

Central Lincolnshire Policy S36 Lincoln's City Centre and Primary Shopping Area Evidence Report

Formerly Policy S35

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 S36, which relates to Lincoln's City Centre and Primary Shopping Area. It seeks to maintain the main shopping function of the Primary Shopping Area whilst ensuring an appropriate balance between retail and non-retail uses where possible.

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. Paragraph 7 of the NPPF explains that:

“The purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. At a very high level, the objective of sustainable development can be summarised as meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. At a similarly high level, members of the United Nations – including the United Kingdom – have agreed to pursue the 17 Global Goals for Sustainable Development in the period to 2030. These address social progress, economic well-being and environmental protection.”
- 2.3. Paragraph 8 goes on to state that:

“Achieving sustainable development means that the planning system has three overarching objectives, which are interdependent and need to be pursued in mutually supportive ways (so that opportunities can be taken to secure net gains across each of the different objectives):

... b) **a social objective** – to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by ensuring that a sufficient number and range of homes can be provided to meet the needs of 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;...”
- 2.4. And Paragraph 20 that:

“Strategic policies should set out an overall strategy for the pattern, scale and quality of development, and make sufficient provision for:

 - a) housing (including affordable housing), employment, retail, leisure and other commercial development;...and
 - c) community facilities (such as health, education and cultural infrastructure);...”
- 2.5. Section 7 relates to Ensuring the vitality of Town Centres, where Paragraph 86 states that:

“... Planning policies should:

- a) define a network and hierarchy of town centres and promote their long-term vitality and viability – by allowing them to grow and diversify in a way that can respond to rapid changes in the retail and leisure industries, allows a suitable mix of uses (including housing) and reflects their distinctive characters;...”

2.6. Section 8 relates to Promoting healthy and safe communities. Paragraph 92 states that:

“Planning policies and decisions should aim to achieve healthy, inclusive and safe places which:

- a) promote social interaction, including opportunities for meetings between people who might not otherwise come into contact with each other – for example through mixed-use developments, strong neighbourhood centres, street layouts that allow for easy pedestrian and cycle connections within and between neighbourhoods, and active street frontages;... and
- c) enable and support healthy lifestyles, especially where this would address identified local health and well-being needs – for example through the provision of safe and accessible green infrastructure, sports facilities, local shops, access to healthier food, allotments and layouts that encourage walking and cycling.

2.7. Paragraph 93 goes on to state that:

“To provide the social, recreational and cultural facilities and services the community needs, planning policies and decisions should:

- a) plan positively for the provision and use of shared spaces, community facilities (such as local shops, meeting places, sports venues, open space, cultural buildings, public houses and places of worship) and other local services to enhance the sustainability of communities and residential environments;
- b) take into account and support the delivery of local strategies to improve health, social and cultural well-being for all sections of the community;
- c) guard against the unnecessary loss of valued facilities and services, particularly where this would reduce the community’s ability to meet its day-to-day needs;
- d) ensure that established shops, facilities and services are able to develop and modernise, and are retained for the benefit of the community; and
- e) ensure an integrated approach to considering the location of housing, economic uses and community facilities and services.

2.8. Section 9 relates to the promotion of sustainable transport requiring significant development to be focussed on locations which are or can be made sustainable, through limiting the need to travel and offering a genuine choice of transport modes (Paragraph 105). With Paragraph 106 stating that:

“Planning policies should:

- a) support an appropriate mix of uses across an area, and within larger scale sites, to minimise the number and length of journeys needed for employment, shopping, leisure, education and other activities; ...”

Local Policy

2.9. The adopted Local Plan includes Policy LP6 on Retail and Town Centres in Central Lincolnshire which established a retail hierarchy. It identified Lincoln City Centre as tier 1, four named Town Centres in tier 2 (Gainsborough, Sleaford, Market Rasen and Caistor), District and Local Centres in the Lincoln Urban Area, and ‘Rural Centres’ in settlements serving the local population. Policy LP33 identified Lincoln’s City Centre, Primary Shopping Area and Central Mixed Use Area and appropriate uses within each.

