

Riseholme Neighbourhood Plan 2015-2036

**A report to West Lindsey District Council on the
Riseholme Neighbourhood Plan**

9 September 2016

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Executive Summary

- 1 I was appointed by West Lindsey District Council in July 2016 to carry out the independent examination of the Riseholme Neighbourhood Plan.
- 2 The examination was undertaken by written representations. I visited the neighbourhood plan area on 28 August 2016.
- 3 The Plan proposes a series of policies and seeks to bring forward positive and sustainable development in the plan area. There is a very clear focus on safeguarding local character and promoting appropriate and sensitive development on the university campus.
- 4 The Plan has been significantly underpinned by community support and engagement. It is clear that all sections of the community have been actively engaged in its preparation.
- 5 Subject to a series of recommended modifications set out in this report I have concluded that the Riseholme Neighbourhood Plan meets all the necessary legal requirements and should proceed to referendum.
- 6 I recommend that the referendum should be held within the neighbourhood plan area.

Andrew Ashcroft
Independent Examiner
XX September 2016

1 Introduction

- 1.1 This report sets out the findings of the independent examination of the Riseholme Neighbourhood Plan 2015-2026 (the Plan).
- 1.2 The Plan has been submitted to West Lindsey District Council (WLDC) by the Riseholme Parish Council in its capacity as the qualifying body responsible for preparing the neighbourhood plan.
- 1.3 Neighbourhood plans were introduced into the planning process by the Localism Act 2011. They aim to allow local communities to take responsibility for guiding development in their area. This approach was subsequently embedded in the National Planning Policy Framework in 2012 and which continues to be the principal element of national planning policy.
- 1.4 This report assesses whether the Plan is legally compliant and meets the Basic Conditions that apply to neighbourhood plans. It also considers the content of the Plan and, where necessary, recommends changes to its policies and supporting text.
- 1.5 This report also provides a recommendation as to whether the Plan should proceed to referendum. If this is the case and that referendum results in a positive outcome the Plan would then be used to determine planning applications within the plan area and will sit as part of the wider development plan.

2 The Role of the Independent Examiner

- 2.1 The examiner's role is to ensure that any submitted neighbourhood plan meets the relevant legislative and procedural requirements.
- 2.2 I was appointed by WLDC, with the consent of the Parish Council, to conduct the examination of the Plan and to prepare this report. I am independent of both the WLDC and the Parish Council. I do not have any interest in any land that may be affected by the Plan.
- 2.3 I possess the appropriate qualifications and experience to undertake this role. I am a Director of Andrew Ashcroft Planning Limited. In previous roles I have over 30 years' experience in various local authorities at either Head of Planning or Service Director level. I am a chartered town planner and have significant experience of undertaking other neighbourhood plan examinations and health checks. I am a member of the Royal Town Planning Institute.

Examination Outcomes

- 2.4 In my role as the independent examiner of the Plan I am required to recommend one of the following outcomes of the examination:
- (a) that the Plan is submitted to a referendum; or
 - (b) that the Plan should proceed to referendum as modified (based on my recommendations); or
 - (c) that the Plan does not proceed to referendum on the basis that it does not meet the necessary legal requirements.

The Basic Conditions

- 2.5 As part of this process I must consider whether the submitted Plan meets the Basic Conditions as set out in paragraph 8(2) of Schedule 4B of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. To comply with the basic conditions, the Plan must:
- have regard to national policies and advice contained in guidance issued by the Secretary of State; and
 - contribute to the achievement of sustainable development; and
 - be in general conformity with the strategic policies of the development plan in the area; and
 - be compatible with European Union (EU) and European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) obligations.

I have examined the submitted Plan against each of these basic conditions, and my conclusions are set out in Sections 6 and 7 of this report. I have made specific comments on the fourth bullet point above in paragraphs 2.6 to 2.10 of this report.

