



Policy LP32 Lincoln's Universities and Colleges 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 LP32, which relates to Lincoln's Universities and Colleges.

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 section of the NPPF concerning promoting healthy communities contains paragraph 72 which states that :
 - The Government attaches great importance to ensuring that a sufficient choice of school places is available to meet the needs of existing and new communities. Local planning authorities should take a proactive, positive and collaborative approach to meeting this requirement, and to development that will widen choice in education.
- 1.5 The above NPPF policy has been taken into account in preparing the Local Plan as a whole, and policy LP32 in particular.
- 1.6 At the time of writing this report, the NPPG did not include any specific guidance on meeting the needs of further education.

2 Central Lincolnshire Context in Relation to Policy LP32

- 2.1 Recent years have seen the development and rapid expansion of further education facilities within the City. Lincoln's two universities and college have an important role to play in supporting the local economy, principally within Lincoln, in raising skills levels within the area as well as providing leisure and business facilities for the wider community.
- 2.2 Lincoln University's academic buildings are predominantly located around Lincoln's Brayford Pool, close to the city centre, and include the Science and Innovation Park and Enterprise Building as well as Performing Arts Centre and the Engine Shed, the largest live music venue in the region. Bishop Grosseteste University is located in uphill Lincoln and as well as academic facilities, provide BG Futures business incubation units, conference and events facilities as well as The Venue Cinema. Lincoln College, the largest educational institution in the County principally located on Monks Road and Lindum Hill, Lincoln, close to the City centre also offer a range of conference and meeting facilities.
- 2.3 There is a need to both support the growth and development of Lincoln's universities and college yet also balance such growth against the need to protect Lincoln's unique natural

and historic environment and to ensure that any development takes place in the most sustainable locations and manner.

- 2.4 The Central Lincolnshire Authorities have responded to these issues in a variety of ways including working closely with the universities and college in developing their masterplans as well as working with associated businesses and communities.

3 Local Plan Policy: Preliminary Draft

- 3.1 The Preliminary Draft version of the Local Plan (published for consultation in October – November 2014) included support for the ongoing development of higher and further education establishments within policy LP31 that sought to provide overarching support and guidance for all elements of Lincoln's economy.
- 3.2 In respect of the education element of the then broad Policy LP31, Lincoln University commented on the draft policy and whilst acknowledging that it supported ongoing development, it felt that the University's wider estate and the benefits that developing these sites would have on capital investment in the main campus and their involvement in the Lincoln Science and Innovation Park were not reflected appropriately.

4 Local Plan Policy: Further Draft

- 4.1 In response to the above issues raised, it was felt that the Lincoln Science and Innovation Park is now adequately referenced in the section on Economic Growth, Prosperity and Jobs, policy LP5, and in policy LP30 which covers Lincoln's Major Development Sites. However, it was considered reasonable to expand upon the importance to the City's growth and prosperity arising from Lincoln's two universities and college and that this could best be done through a separate section and policy.
- 4.2 A new section and policy on Lincoln's Universities and College was therefore added to the Further Draft version of the Local Plan. The Further Draft Local Plan was published for consultation in October – November 2015.
- 4.3 A significant number of comments were received as part of the Further Draft Local Plan consultation objecting to the policy based on view that the University of Lincoln was being given too much flexibility and favouritism. Objections were largely prompted by the separate promotion of the Lincoln University campus site north of Lincoln (Riseholme) as a housing development site. Objectors felt that Lincoln University was being placed "beyond the reach of district and neighbourhood plans" and that their land should be treated the same as other potential development sites. There were concerns expressed over allowing housing development on the Riseholme Campus and impact this would have on important green space north of the Lincoln bypass, identified as Green Wedge and the historic park and garden.
- 4.4 Various comments were received suggesting that the policy needed substantial or significant rewording, especially in relation to providing more detail on the University of Lincoln future growth plans.
- 4.5 Concern was expressed by some that the policy as worded was not in conformity with the NPPF in that it gave financial advantage to a particular landowner (for their existing land

bank and future land acquisition), putting others at a particular disadvantage and could potentially be subject to legal challenge.

5 Local Plan Policy: Proposed Submission

- 5.1 Following careful consideration of the representations, a policy is retained in the Proposed Submission Local Plan, which acknowledges the importance of Lincoln University, Bishop Grosseteste University and Lincoln College to the local economy and provides support for the growth and prosperity of the universities and college as higher education establishments.
- 5.2 However, it is agreed that the final paragraph of the Further Draft Local Plan policy referencing supporting in principle the redevelopment of University/ College land and assets, especially where such redevelopment demonstrably contributes to their continued growth and success, is not an appropriate land use policy suitable for a Local Plan, and does not conform with guidance in the NPPF. That part of the policy is not, therefore, even a reasonable option for inclusion. It has therefore been removed.
- 5.3 The policy, as now included in the Proposed Submission Local Plan, is also supported by other policies in the Local Plan including:
- LP5 – Delivering Prosperity and Jobs;
 - LP30 – Lincoln Sustainable Urban Extensions; and
 - LP31 – Lincoln’s economy.

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:** Incorporate support for Lincoln’s universities and college within the Lincoln City Economy policy along with other drivers of the Lincoln economy. This was the option pursued in the Preliminary Draft version of the Local Plan (as explained in section 3 above). However, in light of comments received as part of the Preliminary Draft Local Plan consultation, this approach has been amended.
- 6.3 **Option 3:** Have no specific policy reference to Lincoln’s universities or college but rely on national policy in the NPPF and the more generic policies of the Local Plan. However, this was not felt to adequately reflect the importance of Lincoln’s universities and college to Lincoln’s economy and growth prospects, and this option has therefore 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.