

Central Lincolnshire Local Plan Review Important Open Spaces Review Methodology

June 2019



1. Introduction

1.1 Important Open Spaces are designated in the Central Lincolnshire Local Plan (2017) alongside Local Green Space within Policy LP23 Local Green Spaces and other Important Open Space. Important Open Spaces (IOS) are different to Local Green Spaces (LGS) as they are identified by the Central Lincolnshire Authorities as open spaces important to the settlement in which they are located, whereas LGSs have been identified by local communities.

1.2 The National Planning Policy Framework (2019) includes the following paragraphs in respect of open space:

Paragraph 96 states: "Access to a network of high quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and physical activity is important for the health and well-being of communities. Planning policies should be based on robust and up-to-date assessments of the need for open space, sport and recreation facilities (including quantitative and qualitative deficits or surpluses) and opportunities for the new provision. Information gained from the assessments should be used to determine what open space, sport and recreational provision is needed, which plans should seek to accommodate."

Paragraph 97 states: "Existing open space, sports and recreational buildings and land, including playing fields, should not be built on unless:

a) an assessment has been undertaken which has clearly shown the open space, buildings or land to be surplus to requirements; or

b) the loss resulting from the proposed development would be replaced by equivalent or better provision in terms of quantity or quality in a suitable location; or

c) the development is for alternative sports and recreational provision, the benefits of which clearly outweigh the loss of the current or former use."

1.3 The sites identified as IOS were the result of a desk based review of the adopted open space designations within the Authorities individual adopted Local Plans. This review involved checking the status of each site to ensure it had not changed (e.g developed for another use) or that it was not included as part of another designation.

1.4 The Central Lincolnshire Local Plan is now to be reviewed. As part of the review process it is proposed to review Policy LP23 and the sites designated as Important Open Space through the policy. The proposed methodology for undertaking the review is set out in Section 4 below.

2. Current Policy Approach to Important Open Spaces

2.1 The Adopted 2017 Local Plan includes a specific policy addressing Local Green Spaces and Important Open Spaces. Policy LP23 states:

"An area identified as a Local Green Space on the Policies Map will be protected from development in line with the NPPF, which rules out development on these sites other than in very special circumstances.

An area identified as an Important Open Space on the Policies Map is safeguarded from development unless it can be demonstrated that:

- a. *In the case of publicly accessible open space, there is an identified over provision of that particular type of open space in the community area and the site is not required for alternative recreational uses or suitable alternative open space can be provided on a replacement site or by enhancing existing open space serving the community area; and*
- b. *In the case of all Important Open Spaces, there are no significant detrimental impacts on the character and appearance of the surrounding area, ecology and any heritage sites.”*

2.2 The Policies Map shows all 329 identified areas of Important Open Space. However, it has been noted that where the sites have been provided by the three individual authorities, there are some inconsistencies in approach towards what should be identified across the Central Lincolnshire area that would benefit from review.

3. Proposed Review Criteria

3.1 The Important Open Space designation is a means of protecting parcels of land which do not fall under existing statutory designations or protective ownership, and have not been suggested by the community as, or do not meet the criteria for, Local Green Space.

3.2 It is proposed that land covered by the following statutory designations would not be included, as there already exists a legislative and policy framework to protect them:

- Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs)
- National Nature Reserves (NNR)
- Local Nature Reserves (LNR)
- Local Wildlife Sites (LWS)
- Historic Parks and Gardens
- Town and Village Greens and registered commons
- Land under protective ownership (e.g. National Trust, Woodland Trust etc).

3.3 In addition to the statutory designations, it is not proposed to include the following open space typologies on the Policies Map following the review. It is considered that it will be possible to protect these sites, by type, through the addition of criteria to the adopted policy.

- Churchyards
- Cemeteries
- School Playing fields (in use as such)
- Sports Centre/Recreation ground
- Allotments

3.4 It is proposed that roadside screening to residential development, watercourse banks and other similar linear sites of a depth of less than **25m** are not included within the review. While these sites provide a valuable resource, their physical form and locations mean that the likelihood of facing development pressure is far less than for other larger, non-linear, sites.

3.5 The following table sets out detailed information that will be used to determine if a proposed site is suitable for designation as an Important Open Space.

Proposed Important Open Space Criteria	Explanation
1. Is the site over 0.1ha ?	Sites smaller than 0.1ha are less likely to face development pressures due to their small size.

2. Is the site publicly accessible and/or publicly visible ?	Sites that are behind high walls or hedges are unlikely to be considered as Important Open Space as they are not open in nature. While publically accessible sites offer a greater benefit to a settlement, private sites can also be of benefit to the character and setting of a settlement.
3. Is the site important to the character of the area?	Open spaces can offer a range of benefits, such as enhancing local character and providing an open or green area within an otherwise build up setting, maintaining an open feel of a less densely developed area or providing recreational value to the local community through both formal and informal spaces.

4. Proposed Review Methodology

Stage 1: A comprehensive list of sites

- 4.1 Before undertaking the site assessment, it will be necessary to ensure that all sites shown on the Local Plan Policies Map are included within the review. In addition, should any potential new sites be identified these too should be included (for example, new areas of open space provided through development, or existing sites simply missed out during previous desk based research).

Stage 2: Site Assessment

Removal of sites not included within review

- 4.2 As set out above, sites that fall into the following categories will be removed, as they are already afforded a higher level of protection than that of the Important Open Space policy:

- Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs)
- National Nature Reserves (NNR)
- Local Nature Reserves (LNR)
- Local Wildlife Sites (LWS)
- Historic Parks and Gardens
- Town and Village Greens and registered commons
- Land under protective ownership (e.g. National Trust, Woodland Trust etc).

- 4.3 Any linear sites such as watercourse banks and roadside screening to residential development of less than 25m in depth will also be removed at this stage.

Site Assessment

- 4.4 The remaining sites will then be assessed using the criteria set out above at paragraph 3.5 to determine their suitability for identification as an area of Important Open Space. Where necessary and appropriate the desk based research will be supported by site visits in order to clarify any site specific queries that may arise when data gathering and assessing individual sites.

- 4.5 While undertaking the assessment the site boundary for each site will also be reviewed to ensure that it accurately reflects the extent of the site. If amendments are required to the boundary, these will be recorded along with an updated site area.

Stage 3: Preparation of proposed list of sites for inclusion as Important Open Space

- 4.6 Following the site assessment a list of sites will be produced that will be proposed for inclusion within the Local Plan. These sites will be those to be included on the Policies Map rather than those identified by typology (see paragraph 3.3).
- 4.7 The proposed sites, to be included on the Policies Map, will be consulted on at the next stage, which is expected to be early 2020.