

## **WEST LINDSEY DISTRICT COUNCIL**

MINUTES of the Meeting of the Planning Committee held in the Council Chamber - The Guildhall on 7 January 2026 commencing at 6.30 pm.

**Present:**

Councillor Ian Fleetwood (Chairman)
Councillor Jacob Flear (Vice-Chairman)
Councillor John Barrett
Councillor Matthew Boles
Councillor Karen Carless
Councillor David Dobbie
Councillor Adam Duguid
Councillor Peter Morris
Councillor Tom Smith
Councillor Jim Snee

**In Attendance:**

Sally Grindrod-Smith	Director Planning, Regeneration & Communities
Russell Clarkson	Development Management Team Manager
Ian Elliott	Development Management Team Leader
Martha Rees	Legal Advisor
Molly Spencer	Democratic & Civic Officer

**Apologies:** Councillor Sabastian Hague

### **73 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PERIOD**

There was no public participation.

### **74 TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the Planning Committee meeting held on Wednesday, 10 December 2025, be confirmed and signed as an accurate record.

### **75 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor T. Smith declared a non-pecuniary interest in agenda item 6a, application WL/2024/00898, in that he had previously visited the site and spoken with the applicant in a previous role. He confirmed he had had no further involvement and would remain as a voting Member of the Committee.

Councillor P. Morris declared a non-pecuniary interest in agenda item 6a, application WL/2024/00898, in that he was the Ward Member for the application and was registered to speak as Ward Member; he stated he would not vote against the application.

## **76 UPDATE ON GOVERNMENT/LOCAL CHANGES IN PLANNING POLICY**

It was reported that the Government had launched a consultation on proposed reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework and other changes to the planning system on 16 December 2025. The consultation was scheduled to run until 10 March 2026. It was noted that the consultation sought views on a revised version of the Framework and that a draft document had been published alongside the consultation. Both documents were to be read together. The consultation also sought views on data centres, on-site energy generation, standardised inputs and viability assessments, and reforming site thresholds.

It was explained that the consultation comprised 225 questions, excluding sub-questions, which increased the total to approximately 280. The scale of the consultation was acknowledged, and it was confirmed that Officers were continuing to review the content. Key headlines identified to-date were outlined. It was noted that the first Framework had been published in 2012, with the most recent iteration issued in December 2024, which remained current for decision-making. The draft document represented a complete rewrite rather than incremental changes, increasing its length from 69 pages to 100 pages, with a further 25 pages of technical annexes proposed.

The updates had been provided by the Development Management Team Manager, who had shared a presentation on screen for Members to review. The draft introduced a clear distinction between plan-making policies and national decision-making policies. It was highlighted that plan-making policies should not influence decisions on planning applications, and local plan policies should not duplicate or modify national decision-making policies. When the new document became effective, existing local development plan policies inconsistent with national decision-making policies were to be given very limited weight.

Further details had been provided on proposed changes, including the presumption in favour of development within settlements, revised approaches to rural development, housing categories, viability assessments, and density standards. It was noted that substantial weight was proposed for economic benefits of commercial development and for energy efficiency improvements. The consultation also addressed biodiversity requirements, heritage considerations, and climate-related policies.

It was confirmed that responses would be coordinated across Central Lincolnshire, with input from local plan teams and key Officers, and that Member engagement would be sought. Links to the consultation documents and details of a Planning Advisory Service webinar scheduled for 21 January 2026 were to be provided. At the conclusion of the updates, the Chairman requested that the presentation also be shared with all Members of West Lindsey District Council.

## **77 WL-2024-00898 WATERMILL LEISURE PARK, MOORTOWN**

The Officer reported that updates had been made to the planning application for the change of use of land for the siting of 90 static caravans and associated infrastructure, including one fishing pond and one ornamental pond. It was noted that the description of the development had been amended to provide greater clarity and that this revised description had been agreed with the applicant.

It was further reported that the Section 106 Agreement had been completed and signed. Consequently, the recommendation was amended to grant planning permission with a completed Section 106 Agreement to secure biodiversity net gain, rather than being subject to completion of the agreement.

The Officer confirmed that the application was for 90 units on the existing visitor accommodation site. A block plan had been displayed showing the proposed layout, including ponds, a wildflower area, and recreational space. Members were informed that a site plan provided by the applicant had been reviewed during a recent visit to the site by Officers prior to Christmas. It was noted that part of the site, shown in blue on the plan, had not been developed in accordance with the approved plans, which had included a dog bone-shaped lake. The north pond was under construction but not yet in use.

