



Policy LP42 Gainsborough Town Centre and Primary Shopping Area Evidence Report

**Proposed Submission
April 2016**

Contents

1	Introduction and Policy Context.....	1
2	Central Lincolnshire Context in Relation to Policy LP42.....	2
3	Local Plan Policy: Preliminary Draft	3
4	Local Plan Policy: Further Draft.....	3
5	Local Plan Policy: Proposed Submission	3
6	Alternative Reasonable Options.....	4
7	Conclusion.....	4

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 LP42, which relates to the Gainsborough Town Centre and Primary Shopping Area.

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 2 of the NPPF concerns "Ensuring the vitality of town centres" and there is a separate section on "Plan-making". The NPPF supports town centres as the heart of communities and as the preferred location for retail and leisure development. The following parts of the NPPF are particularly relevant to policy LP42:
 - Paragraph 23- *"Planning policies should be positive, promote competitive town centre environments and set out policies for the management and growth of centres over the plan period. In drawing up Local Plans, local planning authorities should: recognise town centres as the heart of their communities and pursue policies to support their viability and vitality...define the extent of town centres and primary shopping areas...undertake an assessment of the need to expand town centres...recognise that residential development can play an important role in ensuring the vitality of centres and set out policies to encourage residential development on appropriate sites."*
 - Paragraph 156 - 157 of the section on plan-making states that Local Plans should include strategic policies to deliver *"the provision of retail, leisure and other commercial development"* and *"the provision of health, security, community and cultural infrastructure and other local facilities"* and to indicate *"land use designations on a proposals map"*.
 - The NPPF defines a town centre as an *"area defined on the local authority's proposal map, including the primary shopping area and areas predominantly occupied by main town centre uses within or adjacent to the primary shopping area"*.
 - Primary shopping area is defined as a: *"defined area where retail development is concentrated (generally comprising the primary and those secondary frontages which are adjoining and closely related to the primary shopping frontage)."*
 - Main town centre uses are defined as: *"retail development (including warehouse clubs and factory outlet centres); leisure, entertainment facilities the more intensive sport and recreation uses (including cinemas, restaurants, drive-through restaurants, bars and pubs, night-clubs, casinos, health and fitness centres, indoor bowling centres, and bingo"*

halls); offices; and arts, culture and tourism development (including theatres, museums, galleries and concert halls, hotels and conference facilities)."

1.5 The NPPG includes guidance on ensuring the vitality of town centres:

- *"Local planning authorities should plan positively, to support town centres to generate local employment, promote beneficial competition within and between town centres, and create attractive, diverse places where people want to live, visit and work"* (Reference ID: 2b-001-20140306).
- *"A positive vision or strategy for town centres, articulated through the Local Plan, is key to ensuring successful town centres which enable sustainable economic growth and provide a wide range of social and environmental benefits. Once adopted a Local Plan, including any town centre policy that it contains, will be the starting point for any decisions on individual developments..."* (Reference ID: 2b-002-20140306).

1.6 The above NPPF policy and NPPG guidance has been taken into account in preparing the Local Plan as a whole, and policy LP42 in particular.

2 Central Lincolnshire Context in Relation to Policy LP42

2.1 The current town centre boundary for Gainsborough is defined in the adopted 2006 West Lindsey Local Plan.

2.2 The NPPF, which has come into force since the adoption of the West Lindsey Local Plan, requires local planning authorities to define the extent of Primary Shopping Areas in addition to town centre boundaries.

2.3 The Central Lincolnshire City and Town Centre Study (2012) and update (2015) show that overall, Central Lincolnshire has a healthy market share of convenience goods expenditure and a reasonably good market share of comparison goods expenditure.

2.4 The main shopping area in Gainsborough is concentrated along the pedestrianised area of Market Place, Silver Street and Lord Street, and in Marshall's Yard, with additional retail units located on Church Street, Market Street and North Street.

2.5 Gainsborough accommodates a number of key national retailers, reflecting its important role as the key centre in West Lindsey. The City and Town Centre Study update includes a land use plan for Gainsborough Town Centre (as of March 2015) which identifies the main town centre uses in the town, including vacant units. The town centre currently comprises of 198 units, which is a net reduction of 1 unit since July 2011.