- 2.6 In order to comply with the Basic Condition relating to European obligations the District Council carried out a screening assessment. The conclusion of the draft screening report was that there were no significant environmental effects as a result of the production of the Plan

- 2.7 The required consultation was carried out with the three prescribed bodies.
- 2.8 WLDC has also undertaken a Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) screening report on the Plan. Its Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA) screening report concluded that the Plan was not likely to have any significant effect on a European site.
- 2.9 Having reviewed the information provided to me as part of the examination I am satisfied that a thorough, comprehensive and proportionate process has been undertaken in accordance with the various regulations. The various reports set out a robust and compelling assessment of the relevant information. None of the statutory consultees have raised any concerns with regard to either neighbourhood plan or to European obligations. In the absence of any evidence to the contrary, I am entirely satisfied that the submitted Plan is compatible with this aspect of European obligations.
- 2.10 In a similar fashion I am satisfied that the submitted Plan has had regard to the fundamental rights and freedoms guaranteed under the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) and that it complies with the Human Rights Act. There is no evidence that has been submitted to me to suggest otherwise. There has been full and adequate opportunity for all interested parties to take part in the preparation of the Plan and to make their comments known. On this basis I conclude that the submitted Plan does not breach, nor is in any way incompatible with the ECHR.

Other examination matters

- 2.11 In examining the Plan I am also required to check whether:
- the policies relate to the development and use of land for a designated neighbourhood plan area; and
 - the Plan meets the requirements of Section 38B of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (the Plan must specify the period to which it has effect, must not include provision about development that is excluded development, and must not relate to more than one neighbourhood area); and
 - the Plan has been prepared for an area that has been designated under Section 61G of the Localism Act and has been developed and submitted for examination by a qualifying body.
- 2.12 Having addressed the matters identified in paragraph 2.11 of this report I am satisfied that all of the points have been met subject to the contents of this report.

3 Procedural Matters

3.1 In undertaking this examination I have considered the following documents:

- the submitted Plan.
- the Basic Conditions Statement.
- the Consultation Statement.
- the WLDC Habitats Regulations Assessment
- the WLDC Screening report.
- the representations made to the Plan.
- the West Linsey District Local Plan (First Review)
- the National Planning Policy Framework (March 2012).
- Planning Practice Guidance (March 2014 and subsequent updates).
- recent Ministerial Statements (March, May and June 2015).

3.2 I carried out an unaccompanied visit to the Plan area on 29 July 2016. I looked at its overall character and appearance and at those areas affected by policies in the Plan in particular. My site inspection is covered in more detail in paragraphs 5.9 to 5.16 of this report.

3.3 It is a general rule that neighbourhood plan examinations should be held by written representations only. Having considered all the information before me, including the representations made to the submitted plan, I was satisfied that the Plan could be examined without the need for a public hearing. I advised WLDC of this decision early in the examination process.

4 Consultation

Consultation Process

- 4.1 Policies in made neighbourhood plans become the basis for local planning and development control decisions. As such the regulations require neighbourhood plans to be supported and underpinned by public consultation.
- 4.2 In accordance with the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 the Parish Council has prepared a Consultation Statement. This statement is well-presented and is proportionate to the Plan area and its six policies. It also provides specific details on the consultation process that took place on the pre-submission version of the Plan. The Statement helpfully sets out how the emerging plan took account of the various comments and representations.
- 4.3 The initial section of the Statement sets out details of the wider consultation events that has been carried out as part the evolution of the Plan. Details are provided about:
- the series of posters and leaflets used
 - the series of public events and displays
 - the use of a questionnaire
 - the use of the local newspaper (the Lincolnshire Echo)
 - the advice and assistance provided by both the District Council and Community Lincs.
- 4.4 The Statement provides very useful information on the issues raised at each of the various public events and displays
- 4.5 It is clear to me that consultation has been an important and integral the Plan's production. Advice on the neighbourhood planning process has been made available to the community in a positive and direct way by those responsible for the Plan's preparation. Consultation and feedback has been at the heart of the Plan throughout the various stages of its production.
- 4.6 The positive approach that was taken in responding to the earlier comments is reflected in the number of representations received to the submitted plan (see 4.8 below) and their generally positive nature.
- 4.7 From all the evidence provided to me as part of the examination, I can see that the Plan has promoted an inclusive and comprehensive approach to seeking the opinions of all concerned throughout the process. WLDC has carried out its own assessment that the consultation process has complied with the requirements of the Regulations.