3. Context and Evidence

- 3.1. Lincoln City Centre is the main centre in Central Lincolnshire providing an extensive range of facilities and services including shopping, employment, leisure, arts, tourism, public services and higher education. The City Centre has a lively evening economy based on its restaurants, hotels, bars and cultural venues such as the Drill Hall, Engine Shed and Theatre Royal.
- 3.2. The City Centre has seen many changes in recent years, most significantly in and around the Brayford Pool including hotels, restaurants, a cinema and the further development of the University of Lincoln Campus, development of a Cultural Quarter based around the Collection/ Usher Gallery, significant investment in the Waterside Shopping Centre and the mixed use redevelopment of the Cornhill Quarter.
- 3.3. The redevelopment of the bus station in 2018 to form a transport hub now provides visitors with a multi-modal access point which is linked directly to the City Centre. In 2019 London North Eastern Railway started the operation of direct trains to and from London Kings Cross, greatly enhancing the ease of accessing Lincoln from the capital and vice versa. The East-West Link Road which was completed in 2016 has enhanced access across the city for road users.
- 3.4. Lincoln City Centre benefits from a broad retail offer that currently sustains it as a thriving shopping centre. As well as the larger national retailers, it has the diverse/ niche shops of the historic Uphill area and the vibrant entrepreneurial small business market in South High Street. As Central Lincolnshire grows, the City Centre will need to continue to evolve to ensure that Lincoln's role as a regional attractor is maintained and enhanced to meet the needs of shoppers, residents, businesses and visitors.
- 3.5. The Lincoln Investment Plan (October 2020) outlines a number of key challenges for the City Centre including the need to support a greater mix of uses in the City Centre, to maximise opportunities to improve the public realm and the townscape, to deliver high quality and viable redevelopment of a number of key sites, to enhance the use of digital technology to improve visitor experience and connectivity and to deliver high quality events and activities. It also highlights four key opportunities including the growing population of the city supporting its vibrancy and long term growth, the value of the heritage assets in the city and opportunities to restore and promote these assets, the regeneration of key brownfield sites and heritage sites and the strong public and private centre partnership.
- 3.6. Perhaps the biggest challenge for Lincoln, as it is in all major cities, is the difficulties facing retailers, hospitality industry and the heritage and cultural industry resulting from the dramatic reduction in footfall in the City Centre as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. This global challenge has exacerbated the existing threat to 'front-facing' retailers from online shopping and a number of national retailers have, or are, collapsing as a result. Whilst the plan has limited scope to address these issues, having a positive strategy which seeks to protect the uses which make the City Centre a destination and which will foster investment to strengthen its role will be important for the City's future. The City Centre has a primary role in attracting and maintaining a wide range of activities and services which draws in a large number of visitors. It is therefore intended to encourage a wide range of mutually supporting uses.
- 3.7. The City Centre can be divided into a number of distinct areas including: the historic and cultural quarter in the Uphill and Bailgate Area; the Primary Shopping Area which runs

down from the upper High Street, Central Market, and Cornhill Quarter and stretching down to St Marks and the middle High Street around the level crossing; the Brayford Pool; the University area; and the Civic area around the City and County Council buildings. These distinctive areas provide a wide range of services and physical surroundings that makes Lincoln special and a key destination for residents and visitors.

- 3.8. The Primary Shopping Area contains the core shopping area for the city where ground floor uses will typically be shops and other uses such as banks and building societies, cafés and restaurants which people would expect to visit as part of a shopping trip and providing an active frontage wherever possible. Other key retail areas located within the City Centre and High Street South Regeneration and Opportunity Area but that are outside the Primary Shopping Area are located along the High Street to South Park roundabout and up Steep Hill along Bailgate to the Westgate Junction.

4. Issues and Options Consultation

- 4.1. The Issues and Options Consultation in 2019 included the following proposal for shopping and town centres:

PROPOSAL 16 – Shopping and City and Town Centres

A City Centre Study is being prepared for Lincoln City Centre. It is proposed that the new Local Plan should reflect the evidence of this work and any outcomes to help ensure the plan positively addresses the ongoing role of the city centre and to help ensure it remains healthy. This may include reviewing boundaries and/or reconsidering acceptable uses within the centres.

Policies for the other main town centres may also be adjusted if evidence suggests that this is necessary.

It is proposed that the new Local Plan will maintain the designated District Centres and Local Centres in the 2017 Local Plan unless evidence suggests this is no longer suitable for any areas, and that additional District Centres, Local Centres and Rural Centres will also be designated across the rest of Central Lincolnshire.

