

# **Policy LP43 Protecting Sleaford'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 LP43, which relates to protecting the setting and character of Sleaford. Please note the policy numbering for this policy has changed in the Proposed Submission Local Plan from LP44 (in the Further Draft) to LP43.

## **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 concerns "requiring good design", Section 11 concerns "conserving and enhancing the natural environment", Section 12 concerns "conserving and enhancing the historic environment", and there is a separate section on "Plan-making". The following points are particularly relevant:
  - Para 58 – Local and neighbourhood plans should develop robust and comprehensive policies that set out the quality of development that will be expected for the area...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.
  - Para 109 – The planning system should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by: protecting and enhancing valued landscapes...
  - Para 114 – Local planning authorities should: ...plan positively for the creation, protection, enhancement and management of networks of biodiversity and green infrastructure.
  - Para 126 - Local planning authorities should set out in their Local Plan a positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment ... In doing so, they should recognise that heritage assets are an irreplaceable resource and conserve them in a manner appropriate to their significance. ...
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  - Para 157 – ...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 achieve local character, including landscape objectives. Paragraph 007, (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 LP43 in particular.

## 2 Central Lincolnshire Context in Relation to Policy LP43

- 2.1 Sleaford is a historic market town situated on the River Sleas. The historic centre and land alongside the River are covered by a Conservation Area, which is currently being reviewed by North Kesteven District Council. The town centre has a number of heritage and townscape assets and visitor attractions which help to create a sense of place and special identity. However, in some cases, these are hidden and difficult to access and in others, their settings are undervalued.
- 2.2 There are a number of key local views of Sleaford, both within and outside the town. Perhaps one of the most dominant views in the Sleaford area is of the Bass Maltings complex, which includes the largest group of malt houses in England. The site is listed as Grade II\* on historic England's National Heritage List for England and Heritage at Risk Register.
- 2.3 There is a deficiency in natural green space sites in the Sleaford area, particularly in the east and west of the town (Central Lincolnshire Green Infrastructure Study, 2011). The study identifies Sleaford as a priority area for targeting investment in green infrastructure and greening the built environment.
- 2.4 The Central Lincolnshire Authorities respond to these issues in a variety of ways. For example, undertaking studies with partners to identify opportunities to enhance the built and natural environment, undertaking Conservation Area reviews and appraisals, developing supplementary planning guidance and through Development Management decisions.

## 3 Local Plan Policy: Preliminary Draft

- 3.1 The Preliminary Draft Local Plan (published for consultation in October – November 2014) did not include a policy specifically on protecting the setting and character of Sleaford, but it did include LP37 Building a Better Sleaford, which contained elements relevant to LP43 and which were carried over to the Further Draft Local Plan.
- 3.2 The majority of comments received during the consultation on the Preliminary Draft Local Plan supported those elements of policy LP37 relevant to protecting Sleaford's setting and character. The Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust welcomed the requirement for development proposals to protect and enhance the River Sleas, but suggested additional wording should be inserted around the need for development proposals to take opportunities to deliver green infrastructure improvements. English Heritage welcomed policy LP37 in the Preliminary Draft version, particularly criterion e, which they felt provided the means to address locally specific issues.

## 4 Local Plan Policy: Further Draft

- 4.1 Policy LP43 (then known as LP44) was introduced to the Further Draft Local Plan (published for consultation in October – November 2015) in response to the comments received during the consultation on the Preliminary Draft Local Plan on policy LP37 Building a Better Sleaford, and to ensure development proposals respond positively to Sleaford's built and natural environment in a way that respects its local character and distinctiveness.
- 4.2 The Policy took the comments into account and included a criterion which requires development proposals to take opportunities to deliver improvements to the green infrastructure network.
- 4.3 Criterion (e), which was supported by English Heritage, was been carried forward into policy LP43 in the Further Draft version of the Local Plan and further criteria added around preserving and enhancing the setting and appearance of the Sleaford Conservation Area (bullet a) and protecting important local views, including the Bass Maltings complex and setting (bullet c).
- 4.4 The representations received during the Further Draft consultation were generally supportive of the policy. One respondent raised concern that the policy was factually incorrect in relation to the Corn Exchange building, which should be renamed 17 Market Place.

## 5 Local Plan Policy: Proposed Submission

- 5.1 The policy in the Proposed Submission Local Plan has been carried forward from the Further Draft with minimal change, other than factual corrections in response to the comments.
- 5.2 The policy is supported by evidence contained within the Sleaford Masterplan (2011), Draft Sleaford Conservation Area Appraisal and Central Lincolnshire Green Infrastructure Study. It is also supported by other policies in the Local Plan: LP17 Landscape, Townscape and Views; LP20 Green Infrastructure Network; LP21 Biodiversity and Geodiversity; LP25 The Historic Environment; LP26 Design and Amenity; and LP27 Main Town Centre Uses: Frontages and Advertisements.

## 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.)
- 6.2 **Option 2:** To have no local policy and rely on national policy in the NPPF. This option has not been taken forward, as the NPPF requires Local Plans to develop robust and comprehensive policies that respond to local character and history, and which reflect the identity of local surroundings. Relying on national policy would not allow local circumstances to be taken into account.

## 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 Further Draft consultation, as well as how the latest evidence and national guidance has been taken into account.