Representations Received

4.8 Consultation on the submitted plan was undertaken by the District Council for a six-week period and which ended on 5 August 2016. This exercise generated nine comments from the following persons or organisations:

- Highways England
- Natural England
- Burton-by-Lincoln Parish Council
- Welton- by- Lincoln Parish Council
- Greetwell Parish Council
- Anglian Water Services Limited
- Michael and Wendy Hinks
- University of Lincoln
- Lincolnshire County Council

5 The Plan Area and the Development Plan Context

The Plan Area

- 5.1 The Plan area covers the parish of Riseholme. It was designated as a neighbourhood area on 6 March 2015.
- 5.2 The Plan area is located to the immediate north of Lincoln. The context and setting of the Plan area is heavily defined by the A46 to its southern part and the A15 to its west. Nevertheless, it displays an open and agricultural context that sits in sharp contrast to the city to the south. As its Plan's title suggests the Plan area forms part of the 'Green Lungs of Lincoln'. This was the case in the past and continues to current times.
- 5.3 The principal built development itself sits comfortably within the surrounding rolling countryside. It falls into several distinctive landscape types as set out in the accompanying Character Assessment. It has strong associations in building design, type and design to its historic and agricultural context. The Plan area is strongly associated in landscape, historic and economic terms with the Riseholme Campus. This site is specifically addressed in both the Character Assessment and Policy 3 of the Plan itself.

Development Plan Context

- 5.4 The West Linsey District Local Plan (First Review) was adopted in June 2006. It sets out the basis for development in the District between 2006 and 2016. A significant part of its policies remain saved until the adoption of the emerging Central Lincolnshire Local Plan. All the policies in the Strategic section of the saved local plan are strategic policies of the development plan (see paragraph 2.5 of this report). It is this Local Plan against which I am required to examine the submitted Neighbourhood Plan. Within this saved plan the following policies are particularly relevant to the Riseholme neighbourhood plan:

Policy Strat 3 in which Riseholme is identified as a small Rural Settlement.

Policy Strat 8 which sets out a series of criteria against which applications for windfall or infill residential developments will be assessed in small rural settlements.

Policy Strat 12 which sets out the approach to development in the open countryside.

Policy Strat 13 which identifies a series of green wedges around Lincoln. One of these directly affects the Plan area.

Policy CRT6 which supports the extension of existing educational facilities subject to certain criteria.

- 5.5 The Basic Conditions Statement has very helpfully listed the policies in both the adopted local plan documents with which the Plan is considered to be consistent. It highlights the key policies in the development plan and how they relate to policies in the submitted Plan. This is good practice. WLDC has also provided me with a comprehensive list of those policies that it considers to be strategic. This was also very helpful as part of the examination.
- 5.6 These saved policies will apply in the Plan area until the adopted Local Plan is replaced by the emerging Central Lincolnshire Local Plan.
- 5.7 The emerging Central Lincolnshire Local Plan (CLLP) 2012 to 2036 was about to be submitted for examination in June 2016. Plainly at this stage its policies are in an emerging state and have not been examined. Nevertheless, its policies will have an important and longer term implication on the Plan area.
- 5.8 It is clear that the submitted Plan has been prepared with an eye to the future. In doing so it has relied on up to date information and research that has underpinned the emerging neighbourhood plan. This is good practice and which reflects key elements in Planning Practice Guidance on neighbourhood planning.

Site Visit

- 5.9 I carried out an unaccompanied visit to the Plan area on 28 August 2016.
- 5.10 I drove initially to the University Campus to familiarise myself with the current range of buildings on the site. I had the very unusual experience of sharing the whole of the campus with just two anglers and a security guard.
- 5.12 I spent some time looking at the various traditional and more modern buildings and how they related to the wider agricultural landscape. I was able to look in detail at Riseholme Hall, the stable block, the garden house and St Mary's church. This part of the visit also helped me to understand the submitted Character Assessment.
- 5.13 I then walked along the local road network to Riseholme Lane. I saw the Old Rectory and the more modern houses to the immediate east of the A15.
- 5.14 I then continued my visit by looking at the concentration of properties in St George's Lane.
- 5.15 At various points during my visit I looked at the details set out in the Character Assessment.
- 5.16 In order to get a full impression of the Plan area I drove around some of the surrounding main and minor roads.