- 4.2. This was accompanied by five related questions

Q16a – City and Town Centres

Do you agree that the new Local Plan should try to address the challenging retail environment through positively responding to issues and opportunities identified through work on the city and town centres?

Q16b – Specific Changes Required for the City and Town Centres

Are you aware of any specific planning policy changes that would help to strengthen the city or town centres? If yes please provide details

Q16c – Retaining Current Designated District and Local Centres

Do you agree that the District Centres and Local Centres identified in the 2017 Local Plan should be carried forward unless evidence suggests that this is not suitable? If no, please provide details.

Q16d – Designation of Additional Centres

Do you agree that the plan should designate District Centres, Local Centres and Rural Centres outside of the Lincoln Urban Area?

Q16e – Identifying New Centres

Is there a specific centre which you think should be designated as a District Centre, Local Centre or Rural Centre? If yes, please provide details.

- 4.3. There was good support from responses to the consultation to all questions seeking opinions and a number of suggestions were received. The full details of the summary of responses can be found in the consultation report, replicated at Appendix A to this report.

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. Responses were received in support of the policy although the need to ensure that the policy reflected the NPPF in relation to flood risk and residential uses was highlighted.

6. Proposed Approach in Draft Local Plan

- 6.1. The Draft Local Plan seeks to maintain the main shopping function of the Primary Shopping Area and maintain the vitality and viability of the City Centre as a regional attractor.
- 6.2. The Primary Shopping Area has been rationalised and reduced slightly from the extent in the previous adopted Local Plan. This reflects the need for a focused area for retail and leisure as a destination in response to the challenges faced by the sector. Reducing the boundary slightly seeks to ensure that uses and investment are concentrated, that vibrancy is not diluted, and non-retail uses, and dead frontages are kept to a minimum whilst allowing for growth.

- 6.3. The City Centre boundary largely follows what had previously been called the City of Lincoln Mixed Use Area and seeks to serve a similar function. The area includes the retail and mixed use area that extends up Steep Hill along Bailgate to the Westgate Junction, the Castle and the Lawn. The policy aims to maintain the area's primary role, offering a focus for an extensive range of activities and services and mutually supporting employment, leisure, arts, tourism, public service and higher education uses. This area has also been rationalised and reduced slightly from the extent in the previously adopted Local Plan in order to ensure that uses and investment are concentrated, and that vibrancy is not diluted whilst also allowing for future growth.
- 6.4. The previously adopted Local Plan had identified the lower High Street to South Park as a secondary Shopping Frontage as well as part of the Central Mixed Use Area and as a Regeneration Opportunity Area. This area has now been rationalised as Regeneration and Opportunity Area ROA5: High Street South Mixed Use Area and is covered by a specific Lincoln Regeneration and Opportunity Area policy (NS72).

7. Reasonable Alternative Options

- 7.1. The following alternative options have been considered for this policy (option 1 being the preferred option).
- 7.2. **Option 2:** to identify a larger City Centre and Primary Shopping Area boundary with policy outlining suitable uses in each.
- 7.3. **Option 3:** to identify a smaller Town Centre and Primary Shopping Area boundary with identified out of town retail centres with policy outlining suitable uses in each.
- 7.4. All of the policy options concentrate City Centre uses in an identified Primary Shopping Area and City Centre ensuring a viable and vibrant primary shopping core and periphery. However, the preferred policy, unlike Options 2 and 3, would allow for some growth of the centre and investment without overly constraining potential growth options or diluting vibrancy by directing some growth to out of town retail centres or having an area too widely defined resulting in more non-retail uses and dead frontages.

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.

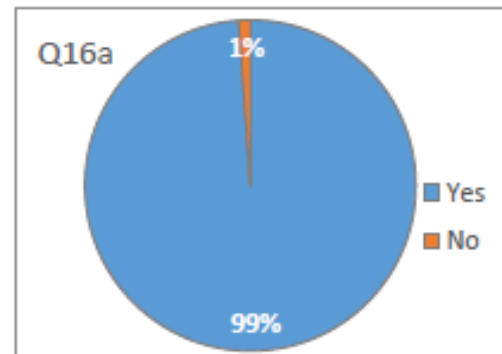
Appendix A

Extract from the Issues and Options Consultation 2019 for Proposal 16

Q16a – City and Town Centres

Do you agree that the new Local Plan should try to address the challenging retail environment through positively responding to issues and opportunities identified through work on the city and town centres?