2.6 As of March 2015, at 16.7% (33 in number) the rate of vacant units is above the national average figure of 11.4%, however at 9.4% the vacancy rate of floorspace is broadly in line with the national rate of 9.3%. Between July 2011 and March 2015, the number of vacant units increased by 3, however the amount of vacant floorspace in Gainsborough town centre decreased from 5,210sq.m to 4,700sq.m. This is mainly due to larger units in Marshalls' Yard becoming occupied since 2011. These vacant units are spread throughout

the town centre, but there is a slight concentration to the north of Church Street, to the west of Lord Street and on Silver Street.

- 2.7 Gainsborough town centre includes 12 of the main national retailers including both comparison and convenience retailers. Comparison goods retailers make up 34.3% of all town centre outlets, which is slightly above the national average. The City and Town Centre Study update identifies a need for an increase in comparison goods floorspace of between 5,247 sq.m and 8,745 sq.m by 2036 in Gainsborough.
- 2.8 The primary convenience foodstores in the town centre comprise Tesco at Beaumont Street, M&S Simply Food at Marshall's Yard, and Heron Foods in Market Place. Elsewhere in Gainsborough there is also an Aldi, a Lidl, a Morrisons and a Co-operative Food store. The City and Town Centre Study update identified a need for additional convenience goods floorspace of between 1,312 sq.m and 2,440 sq.m in Gainsborough by 2036.

3 Local Plan Policy: Preliminary Draft

- 3.1 The Preliminary Draft version of the Local Plan (published for consultation in October – November 2014) did not include a policy specifically on Gainsborough Town Centre, although LP35 Supporting the Natural Evolution of Gainsborough identified that a number of allocations would be needed in future drafts of the Local Plan, including Town Centre boundaries.

4 Local Plan Policy: Further Draft

- 4.1 Policy LP42 was introduced into the Further Draft version of the Local Plan to designate and define policy requirements in relation to the Gainsborough Town Centre boundary and Primary Shopping Area, both of which were defined on the Central Lincolnshire Local Plan Policies Map.
- 4.2 The policy is supported by evidence contained within the Central Lincolnshire City and Town Centre Study, the Gainsborough Masterplan (2007), and Local Plan policy LP6 Retail and Town Centres in Central Lincolnshire which defines the role and function of Gainsborough Town Centre and guides development proposals for retail and/or other town centre uses.
- 4.3 Support for policy LP42 was expressed during the consultation on the Further Draft Local Plan, though no detailed comments were made. One comment received stated that the 'Gainsborough Town Plan' will define the town centre and district centres for Gainsborough. However, it is necessary to define the primary retail area and town centre boundary in the Local Plan to provide certainty for investors and to be aligned to national policy: it would therefore be inappropriate to leave these designations to a non-statutory plan.

5 Local Plan Policy: Proposed Submission

- 5.1 The thrust of policy LP42 in the Proposed Submission Local Plan has not changed from the Further Draft version, though the detailed policy wording has been revised slightly to make the policy read better. Specifically, reference to non-retail uses on ground floors has been moved from criteria 'a' and incorporated into the opening sentence regarding the primary shopping area.

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 Local Plan).
- 6.2 **Option 2:** Expand the Town Centre Boundary to include a larger geographical area and designate a Primary Shopping Area. This option has been rejected as it has potential to dilute the concentration of town centre uses and therefore undermine the viability and vitality of the town centre. The rate of vacant units and vacant floorspace in Gainsborough is above the national average and this option could exacerbate this issue.
- 6.3 **Option 3:** Reduce the Town Centre Boundary and designate a Primary Shopping Area. This option has been rejected as reducing the town centre boundary could constrain future development opportunities and prevent the delivery of the additional floorspace requirements identified in the Central Lincolnshire City and Town Centre Study. With fewer sites available in the centre it could lead to out of town sites being developed weakening the viability and vitality of the town centre.

7 Conclusion

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