6 The Neighbourhood Plan as a whole

- 6.1 This section of the report deals with the submitted neighbourhood plan as a whole and the extent to which it meets the basic conditions. The submitted Basic Conditions Statement has helped considerably in the preparation of this section of the report. It is a well-presented, informative and very professional document. It follows other submission documents in terms of its design, format and presentation.
- 6.2 The Plan needs to meet all the basic conditions to proceed to referendum. This section provides an overview of the extent to which the Plan meets three of the four basic conditions. Paragraphs 2.6 to 2.10 of this report have already addressed the issue of conformity with European Union legislation.

National Planning Policies and Guidance

- 6.3 The key elements of national policy relating to planning matters are set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) issued in March 2012.
- 6.4 The NPPF sets out a range of core land-use planning principles to underpin both plan-making and decision-taking. The following are of particular relevance to the Riseholme Neighbourhood Plan:
- a plan led system– in this case the relationship between the neighbourhood plan and the adopted Local Plan.
 - recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside and supporting thriving local communities.
 - proactively driving and supporting economic development to deliver homes, businesses and industrial units and infrastructure.
 - Encouraging the effective use of land by reusing land that has been previously developed provided that it is not of high environmental value

- 6.5 Neighbourhood plans sit within this wider context both generally, and within the more specific presumption in favour of sustainable development, which is identified as a golden thread running through the planning system. Paragraph 16 of the NPPF indicates that neighbourhoods should both develop plans that support the strategic needs set out in local plans and plan positively to support local development that is outside the strategic elements of the development plan.
- 6.6 In addition to the NPPF I have also taken account of other elements of national planning policy including Planning Practice Guidance and the ministerial statements of March, May and June 2015.
- 6.7 Having considered all the evidence and representations available as part of the examination I am satisfied that the submitted Plan has had regard to national planning policies and guidance in general terms. It sets out a positive vision for the future of the plan area and promotes sustainable growth. At its heart are a suite of policies that aim to bring forward infill housing development to meet local needs, to safeguard its rich

natural heritage and to provide a context for future development on the Riseholme Campus. Section 3 of the Basic Conditions Statement is particularly effective in terms of mapping Plan policies with the appropriate paragraphs in the NPPF.

6.8 At a more practical level the NPPF indicates that plans should provide a clear framework within which decisions on planning applications can be made and that they should give a clear indication of how a decision-maker should react to a development proposal (paragraphs 17 and 154). This was reinforced with the publication of Planning Practice Guidance in March 2014. Its paragraph 41 (41-041-20140306) indicates that policies in neighbourhood plans should be drafted with sufficient clarity so that a decision-maker can apply them consistently and with confidence when determining planning applications. Policies should also be concise, precise and supported by appropriate evidence.

6.9 As submitted the Plan does not fully accord with this range of practical issues. The majority of my recommended modifications in Section 7 relate to matters of clarity and precision. They are designed to ensure that the Plan fully accords with national policy.

Contributing to sustainable development

6.10 There are clear overlaps between national policy and the contribution that the submitted Plan makes to achieving sustainable development. Sustainable development has three principal dimensions – economic, social and environmental. It is clear to me that the submitted Plan has set out to achieve sustainable development in the Plan area. In the economic dimension the Plan includes policies to promote new residential development, to safeguard the retail centre and to provide a context for future development on the university campus site. In the social role it includes policies to promote any unidentified local need for affordable housing over the plan period. In the environmental dimension the Plan positively seeks to protect the natural, built and historic environment of the parish. In particular, it proposes innovative policies on design and local character and on character areas.

General conformity with the strategic policies in the development plan

6.11 I have already commented in detail on the development plan context in the wider West Lindsey District Council area in paragraphs 5.4 to 5.8 of this report.