Reference was made to the history of the site as set out in the Officer's report. It was confirmed that there were no public rights of way within the application site, as verified by Lincolnshire County Council's Rights of Way mapping. Photographs of the site were shown, illustrating excavation works undertaken for archaeological trial trenching and the storage of excavated sand on the application site. It was noted that the sand had been moved from the areas where ponds had been dug and had not been removed from the site. Further photographs showed newly excavated areas and access routes to the north pond.

The Officer concluded the presentation, was thanked by the Chairman who proceeded to invite the first speaker to take their seat.

A representation was made by one of the Directors and owners of Watermill Leisure Park. Appreciation was expressed for the opportunity to address the Committee. It was explained that the land had been purchased in 2020 when the site had been in a poor condition, with individuals living illegally in old static holiday homes and touring caravans. The vision for the site had been to create a five-star accredited holiday park that would contribute positively to the local area, infrastructure, and economy.

It was reported that the site had been developed within its existing boundaries and had not extended onto adjoining farmland. A strong relationship with the neighbouring farmer was noted. The park operated under a twelve-month licence, and strict terms and conditions were in place to prevent permanent occupation and subletting. It was stated that customers were required to maintain their primary residence elsewhere and were registered with healthcare providers at their home address.

Reference was made to a previous Parish Council meeting in 2023 where concerns had

been raised regarding permanent occupation and pressure on local services. It was explained that a site visit had subsequently been undertaken by Councillor Tom Smith, who had been satisfied with the procedures in place.

It was noted that touring caravans and camping had ceased in order to reduce traffic impact on local highways. The park included facilities such as a private bar for owners only and did not operate as a public venue. Environmental measures implemented on the site included the installation of owl boxes, creation of ponds and bug habitats, and regular planting of trees and shrubs.

The Chairman advised that the allotted time for the speaker had expired and thanked the speaker for the comments provided. The Chairman then invited Councillor Morris, as Ward Member to address the Committee.

Councillor Morris stated that the applicant operated the site well and that no personal complaints had been received other than comments raised at Parish Council meetings. It was acknowledged that the site was well managed; however, concerns were expressed regarding the current application.

Councillor Morris explained that the ward represented was highly rural, with limited services and no retail or industry, and that leisure and tourism were important for local employment and income. It was stated that opposition to the application was not taken lightly, but concerns existed regarding the scale of development and its impact on the rural area. Reference was made to the number of applications submitted for the site over recent years, which had created a complex planning history.

It was raised that the original target date for determination had been January 2025 and that the application had initially been intended for delegated decision. Councillor Morris indicated that the delay and referral to Committee raised concerns and suggested that confidence in the application may have been lacking. It was stated that the proposal appeared to conflict with Policy S43 of the Central Lincolnshire Local Plan, which discouraged intensive tourism in rural areas.

Further concerns were raised regarding the environmental impact of sand deposited on the site following pond excavation, which was said to have covered much of the application area and affected habitats. Reference was made to the completed Section 106 Agreement, although concerns were expressed regarding previous disregard for planning conditions. It was noted that the report referred to proposed pitches around a pond under construction, but that these pitches had already been installed and connected to services. Councillor Morris stated that photographs taken in October evidenced this and questioned why enforcement action had not been taken.

Concerns were expressed regarding enforcement capacity within the Council, noting that the service had been without a dedicated Officer for a period and was currently reliant on a consultant. Councillor Morris concluded by requesting that Members visit the site before making a decision on the application.

**NOTE:** Councillor Morris left the meeting at 7:03pm.

The Officer addressed comments raised by the Ward Member. It was explained that the delay in determining the application had been due to extensive negotiations regarding biodiversity net gain and the completion of the Section 106 Agreement, which had required significant time to finalise.

In relation to Policy S43 of the Central Lincolnshire Local Plan, it was clarified that reference to intensive tourism appeared only within the justification text and not within the policy itself. The policy supported visitor accommodation in the countryside where it related to an existing visitor facility, sought redevelopment or expansion, and was of a scale, form, and design appropriate to its location.

The Officer confirmed that biodiversity net gain had been fully assessed with input from the Central Lincolnshire Wildlife Officer, who had reviewed the site and associated reports. The Section 106 Agreement secured the required biodiversity enhancements, which would deliver a 21.95% habitat unit gain, a 150.77 hedgerow unit gain, and a 40.47 watercourse unit gain, significantly exceeding the statutory requirement of 10%.

Regarding enforcement, it was acknowledged that there had been a period when staffing levels were reduced due to personal circumstances, which had created challenges. Temporary cover had been arranged, and the service was now operating with increased capacity. In response to concerns about proposed pitches, the Officer stated that while works had commenced, the pitches were not yet occupied by units. The description within the report referred to proposed pitches as part of the application.

