

Central Lincolnshire Policy S25 Sub-division and Multi- occupation of Dwellings within Lincoln. Evidence Report

Formerly Policy S24

March 2022



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1. Introduction

- 1.1. The Central Lincolnshire Local Plan is being updated since the first Local Plan for Central Lincolnshire, an area covering the districts of City of Lincoln, North Kesteven and West Lindsey, was adopted in April 2017.
- 1.2. This Evidence Report (which is one of a collection) provides background information and justification for Policy S25 for the sub-division and multi-occupation of dwellings within Lincoln. It seeks to ensure the acceptable conversion or change of use of an existing dwelling or building in another use to self-contained flats or shared accommodation within the city.

2. Policy Context

National Policy and Guidance

- 2.1. Since the Central Lincolnshire Plan was adopted the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was updated in July 2018 with subsequent additional changes being published in February 2019 and a further update in July 2021.
- 2.2. Section 2 of the NPPF states that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development with three overarching objectives. The 'social objective' stating that the planning system should:

“...support strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by ensuring that a sufficient number and range of homes can be provided to meet the needs of the present and future generations; and by fostering well-designed, beautiful and safe places, with accessible services and open spaces that reflect current and future needs and support communities' health, social and cultural well-being...”

- 2.3. In delivering a sufficient supply of homes, paragraph 62 states that:

“Within this context, the size, type and tenure of housing needed for different groups in the community should be assessed and reflected in planning policies (including, but not limited to, those who require affordable housing, families with children, older people, students, people with disabilities, service families, travellers, people who rent their homes and people wishing to commission or build their own homes)”

with the aim of contributing to the objective of creating “mixed and balanced communities.” (paragraph 63b)

- 2.4. The Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) was first introduced in 2014 which offers 'live' government guidance. The PPG provides guidance to help in the implementation of policy in the NPPF.
- 2.5. The PPG provides advice on addressing the need for different types of housing and how the private rented sector and student housing needs can be assessed.

Local Policy

- 2.6. The adopted Local Plan contains policy LP37 which seeks to ensure that the housing needs of those seeking subdivided and multi-occupancy accommodation are met appropriately. The policy provides criteria for the provision of purpose-built accommodation and the sensitive conversion of buildings whilst protecting the amenity of

the occupiers of those properties and of their neighbours and maintaining balanced communities.

3. Context and Evidence

- 3.1. Lincoln's population has grown considerably in recent decades including increases in students and migrant workers and shared accommodation is often the preferred choice for many, for a variety of reasons. Whilst such accommodation does meet a particular housing need, it can cause difficulties where there is a high concentration in a particular area.
- 3.2. Problems have occurred where there is a concentration of dwellings with a rapid turnover of residents or a concentration of converted dwellings in an established residential area. This has caused issues such as an increase in parking pressures, an increase in anti-social behaviour and crime levels and creating an imbalance in the neighbourhood. These problems are particularly acute in densely populated areas and where properties share party walls. The rental yields that can be realised on shared accommodation can also put pressure on the ability of individual families or households to compete in the local housing market.
- 3.3. In an effort to manage the impacts of shared accommodation, the City of Lincoln Council has made an Article 4 direction to remove permitted development rights relating to houses in multiple occupation. Planning permission is therefore required for development comprising a change of use from a traditional dwelling house (Use Class C3) to a house in multiple occupation for between 3 and 6 unrelated people (Use Class C4). The Houses in Multiple Occupation Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) outlines how the Council implements the Article 4 direction and manages the development of houses in multiple occupation by setting out criteria that will be used in the determination of any planning application for the development of these properties within the City's administrative boundary.
- 3.4. The needs of those requiring subdivided or multi-occupancy living can also be met through the development of purpose built accommodation which increases choice for those people and eases the pressure on existing residential areas.

4. Issues and Options Consultation

- 4.1. The Issues and Options Consultation identified the existing policy LP37:Sub-division and multi-occupation of dwellings within Lincoln as a policy not intended to be changed.
- 4.2. Most respondents supported this general approach and made no specific reference to this particular policy. However, the Environment Agency did comment on the potential danger within Flood Zone 3 areas of the use of ground floor multi-occupation rooms as bedrooms and that whilst this has been managed so far, they felt that for clarification, this should be made explicit in policy wording.

5. Regulation 18 Consultation

- 5.1. A Consultation Draft of the Local Plan was published for consultation between 30 June and 24 August 2021. During this eight week consultation comments were received on the plan, the policies within the plan, and supporting information and evidence.
- 5.2. Reference to the safety of occupants had been added to the policy in response to the previous concerns expressed by the Environment Agency, however, they felt that the concern regarding ground floor HMO bedrooms in Flood Zone 3 areas should be addressed more explicitly.

6. Proposed Approach in Draft Local Plan

- 6.1. The Draft Local Plan includes a policy that provides criteria for subdivided and multi-occupancy accommodation and encouraging purpose built accommodation in appropriate locations to meet this identified need. The policy has largely been carried forward from the adopted Local Plan.
- 6.2. However, reference to the need to avoid “safety issues” has been added to the first criteria of the policy and an explanatory paragraph added to the supporting text for clarity and to meet the concerns of the Environment Agency.

7. Reasonable Alternative Options

- 7.1. The following alternative option has been considered for this policy (option 1 being the preferred option).
- 7.2. Option 2: to have no specific policy for housing in multiple occupation in Lincoln. This option was discounted as it would not offer a constructive solution to an identified local issue, preventing unsympathetic conversions and over concentrations of sub divided houses affecting the balance and mix of communities.

8. Conclusion

- 8.1. This Evidence Report demonstrates the rationale for the proposed policy as contained in the Proposed Submission Draft Central Lincolnshire Local Plan. This helps bring together relevant evidence that has informed this policy and how we have responded to comments received during the plan making process, as well as how the latest evidence and national guidance has been taken into account.