6.12 I consider that the submitted Plan delivers a local dimension to this strategic context and supplements the detail already included in the adopted Local Plan. Table 3 of the Basic Conditions Statement helpfully relates the Plan's policies to policies in the Core Strategy/saved Local Plan. I am satisfied that the submitted Plan is in general conformity with the strategic policies in the development plan.

7 The Neighbourhood Plan policies

- 7.1 This section of the report comments on the range of policies in the Plan. In particular, it makes a series of recommended modifications to ensure that the various policies have the necessary precision to meet the basic conditions.
- 7.2 My recommendations focus on the policies themselves given that the basic conditions relate primarily to this aspect of neighbourhood plans. In some cases, I have also recommended changes to the associated supporting text.
- 7.3 I am satisfied that the content and the form of the Plan is fit for purpose. It is thorough and distinctive to the Plan area. The wider community and the Neighbourhood Forum have spent considerable time and energy in identifying the issues and objectives that they wish to be included in their Plan. This gets to the heart of the localism agenda.
- 7.4 The Plan has been designed to reflect Planning Practice Guidance (41-004-20140306) which indicates that neighbourhood plans must address the development and use of land.
- 7.5 I have addressed the policies in the order that they appear in the submitted plan. In some cases, there are overlaps between the different policies.
- 7.6 For clarity this section of the report comments on all policies whether or not I have recommended modifications in order to ensure that the Plan meets the basic conditions.
- 7.7 Where modifications are recommended to policies they are highlighted in bold print. Any associated or free-standing changes to the text of the Plan are set out in italic print.

The initial sections of the Plan

- 7.8 These introductory elements of the Plan set the scene for the range of policies. They do so in a concise and proportionate way. The Plan is well-presented and arranged and it is supported by well-chosen photographs and diagrams. The photographs add value and depth to the text in these sections of the Plan. The theme continues throughout the Plan and makes it interesting both to local residents and others who may be using it as a planning document throughout its lifetime.
- 7.9 A very clear context is provided to the production of the Plan area and some historic background to the Plan area. It describes earlier work on the preparation of a community-led plan.
- 7.10 The 'Local History' section provides a succinct background to the Plan area. It helps significantly in understanding its landscape and building characteristics.
- 7.11 The 'Socio-economic/demographic' section sets out detailed information on the Plan area and helpfully compares it with the remainder of the District, the East Midlands and England.

- 7.12 The Community Aspirations section draws out a series of ambitions that cannot be delivered through the planning process. These are set out in greater detail later in the Plan.

Policy 1: Managed Housing Growth

- 7.13 This policy sets out to provide a positive framework for locally distinctive decision making. It seeks to address positively national ambitions for housing growth and the delivery of sustainable development. It properly identifies that new residential development should not have a negative impact on the special character and appearance of the landscape setting and historic buildings in the Plan area.
- 7.14 The policy indicates that new housing will be supported where they meet one of four criteria – located on previously developed land, within existing residential built up areas, an appropriate conversion of a redundant rural building and meeting an unidentified local need for affordable housing. The policy also makes reference to the proportionate requirement of new housing in the Plan area arising from the emerging Local Plan.
- 7.15 I recommend a series of modifications to ensure that the Plan meets the basic conditions. The first removes the indicative new housing growth from the policy. The future housing target for the Plan area is already addressed in the supporting text. The basic conditions require that a neighbourhood plan is in general conformity with the adopted neighbourhood plan. The second indicates that plans at an appropriate scale should be included in the Plan to identify the three areas of existing built up areas as shown on Map 2. The indicative format of Map 2 does not provide the clarity required by the NPPF. The third recommends that the wording of the third criterion on rural conversions is tightened and aligned to national policy. The fourth recommends that the policy also refers to other policies in the neighbourhood plan and the wider development plan. As submitted the implementation of the policy has the potential to permitted unintended development.

Replace initial element of the policy with the following:

Proposals for new housing development will be supported where they:

- 1. Are located on previously-developed land; or**
- 2. Are within existing residential built up areas on Map 2 in general and on Maps (insert additional map numbers) in detail; or**
- 3. Represent a re-use of redundant or disused buildings and lead to an enhancement to the immediate setting; or**
- 4. Respond to an unidentified local need for affordable housing over the Plan period**

Include the following addition to the policy:

All proposals for new housing development should comply with other policies in this Plan and with the local plan in place at the time of their determination.