The Chairman thanked the Officer for his response and opened for the Committee to debate.

Members considered the application and expressed views on the proposals. It was noted that the site had been presented as well managed and that the applicant's presentation, together with the Officer's report, had addressed concerns raised. Members acknowledged the presumption in favour of supporting businesses and expansion where appropriate and stated that no valid planning reasons for refusal had been identified.

It was suggested that a site visit would add little value, and support was expressed for the recommendation as amended to include the updates and completed Section 106 Agreement. Members commented that the development would transform a previously underused site into a business contributing to the local economy. It was noted that the proposals appeared consistent with national and local policy objectives to promote tourism and leisure in rural areas.

Further comments were made that the development would support the local economy and provide employment opportunities. It was suggested that, given the distance to the nearest shops, a farm shop or similar facility could be beneficial for visitors. Members acknowledged concerns raised by the parish council but noted that these did not amount to valid planning reasons for refusal. It was confirmed that no objections had been received from local health providers or the NHS, and that the application should be considered on its merits. Members concluded that the proposal would provide recreation and economic benefits and expressed

support for the application.

Clarification was sought regarding biodiversity net gain and the retention of juvenile trees shown in the photographs, as well as the existence of a permissive footpath near the site. The Officer responded that the trees shown in the photographs were likely located outside the application site. It was confirmed that a condition requiring a landscaping scheme had been included, which was expected to enhance planting within the site. Reference was made to the biodiversity net gain figures, which indicated a 150% increase in hedgerow provision. The Officer stated that existing trees were expected to be retained, as most were situated around the site boundary or beyond.

In relation to the permissive footpath, the Officer clarified that the footpath was located outside the application site and that there was no direct access from the site. The footpath was understood to run to the east of the site but was not connected to the development.

Having been proposed and seconded, the Chairman took the vote, and it was agreed that planning permission be **GRANTED** with a completed S106 agreement to secure a biodiversity net gain and the following conditions:

**Conditions stating the time by which the development must be commenced:**

1. The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of three years from the date of this permission.

**Reason:** To conform with Section 91 (1) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended).

**Conditions which apply or require matters to be agreed before the development commenced:**

2. No development shall take place until a Construction and Traffic Management Plan has been submitted to and agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The approved plan shall be adhered to throughout the construction period. The statement shall provide for:
  - (i) the routing and management of traffic;
  - (ii) the parking of vehicles of site operatives and visitors;
  - (iii) storage of equipment or materials used in constructing the development;
  - (iv) wheel cleaning facilities;
  - (v) measures to control the emission of dust and dirt;
  - (vi) the hours during which machinery may be operated, vehicles may enter and leave, and works may be carried out on the site;
  - (vii) scheme of recycling and disposal of waste;
  - (viii) storage of raw materials on site;
  - (ix) details of any raw materials to be removed off the site.

**Reason:** In the interests of highway and railway safety, including the adjacent

level crossing in accordance with Policy S47 of the Central Lincolnshire Local Plan 2023-2043 and the provisions of the NPPF.

3. No development shall take place until a written Ecological Mitigation & Enhancement Plan (EMEP) is submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The EMEP shall include: -

- A plan showing habitat protection zones
- Details of any precautionary method statements for protected species
- Details of a sensitive lighting strategy
- Details of educational leaflets to be provided to all visitors regarding enhancements for wildlife across the site.
- Evidence of collaboration with Waterlife Recovery East as part of GLNP Operation Water Vole by means of providing 1 x mink trap and upkeep for at least 3 years
- Details, specification, locations of amphibian friendly curb and drain treatments.
- Details, specification and location of the following species enhancements incorporated across the site:
  - Bird boxes (tree or post mounted)
    - General Multi Species Boxes
    - Owl and kestrel boxes
    - Woodpecker/tree creeper boxes
  - Bat Boxes (tree or post mounted)
  - Insect Hotels/Bee posts
  - Hibernacula and Log Piles

The EMEP shall be implemented in strict accordance with the approved plan. All features shall be installed during construction and retained as such thereafter.

**Reason:** In the interest of nature conservation and to accord with the National Planning Policy Framework and local policy S60 of the Central Lincolnshire Local Plan 2023-2043.

**Conditions which apply or are to be observed during the course of the development:**

4. The Biodiversity Gain Plan shall be prepared in accordance with the Statutory Biodiversity Metric received 13/05/2025 and prepared by Kevin Johnson from KJ Ecology Ltd.

**Reason:** To ensure the development delivers a biodiversity net gain on site in accordance with Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and Policy S61 of the Central Lincolnshire Local Plan 2023-2043.