- There were 87 responses to this question;
- 86 supported the proposal to try to address the challenging retail environment in the Local Plan;
- 1 respondent disagreed with the proposal.



3.59. There were a number of comments received in response to the question and the key issues can be summarised as follows:

- Needs a much broader plan, that considers all factors;
- City and town centres need to be redesigned to recognise that retail must reduce and not require ever increasing consumption. They should also be designed for access by sustainable means rather than private cars;
- More public transport, & key segregated and safe walking and cycling provision to become key. More cars and car parking does not make for a better retail centre;
- The Local Plan is a framework for the next 20+ years. Current retail practices are significantly more dynamic than this, and therefore the LP should refer to a shorter term policy which is regularly updated to reflect changing retail trends;
- The new Local Plan should try to address the challenging retail environment through positively responding to the issues and opportunities identified through work on the City and Town Centre Strategy;
- Our city and town centres seem to be decaying due to internet activities. Anything that can be done to improve them, and accessibility to them is to be encouraged;

- The Local Plan is one of the best places to address the challenging environment faced by town centres. The intention to review the evidence base which underpins the current Town Centre boundaries is fully supported. E.g. a focus on the historic Market Place of Gainsborough would allow more flexibility towards the river end of Lord Street to create anchors which can direct footfall from Marshalls Yard to the historic town centre;
- Suggest that the plan should be more permissive and encouraging of temporary uses where they activate vacant units, particularly, cultural uses such as performance spaces which add to town centre diversity and drive footfall to the benefit of other businesses;
- Suggest reference be made to the Extensive Urban Survey project currently underway which will help to define what makes each town unique and what gives it the character it has. This will provide an evidence base for decision-making in respect of creating more sustainable town centres and vibrant high streets. This study only addresses settlements in tiers 2 and 3 of the hierarchy;
- A City Centre Study is being prepared for Lincoln City Centre which may include reviewing boundaries and/ or reconsidering acceptable uses within the centres. Patricia wish to be engaged in this consultation process. Placing greater emphasis on flexibility will bring the Local Plan closer in line with NPPF;
- Retail is linked with households and employment and if the high street/ centre is full of empty buildings people are not attracted to an area. Whilst shops etc. are important to a town, the number of establishments required is not as great as in the past. It is essential that alternative uses are found for empty properties;
- The special character, as well as the retail/ service/ leisure focus of Lincoln must be maintained. The proposed Project Magna Carta designer outlet and leisure development at the A46/ Pennells Roundabout junction will be a major attraction for the area, supporting sustainable transport choices, potentially linked with proposed Park and Ride facility, as well as part funding and construction of major highways improvements to the A46 junction as a first phase, and potential financial partnering towards the completion of the proposed North Hykeham Relief Road;
- Severn Trent are only able to provide limited comments regarding this section. But we are aware that a number of councils are looking to enhance and re-invigorate town centres and retail areas. One of the key objectives within this is usually to develop a sense of place looking to introduce greener elements such as trees into the urban landscape. This approach can be effective for both biodiversity and ecology, but also where SuDS systems such as tree-pits or bio-retention systems can also provide benefits to flood risk. We would therefore encourage that any policies looking to re-develop town centres consider the benefits of retrofitting SuDS into the landscape;
- Historic England should be consulted in relation to the City Centre Study for Lincoln Town Centre.

Q16b – Specific Changes Required for the City and Town Centres

Are you aware of any specific planning policy changes that would help to strengthen the city or town centres? If yes please provide details

- 3.60. 26 of the 85 people who responded to this question said they knew of policy changes that would help to strengthen the city and town centres. The comments received in response to the question can be summarised as follows:

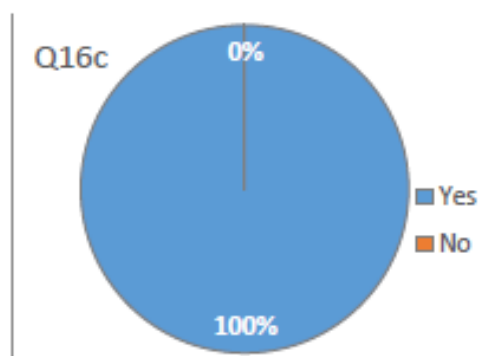
- Business Rate review to allow start up leisure & restaurant opportunities and Transport access in the evenings - Gainsborough shuts down after 4pm;
- Affordable car parking, cheaper for staff, better facilities like toilets;
- Provision of more and cheaper parking capacity within City & Town centres. Public transport services are often insufficient and outlying villages have to use private cars for routine shopping etc;
- Planning must provide sufficient attractive off street parking, eg Sleaford's new cinema complex makes no mention of parking: without which it is not viable and risks being a real nuisance in the town by generating significant congestion. To really make the point, such measures should consider replacing the Holdingham roundabout with a bridge;
- Lincoln is a nightmare for parking since it has a passive anti-car policy. Far more work is needed to make it car friendly. The decision to use roundabouts on the new bypasses is extremely short sighted and will cause major congestion necessitating further major expense and disruption in a few years' time;
- Improve/ increase bus routes into the centre;
- Improved transport networks and increased public transport availability such as later bus and train services;
- Fewer out of town retail centres;
- Centres must be considered for other uses rather than retail and government functions;
- Allow existing shops to be converted to dwellings where the shop has been vacant for say 1 year. This would re-vitalise town centres that are dying as shops close;
- The NPPF has an emphasis on the diversity of uses for town centres to ensure its long term vitality and viability, including opportunities for residential uses. It may be worth considering introducing residential uses within the Primary Shopping Area at ground floor using a 'take away (A5)' style restriction which some London Boroughs adopt. Where it restricts the level of residential permitted to a certain percentage of total frontage and restricts congregation of such uses so that they are spread out across the town centre rather than creating a large amount of dead frontage. This would help further promote existing Heritage led regeneration projects such as living over the shop etc.;
- Allow more commercial/ entertainment activities in centres after 17:30 to enliven & reduce antisocial behaviour, etc.
- Promotion of use of city/ town centre locations for leisure businesses will help reinforce locations as hearts of communities, bringing more people to these areas should also increase footfall for commercial businesses. It would also be a positive change to allow residential development within the town/ city centre as part of mixed-use developments, creating more diverse opportunities for development;
- Cycle and walking provision. Changes to TROs that currently allow for stopping in mandatory cycle lanes cause danger. Allowing cycling in the City centre would bring economic benefit as has been demonstrated in key studies;
- Ring roads at the outskirts of cities should help with internal congestion, however it is a problem during the length of time it takes to get the ring-roads organised;
- Strengthening city and town centres requires coordinated development in transport infrastructure and policy;
- Sleaford Masterplan to be revisited;
- Town centres must change to adapt to the digital revolution. Lincoln might be thought a mediocre shopping centre, but it is, potentially, a world-class visitor attraction. Sleaford and Gainsborough similarly do little to encourage visitors. Diversity of uses must be the future for city centres;

- National Government should level the playing field of taxation on products sold via the High Street versus on-line;
- The Agent of Change principle should be incorporated into design policies (and/ or within town centre or community facility policies). This will help protect existing uses such as theatres and pubs within town centres and elsewhere within the plan area where nearby residential use is proposed and ensure new residential uses within town centres are sensitively located;
- The Government has implemented a number of the reforms set out in the consultation, Planning Reform: Supporting the high street and increasing the delivery of new homes;
- Continue the E Bypass to the A607 but no further; reinstate the goods traffic loop line and construct replacement rail sidings/ distribution centre to handle import/ export container traffic etc.; duplicate the above loop line with the desired E.W link road abandon the newly engineered Tentercroft mess which is too near the city centre and only adds to the confused and ugly townscape round Pelham Bridge (which should be marked for demolition). An even better E.W link road would connect Tritton Road with South Park Avenue and on to Allenby and Outer Circle Road as a possibility thus relieving Broadgate and Lindum Hill. Suggest studying the 1932 edition of the OS Maps for central Lincoln - just change the emphasis from cars to people and don't mix cyclists and pedestrians. In Lincoln the Cathedral stands as a constant reproach to all the lost opportunities;
- Get rid of traffic wardens. They have ruined Gainsborough. Councils expect shoppers to come and then fine them. Every street is a car park, also same in Lincoln.

Q16c – Retaining Current Designated District and Local Centres

Do you agree that the District Centres and Local Centres identified in the 2017 Local Plan should be carried forward unless evidence suggests that this is not suitable? If no, please provide details.

