

# 8 Supporting Sustainable Development in North Lincolnshire's Countryside

- 8.1 North Lincolnshire is characterised by its high quality landscape and scattered flourishing communities. This character makes North Lincolnshire a safe and attractive place for residents and visitors. Consequently, these rural areas are often subject to significant pressure for development. Whilst the scale of change in rural North Lincolnshire is unlikely to be widespread, the vibrancy of the countryside depends on getting the right balance between developments and protecting the intrinsic rural character of North Lincolnshire.
- 8.2 Outside of the settlements identified in Policy SS2p, there is a wide range of smaller settlements, farmsteads and rural enterprises. These places have their own particular needs, which the Local Plan seeks to respond to and ensure their continued success. In those settlements with basic services, appropriate development offers opportunities for rural settlements to grow organically. Elsewhere, the Local Plan does not seek to preserve the countryside in aspic, instead it recognises that a working, living, flourishing and attractive countryside means adapting to changing needs and enhancing what is already present.
- 8.3 Policy RD1p lists those types that are most relevant to North Lincolnshire. Proposals not listed in the policy would have to demonstrate why they require a rural location. In all instances, proposals are expected to be of an appropriate scale for their rural location. Therefore, consideration will be given to how the proposal relates to the built and landscape character of the surrounding area and the impact that the development would have on the local road network. Proposals involving the re-use of previously developed land will also be expected to be in an appropriate location, which avoids the use of land that is of high environmental value and would not be subject to significant risks from flooding or other hazards.

## Policy RD1p: Supporting Sustainable Development in the Countryside

Outside settlement development limits land will be regarded as the countryside and the following forms of development supported, where proposals respect the intrinsic character of their surroundings:

1. Conversion of buildings for employment related development (including work-live units), tourism or community uses;
2. Conversion of buildings for new housing will be supported where the preservation of the building would enhance the immediate setting and where it:
  - a. Would represent the optimal viable use of a heritage asset or would be appropriate enabling development to secure the future of a heritage asset; or
  - b. Would re-use a redundant or dis-used building without significant alteration or significant extension.
3. Replacement dwellings where their design and character reflects the surrounding area and results in an increase of less than 50%;
4. New dwellings of exceptional quality or of truly outstanding innovative design;
5. Affordable housing for local people (Exceptions Sites);

6. Agricultural, forestry or other rural based occupational dwellings subject to demonstrating a functional need. Such dwellings will be subject to an occupancy condition;
7. Employment uses where it is an appropriate scale to its location and it respects the character of the surrounding landscape. Proposals should:
  - a. Be within or adjacent to an existing industrial estate or business park;
  - b. Involve the expansion of an existing business;
  - c. Involve the conversion of an existing building; or
  - d. Have a functional need to be in that particular location that cannot be met either on a nearby allocation, or on a site that satisfies any of the above criteria.
8. Agricultural, horticultural and forestry uses;
9. New and enhanced infrastructure;
10. Sports, equine, recreation, community facilities and tourism development; and
11. Intensive livestock units where it can be demonstrated that (individually or cumulatively) the proposal will not result in an unacceptable environmental impact on its surroundings.

Development will be expected to protect the best and most versatile agricultural land. Areas of lower quality agricultural land should be used for development in preference to the best and most versatile agricultural land.

All development proposals should demonstrate that soil resources will be managed and conserved in a viable condition and used sustainably in line with accepted best practice.

- 8.4 It is important that the Local Plan plays a role in maintaining and enhancing a sustainable countryside. To do this we need to balance the potentially conflicting demands on rural areas. This policy seeks to support the diversification and strengthening of the rural economy and revitalisation of villages and to improve the range and quality of local services available to rural communities. This however must not be at the expense of maintaining the character and quality of North Lincolnshire's prosperous and safe environment.
- 8.5 The conversion of rural buildings will be supported where they help to create more vibrant rural communities, offering employment, tourism or residential opportunities. As well as the types of uses supported through the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 Policy RD1p provides a positive framework for bringing buildings back in to use.
- 8.6 In order to be considered suitable for conversion to residential use, an existing building must be structurally sound and capable of re-use without significant rebuilding, alteration or substantial extensions. Permitted development rights will normally be removed when conversions are approved. Where the proposal involves the use of a listed building, it will need to be assessed against Policy NHE6p.
- 8.7 Permanent dwellings for agricultural and forestry workers, or for other people involved in rural based enterprises, will be supported where it is justified and commensurate with the size of the holding. This will include demonstrating:

- A clear functional need for the dwelling, relating to a full time worker(s) employed on the unit;
- The existing rural activity has been established for at least three years, has been profitable for at least one and is currently financially sound; and
- That the need for the dwelling cannot be provided by an existing dwelling, which is suitable and available for occupation by the worker concerned.

8.8 Some types of infrastructure may be required in the countryside to support the achievement of the Plan's objectives. Examples include water management schemes, energy development and infrastructure, transport schemes and telecommunications infrastructure. These will be supported where they require a countryside location for operational reasons.

8.9 Policy RD1p is supportive of intensive livestock units, but designed to limit the environmental impacts of proposals to an acceptable level. Conflict can arise when new schemes take place next to residential areas and this results in complaints about the unit itself.

8.10 Agriculture is the predominant land use in North Lincolnshire, and land quality varies from place to place. The Agricultural Land Classification (ALC) system provides a method for assessing the quality of agricultural land, with Grades 1, 2 and 3a considered the best and most versatile agricultural land. The majority of North Lincolnshire's best and most versatile land is located in the Isle of Axholme, adjoining the River Trent and River Ancholme, the Ancholme Valley and the North Lincolnshire Wolds. It is not currently possible to differentiate between Grade 3a and 3b as a comprehensive survey of Grade 3 land is not available. Where land is identified as Grade 3 on the ALC maps and an agricultural land classification statement is not provided the council will consider the land to be best and most versatile land unless it is proven otherwise. All proposals over 1 hectare that would have the potential to involve the loss of best and most versatile agricultural land will be expected to be accompanied by an agricultural land classification statement.

### Alternatives Considered

There were no options for development in the countryside, however reference was made in the other options. North Lincolnshire's Rural Economy considered an option for the allocation of small-scale employment sites, however it was felt that the Local Plan should support the area's rural economy and allow for opportunities for diversification in appropriate locations. This would ensure existing businesses are able to continue to operate and grow, as well as allow economic development opportunities of an appropriate scale and nature to come forward. This option would not achieve this aim.

The importance of protecting the best and most versatile agricultural land via policy received overall support in the consultation. It has however been determined that this requirement should be included with this wider policy for sustainable development purposes.

## Monitoring

| Indicator                              | Target                |
|--|-----------------------|
| Appeals upheld contrary to this policy | None upheld at appeal |