5. With the exception of the detailed matters referred to by the conditions of this consent, the development hereby approved shall be carried out in accordance with the following drawings and materials:
- Proposed Site Plan: 2464 Rev B dated 12/02/2025.
  - Site Location Plan dated 27/09/2024.

The works shall be carried out in accordance with the details shown on the approved plans and in any other approved documents forming part of the application.

**Reason:** To ensure the development proceeds in accordance with the approved plans and to accord with the National Planning Policy Framework and Policy S53 of the Central Lincolnshire Local Plan 2023-2043.

6. The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in full accordance with the details set out in the submitted Energy Statement received 11/10/2023, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

**Reason:** To ensure that the development takes place in accordance with the approved details and in accordance with the provisions of Policies S6 and S8 of the Central Lincolnshire Local Plan 2023-2043.

7. The development hereby permitted shall be undertaken in accordance with the mitigation measures and enhancements in the following ecological documents:
  - Preliminary Ecological Appraisal and Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment Version 1.1 produced by KJ Ecology Ltd dated 14<sup>th</sup> February 2025.

**Reason:** To ensure that the development proceeds in accordance with the recommended ecological enhancements in accordance with Policy S60 of the Central Lincolnshire Local Plan and the provisions of the National Planning Policy Framework.

8. All new hardstanding shall be constructed from a porous material or shall be appropriately drained within the site and shall be retained as such thereafter.

**Reason:** To ensure appropriate drainage to accord with the National Planning Policy Framework and Policy S21 of the Central Lincolnshire Local Plan.

9. No occupation of the lodges/caravans shall take place until a scheme for the disposal of foul and surface waters (including the results of soakaway/percolation tests) have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall only be carried out in accordance with the approved details and prior to occupation of the dwelling.

**Reason:** To ensure adequate drainage facilities are provided to serve the development in accordance with Policy S21 of the Central Lincolnshire Local Plan.

10. No occupation of the lodges/caravans hereby approved must take place until a landscaping scheme has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Details to include:

- Type, height and position of all boundary treatments.



- Material finish of all hardstanding (access road, driveways, patios and paths).
- Species, planting height, formation and position of new trees and hedging.

The development must be completed in strict accordance with the approved landscaping scheme.

**Reason:** To ensure that appropriate landscaping is introduced and would not unacceptably impact on the character and appearance of the site and the surrounding area or the amenity of nearby residents to accord with the National Planning Policy Framework and local policies S53 of the Central Lincolnshire Local Plan 2023.

**Conditions which apply or relate to matters which are to be observed following completion of the development:**

11. All planting and turfing approved in the Biodiversity and Landscape Management Plan under condition 2 shall be carried out in the first planting and seeding season following the completion of the development, whichever is the sooner; and any trees or hedging which within a period of 5 years from the completion of the development die, are removed, or become seriously damaged or diseased shall be replaced in the next planting season with others of similar size and species, unless the Local Planning Authority gives written consent to any variation. The landscaping should be retained in perpetuity thereafter.

**Reason:** To ensure the site is visually softened by appropriate methods in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework and Policies S53 and S57 of the Central Lincolnshire Local Plan.

12. The lodges shall be occupied for holiday purposes only and shall not be used as a person's sole or main place of residence. The owners/operators shall maintain an up-to-date register of the names of all occupiers in individual lodges on the site and of their main home addresses, and shall make this information available at all reasonable times to the Local Planning Authority.

**Reason:** To ensure that unencumbered residential accommodation is not permitted in this open countryside location in accordance with the provisions of Policy S5 and S43 of the Central Lincolnshire Local Plan and the provisions of the National Planning Policy Framework.

13. No more than 90 static caravans shall be sited on the site at any one time and shall be sited within the red line boundary indicated on plan 2464 Rev B dated 12/02/2025.

**Reason:** To ensure the development remains appropriate in scale in accordance with S5 and S43 of the Central Lincolnshire Local Plan.

## **78 DETERMINATION OF APPEALS**

**NOTE:** Councillor Morris entered the meeting at 7.11pm.

With no comments or questions the determination of appeals were **DULY NOTED**.

**NOTE:** The Committee entered closed session at 19:16

## **79 PLANNING ENFORCEMENT - FORMAL CASE UPDATE**

Members discussed the Planning Enforcement Report, with reference made to the earlier debate on enforcement. The importance of reviewing the report thoroughly was stressed, and Members expressed their agreement.

With no further comments, questions, or requirement for a vote, the Planning Enforcement Report was **DULY NOTED**.

The meeting concluded at 7.17 pm.

Chairman