



# **Policy LP46 Sleaford Town Centre 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 LP46, which relates to Sleaford Town Centre.

## 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 points are particularly relevant:
  - 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 the Local Plan 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".
  - Annex 2 Glossary 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";
  - Annex 2 Glossary defines main town centre uses 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. The following points are relevant:
- “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” (para 001, Reference ID: 2b-001-20140306).
  - Para 002 – “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.” (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 LP46 in particular.

## 2 Central Lincolnshire Context in Relation to Policy LP46

- 2.1 The current Town Centre boundary for Sleaford is defined in the adopted North Kesteven Local Plan 2007. As this was defined more than 8 years ago, it is necessary to review the boundary as part of the Central Lincolnshire Local Plan preparation process, taking into account any changes that have taken place since 2007. Additionally, the NPPF, which has come into force since the adoption of the North Kesteven Local Plan, requires local planning authorities to define the extent of Primary Shopping Areas.
- 2.2 The Central Lincolnshire City and Town Centres 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. Sleaford town centre is broadly similar to the national average, but is below the national figure for comparison goods and leisure service units.
- 2.3 The main shopping area in Sleaford is focused around Southgate and Northgate, with various secondary shopping Streets including the Market Place and Westgate. Sleaford accommodates a number of key national retailers, reflecting its important role as the key centre in North Kesteven. The City and Town Centres Study update includes a land use plan for Sleaford 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 204 retail units, with a net increase of 8 units since July 2011.
- 2.4 As of March 2015, the rate of vacant outlets (12.7%) and proportion of vacant floorspace (13%) is above the national average figures of 11.7% and 9.3% respectively. Between July 2011 and March 2015, there has been an increase in both the number of vacant units and the amount of vacant floorspace in Sleaford town centre. The greatest concentration of vacant units is in the north west of the town at the Riverside Shopping Centre and to the south near the railway station.
- 2.5 The primary convenience foodstores in the town centre comprise the Sainsbury’s supermarket to the rear of the Riverside Shopping Centre, the Iceland store on Southgate and the Aldi supermarket to the south of the town centre on Mareham Lane. Other

foodstore units on the outskirts of Sleaford include the Tesco, Lidl and Co-op units on Lincoln Road to the north of the town centre. The City and Town Centres Study update identifies a need for additional convenience goods floorspace between 1,534 sq.m and 2,852 sq.m in 2015, increasing to between 2,603 sq.m and 4,841 sq.m 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 Sleaford Town Centre, although LP38 Supporting the Natural evolution of Sleaford identified that a number of allocations would be needed in future iterations of the Local Plan, including Town Centre boundaries.
- 3.2 The majority of respondents to the Preliminary Draft version of the Local Plan decided to reserve comment on LP38 Supporting the Natural evolution of Sleaford, until further detail was made available in later versions of the Plan.

### 4 Local Plan Policy: Further Draft

- 4.1 Policy LP46 was introduced into the Further Draft version of the Local Plan (published October to November 2015) to define policy requirements in relation to the Sleaford Town Centre boundary and Primary Shopping Area as designated on the Central Lincolnshire Local Plan Policies Map.
- 4.2 The Town Centre boundary designated on the Central Lincolnshire Further Draft Local Plan Policies Map was retained as defined in the adopted North Kesteven Local Plan, as the findings of the Central Lincolnshire Town Centre Study (May 2012 and Update 2015) and Sleaford Town Centre Visioning Report (July 2015) do not highlight a need to change the boundary. The same Study recommended a Primary Shopping Area boundary for Sleaford based on an analysis of current A1 uses and an understanding of how the town centre functions. This boundary was accepted and shown on the Further Draft Local Plan Policies Map.
- 4.3 In general, responses to the Further Draft Local Plan were supportive of the policy.

### 5 Local Plan Policy: Proposed Submission

- 5.1 The policy in the Proposed Submission version of the Local Plan has not been amended from the version in the Further Draft Local Plan. The Policies Map has also remained unchanged.
- 5.2 The policy is supported by evidence contained within the Central Lincolnshire City and Town Centre Study, Sleaford Masterplan (2011), Sleaford Town Centre Visioning Report and policy LP6 Retail and Town Centres in Central Lincolnshire in the Local Plan, which defines the role and function of Sleaford Town Centre and guides development proposals for retail and/or other town centre uses.

### 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 as defined in the adopted North Kesteven Local Plan and designate a Primary Shopping Area. This option has been rejected. Expanding the town centre boundaries could weaken the town centre by dispersing town centre and retail uses and therefore undermine the viability and vitality of the town centre. The rate of vacant units and vacant floorspace in Sleaford is above the national average and this option could exacerbate this issue.
- 6.3 **Option 3:** Reduce the Town Centre Boundary as defined in the adopted North Kesteven Local Plan and designate a Primary Shopping Area. This option has been rejected. Reducing the town centre boundary could constrain future development opportunities and additional floorspace requirements as identified in the Central Lincolnshire City and Town Centres Study.

## 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.