- All 82 of the respondents who answered this question supported the proposal of carrying forward District and Local Centres that were designated in the 2017 Local Plan.



3.61. There were a number of comments received in response to the question and the key issues can be summarised as follows:

- This response is based on our understanding that Keelby is already a Local Centre;
- If the Council is serious in promoting an essentially car free zone, then I planning for connecting bus routes, stops, timetables between district and local centres and into the City Centre has made some headway. However question whether even with free travel the population density of these suburban districts is numerically sufficient to

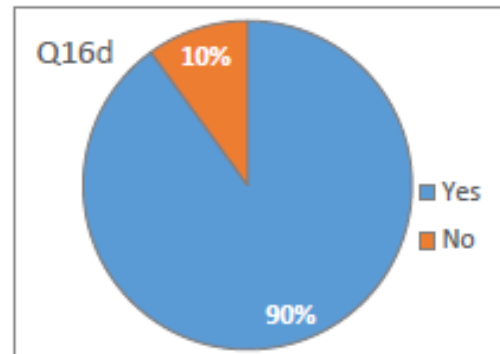
underpin a viable flexible system. Runcom New Town in Cheshire was specifically planned round public transport but Lincoln wasn't;

- But not to expand unless sustainable.

Q16d – Designation of Additional Centres

Do you agree that the plan should designate District Centres, Local Centres and Rural Centres outside of the Lincoln Urban Area?

- There were 80 responses to this question;
- 72 supported the proposal of designating District, Local and Rural Centres outside of the Lincoln Urban Area;
- 8 respondents disagreed with the proposal.



3.62. There were a number of comments received in response to the question and the key issues can be summarised as follows:

- With due caution. Agriculture is the mainstay of Lincolnshire not out of town retail parks;
- All the new towns will need them;
- Providing they are set within clear bounds to retain existing character;
- Possibly - the concept might engender better communications with places like Bardney, Woodhall Spa, Tattershall etc. Maybe resurrect the railway as Edinburgh has done with the very successful Border Railway down to Galashiels and Selkirk some 40 miles;
- In principle this would generally be supported although we would reserve judgment on this matter until further details are provided on how this would work in practice and any development management implications;
- Not sure of the purpose as there is no explanation in the consultation document;
- Local sites could be identified, but no advantage is evident;
- Depends on amount of development in the area;
- Proposed Project Magna Carta designer outlet and leisure development destination at the A46/ Pennells Roundabout junction, supporting sustainable transport choices, potentially linked with proposed Park and Ride facility, as well as part funding and construction of major highways improvements to the A46 junction as a first phase, and potential financial partnering towards the completion of the proposed North Hykeham Relief Road. The proposal promotes tourism in line with the policies of the development plan, whilst supporting existing attractions, providing circa 2500 employment opportunities, and can be delivered within three years.

Q16e – Identifying New Centres

Is there a specific centre which you think should be designated as a District Centre, Local Centre or Rural Centre? If yes, please provide details.

3.63. Of the 71 people who responded to this question, 17 said there were specific centres that should be designated. A list of these centres is provided below:

- As identified in the 2013 Genecon report commissioned by NKDC 'LN6 - a Plan for the future', there is a clear need for additional shops and amenities in the Whisby Road/ Teal Park area;
- Sleaford, Holdingham roundabout could do with becoming a rural centre;
- Sleaford and the River Slea corridor;
- Sleaford;
- Market Rasen, as a rural centre encouraging tourism to the Lincolnshire Wolds;
- Larger Villages such as Skellingthorpe should be given the opportunity to have a Rural Centre;
- This should be based on appropriate criteria to be developed in the Plan. Centres impacting on our village (Coleby) are Bracebridge Heath, Waddington and Navenby;
- Leadenham old railway station yard;
- Cherry Willingham;
- See Cherry Willingham Neighbourhood Plan;
- Scampton when free, Red Arrows will be gone. Too much emissions;
- All major towns below the level of Lincoln;
- Suspect that there are many, but insufficient knowledge to react authoritatively.

Next Steps

3.64. It is clear from the responses that work should be undertaken to understand how the local plan can help support our city and town centres. Evidence will be compiled to develop this understanding and to inform policy direction. It is also proposed that work will be undertaken to identify important local centres and rural centres outside of the Lincoln Urban Area. Suggestions and comments received will feed into these pieces of work.