Policy 2: Infill Developments

- 7.16 This policy consolidates the approach adopted in Policy 1. It sets out three criteria against which residential proposals will be assessed. The criteria are both appropriate and distinctive to the Plan area.
- 7.17 Both the initial section of the policy and the first criterion refer to 'small' scale developments or gaps in the existing street frontage. However, 'small' is not defined and as such the policy does not have the necessary clarity. In order to ensure that the policy complies with the basic conditions I recommend the deletion of the word 'small' and the inclusion of an additional criterion that provides guidance on the scale of redevelopment plots to their immediate surroundings.

Remove 'small' from the introductory paragraph to the policy and in the first criterion

Add the following to the policy:

4 They are appropriate in scale to the character, appearance and layout to the character of their immediate surroundings

Policy 3: Redevelopment of Previously Developed Land at Riseholme Campus

- 7.18 This policy sits at the heart of the Plan. The campus occupies a significant parcel of land in the Plan area. It also represents the most obvious development opportunity in the Plan area.
- 7.19 The policy and its supporting text provide background on the consolidation of the campus in recent years and the views of the community about preferred uses for the site. I have also taken account of a representation from the University setting out its ambitions for future development on the site. As I have highlighted earlier I looked at the campus site in detail when I visited the Plan area.
- 7.20 As submitted the policy does not have proper regard to national planning policy. Its focus is on the enhancement and sustainability of the parish. This is acceptable in principle. Nevertheless, the policy also needs to have regard to those elements of national policy that promote economic growth in general, and the effective use of brownfield land in particular. These matters are addressed in Section 1 (18-22) and the Core Planning Principles (17) in the NPPF.
- 7.21 Taking into account national planning policy, the representation submitted by the University and the range of environmental constraints on the campus site I recommend a series of modifications to the submitted policy as set out below. These modifications to the policy would ensure that the policy has proper regards to national policy and therefore meets the basic conditions. It would provide appropriate support for the

consolidation of teaching and research facilities in the site. The criteria will also address the full round of environmental and other material considerations that apply to the post.

- 7.22 I have recommended the removal of any reference to new residential development in this policy. The examination process is solely concerned with ensuring that a submitted neighbourhood plan meets the basic conditions. New residential development in this location would not sit comfortably with national planning policy or the adopted local plan.
- 7.23 I have also recommended the inclusion of additional supporting text. This addition to the supporting text will make it clear that the policy has a focus specifically on teaching and research facilities. It properly identifies that it will be for the District Council to consider any applications for residential accommodation on their merits.

Replace policy with the following:

Proposals for educational, teaching and research buildings and other associated uses will be supported at the University of Lincoln Campus as shown on the proposals map subject to the following criteria:

- **they make an effective use of land within the campus that has been previously developed; and**
- **they respect the integrity and the setting of listed buildings on the campus and propose uses sensitive to their design and scale; and**
- **they respect the integrity of the parkland setting and the lake to the south of Riseholme Hall; and**
- **the design and massing of new buildings is appropriate to the rural setting of the site;**
- **appropriate car park facilities are provided on the site in accordance with WLDC standards**

Proposals that promote agricultural, land based or food related research and educational facilities will be particularly supported.

Add additional text at the end of that already set out on pages 18/19

Policy 3 sets out key principles for the future consolidation and development of the site for university related teaching and research purposes. Any proposals for the development of additional student residential accommodation on the site or for other types of residential development will be considered on their merits taking account of development plan policies in place at that time and any other material planning applications

Policy 4: Local Design and Development Principles

- 7.24 This policy sets out a very comprehensive approach to local design and distinctiveness. It identifies locally distinctive design principles for the Plan area and which I can clearly relate to what I saw on my visit. It is supported by evidence and is underpinned by earlier work carried out as part of the West Lindsey Landscape Character Assessment.

7.25 The policy properly responds to paragraph 60 of the NPPF in promoting and reinforcing local distinctiveness. At the same time, it follows the approach set out in paragraph 59 of the NPPF in not being unnecessarily prescriptive and avoiding detail.

