated in section 1 above. Details of specific proposals and balance of benefits would be weighed on a case by case basis.

## 5 Local Plan Policy: Proposed Submission

- 5.1 Suggestions made to include more Lincoln area specific details such as reference to conservation areas, historic parks and gardens and reference to the public realm and art, culture and leisure assets and facilities have been added to the policy and supporting text. The Policy has also been amended to reflect more the style of the similar policy for Sleaford (which received support at the Further Draft stage). Overall, the policy the policy is now longer and more comprehensive, though the broad objective of the policy remains the same.
- 5.2 The policy is supported by the Central Lincolnshire Green Infrastructure Study, Lincoln Townscape Assessment, Lincolnshire Biodiversity Action plan, Central Lincolnshire Biodiversity Opportunities Mapping Study and allows for links to the emerging Lincoln Urban Opportunities Study.
- 5.3 The policy is also supported by other polices in the Local Plan including:
- LP17 – landscape, Townscape and Views which seeks to preserve, enhance or create key local views and vistas particularly for significant buildings or areas particularly sensitive to change;
  - LP20 – Green Infrastructure Network which encourages regard to and enhancement of the Green infrastructure Network;
  - LP21 – Biodiversity and Geodiversity seeks to safeguard, enhance and mitigate against the loss of habitats, species and sites;
  - LP22 – Green Wedges which seeks to restrict development within important green spaces;
  - LP25 – The Historic Environment sets criteria to protect or enhance historic assets;
  - LP26 – Design and Amenity sets out the criteria to inform the layout and design of developments to create a sense of place, safeguarding features and respecting character and views; and
  - LP28 and LP30 – Sustainable Urban Extensions provide the overarching and specific policies for what SUEs in general and the Lincoln SUEs in particular will be expected to provide and have regard to.

## 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 local Lincoln policy to protect Lincoln's setting and character, but to rely on general Central Lincolnshire green infrastructure, heritage or national policies. Whilst a Central Lincolnshire wide Green Wedge and Settlement Breaks policy has been included in the Local Plan, to also rely on generic Central Lincolnshire policies for green infrastructure and heritage or national policies would not adequately protect Lincoln's distinctive character or setting, particularly it's unique cathedral. The NPPF also requires

Local Plans to develop robust and comprehensive policies that respond to local character and history and reflect the identity of local surroundings.

## 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.