7.26 I recommend modifications to bring clarity to the policy in general, and to ensure that all the criteria apply to all development proposals where applicable

C1 replace 'feel' with 'character'

C1 insert 'and' at the end of the criterion

C5 delete 'the large number of'

C6 replace 'views' with 'vistas'.

C6 replace 'must be.... new development' with 'incorporate them into the design and layout of any new development'

C7 delete 'and its surrounding setting'

Policy 5: Character Areas

7.27 This policy provides a detailed context for three identified character areas in the Plan area – Riseholme Fields, Riseholme Campus and Riseholme South. It does so in a very thorough and professional way

7.28 The policy is supported by a very comprehensive Character Assessment. This document is equally thorough and comprehensive. It is also beautifully illustrated with plans, diagrams and photographs.

7.29 The policy itself indicates that proposals must demonstrate how they have had regards to the key features of the character areas in which they are located. Within this context I recommend two modifications. The first ties the policy into the planning application process. The second provides guidance for how planning applications will be assessed based on the extent to which they have regard to the identified key features. This will provide the clarity required by the NPPF

Replace 'Proposals.... they' with 'Planning applications will be supported where they'

Insert the following at the end of the policy:

Planning applications that do not have regards to the key features of the character area concerned and would create demonstrable harm to its character will not be supported

Policy 6: Conservation and Enhancement of Non-Vehicular Routes

7.30 The policy has been included in the Plan to reflect community feedback that existing public rights of way should be preserved and enhanced wherever possible. I walked along several of the routes as part of my visit

- 7.31 The policy is helpfully supported by Map 6 and which identifies the different types of routes
- 7.32 I recommend modifications to the policy so that its language is clear and consistent and in order to ensure that it meets the basic conditions

Replace 'will normally be permitted' with 'will be supported'

Start each of the three criteria as follows:

- **they do not detract....**
- **they conserve or enhance....**
- **they retain and incorporate....**

Community Aspirations and Priorities

- 7.33 The text on p34 identifies that not all community priorities can be delivered through planning policies. This section of the Plan correctly follows advice in Planning Practice Guidance in including non-land use matters in a separate section of the Plan.
- 7.34 Seven Aspirations are identified as follows:
- Improvements to the A15 junctions at Riseholme Lane
 - Improvements to the connections across the A46
 - Creating Heritage Trails between Nettleham and Burton Villager
 - Improving public rights of way
 - Promoting tourism development
 - A community led masterplan for the university campus
 - Increase in community facilities
- 7.35 These aspirations are both appropriate and distinctive to the Plan area. I can see that they sit comfortably within the wider context of the Plan. Aspiration 6 is a matter that the community and the University will address as they see fit throughout the Plan period. Plainly the future of the campus site will ultimately be determined by the District Council's consideration of relevant planning applications.

8 Summary and Conclusions

Summary

- 8.1 The Plan sets out a range of policies to guide and direct development proposals in the period up to 2026. It is thorough and distinctive in addressing a specific set of issues that have been identified and refined by the wider community.
- 8.2 Following my independent examination of the Plan I have concluded that the Riseholme Neighbourhood Development Plan meets the basic conditions for the preparation of a neighbourhood plan subject to a series of recommended modifications.
- 8.3 This report has recommended a range of modifications to the policies in the Plan. Nevertheless, it remains fundamentally unchanged in its role and purpose.

Conclusion

- 8.4 On the basis of the findings in this report I recommend to West Lindsey District Council that subject to the incorporation of the modifications set out in this report that the Riseholme Neighbourhood Plan should proceed to referendum.

Referendum Area

- 8.5 I am required to consider whether the referendum area should be extended beyond the Plan area. In my view the neighbourhood area is entirely appropriate for this purpose and no evidence has been submitted to suggest that this is not the case. I therefore recommend that the Plan should proceed to referendum based on the neighbourhood area as approved by the District Council on 6 March 2015.
- 8.6 I am grateful to everyone who has helped in any way to ensure that this examination has run in a smooth and efficient manner.

Andrew Ashcroft
Independent Examiner
09th September 2016