

# West Lindsey District Council Interim Plan

## Local Government Reorganisation

21 March 2025



# Introduction

In responding to the Statutory Invitation to Leaders of local authorities within two-tier areas (5 February 2025), West Lindsey District Council ('the Council') has sought to identify and appraise initial geographical boundary options for new unitary authorities across Greater Lincolnshire.

The boundary options assessed within this Interim Plan submission represent the start of the process; the Council has sought to understand how each option reflects and responds to the Government's key drivers for unitisation which include: avoiding unnecessary fragmentation of services; opportunities to deliver public service reform and value for money; deliver sensible economic geographies; and meet housing need.

In line with the requirements of the Statutory Invitation, this submission is informed by place-based information which forms the basis for an initial identified and appraisal of options to understand the opportunities and challenges associated with various options. Whilst the Interim Plan submission does not rate one geographical option above another, the initial analysis demonstrates that certain unitary geographies have the potential to realise better outcomes and synergies than others.

The Council will continue to adopt an evidence led approach to working through the various options for unitarisation and will use these findings to inform our approach to collaboration and consultation with residents, businesses and partners to develop our final preferred option.



# Our People

Our demographic characteristics have remained relatively static over time. Our population is increasingly ageing with a current average age of 48.5, eight years above the national average. Our working age population remains static and our birth rates are low, which creates implications in relation to increasing employment levels and growing the local economy.

The diversity of need across the district is evident when considering factors such as deprivation, poverty, health and wellbeing. An ongoing challenge is enabling the conditions to support our most deprived neighbourhoods in Gainsborough to thrive, whilst at the same time supporting our rural communities who face unique challenges of their own, including hidden deprivation, fuel poverty and isolation.



# Our Place

West Lindsey is one of the largest districts in England and one of the most rural in the county of Lincolnshire. It covers an area of 1,156 km<sup>2</sup> (447 square miles), with a population of 97,880. West Lindsey is characterised by its rural nature, being the second least densely populated local authority area in the East Midlands with just 82 people per square kilometre. This rurality is reflected in the district's landscape, which includes large areas of fertile agricultural land, woodland, open countryside and the Lincolnshire Wolds, which is designated as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The administrative centre is in Gainsborough, located on the River Trent to the west, with smaller market towns like Market Rasen and Caistor to the east.

West Lindsey's location on the Western boundary of Lincolnshire means it acts as an important gateway to and from Nottinghamshire and the East Midlands, as well as into South Yorkshire. This close proximity to these other regions present significant opportunities for the district and future unitary Council to expedite sustainable economic growth for the UK. An example of this that has already been realised is the new opportunities in clean energy development following the decision of the UKAEA in selecting the previous West Burton power station site for the world's first prototype commercial fusion energy plant, known as STEP (Spherical Tokamak for Energy Production). Adjacent to the town of Gainsborough and the western gateway into Lincolnshire, this provides a once in a lifetime opportunity to deliver growth, prosperity and climate resilience.

West Lindsey despite being a relatively rural area has significant potential for growth in specialist sectors due to its strategic location and existing infrastructure, these include aerospace, defence and security, agriculture and agri-tech, advanced manufacturing, clean energy and digital. In summary, West Lindsey has significant potential for economic growth in several specialist sectors. By leveraging its unique attributes and addressing existing challenges, the district can create industry-specific clusters and drive sustainable economic development.

# Interim Plan - High level appraisal criteria

In the absence of consensus around a single proposal for Lincolnshire, we have developed a number of options through the lens of the challenges & opportunities identified in our Corporate Plan

- Population & demographics
- Health & wellbeing
- The local economy
- Inequality and deprivation
- Employment & skills

# Consideration of Options for Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) in Greater Lincolnshire

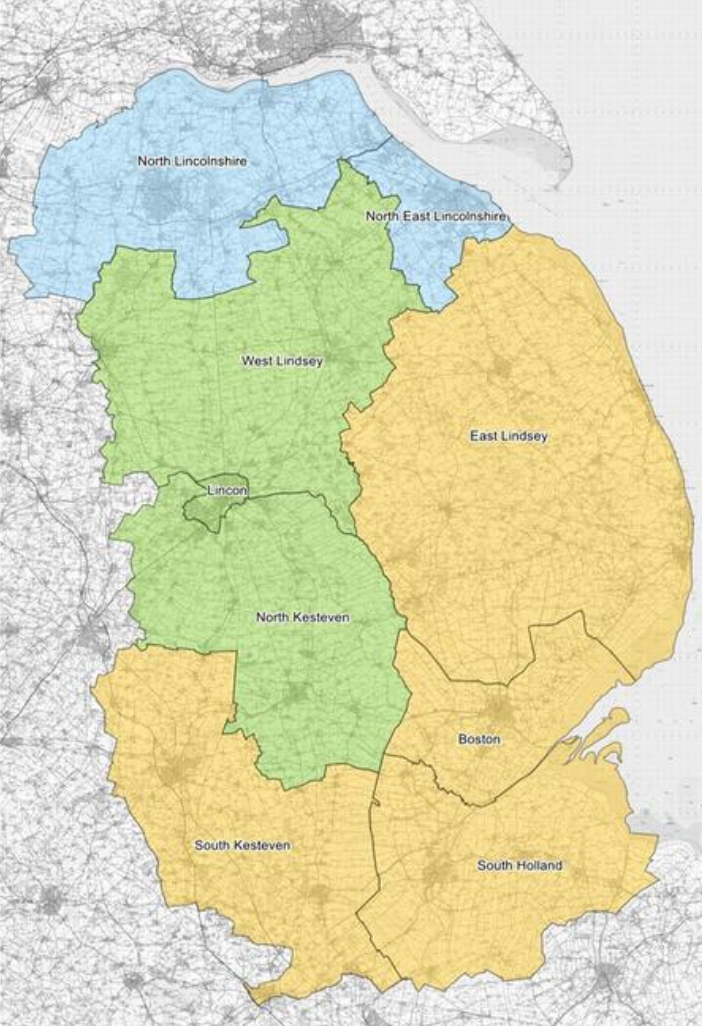
Each of the 6 options identified include a colour coded map showing the various unitary boundary options, population projections to 2043, current councillor numbers and also the geographical area in sq.km.

Following the summary page for each option, a dashboard is provided which summarises key metrics relating to population, indices of multiple deprivation measures, economic activity, health and existing strategic alignment of regional public sector organisations considered. Each of these metrics are then RAG rated to provide an overview of outcomes and alignment as a result of the option presented.

During this initial identification and appraisal of LGR options, we have included the two existing unitary authorities to the North of Greater Lincolnshire, who are constituent members of the newly created Greater Lincolnshire MCCA. We note, however that following recent statements from MHCLG, that these two organisations may be out of scope being existing small unitaries and as such only options that cover the County of Lincolnshire may be viable options to move forward with for the November submission deadline.

The use of RAG criteria provides the opportunity to appraise how each new unitary option performs against key metrics and place-based priorities. The process has enabled an assessment of the comparative levels of need, health, prosperity and economic growth associated with the aggregated population for each new unitary option. This approach has led to initial conclusions being made in relation to the desirability of each option from the perspectives of West Lindsey's communities, businesses and neighbouring populations. Additionally, the analysis provides an assessment of how alignment between the economies of each option and emerging MMCA strategic priorities.

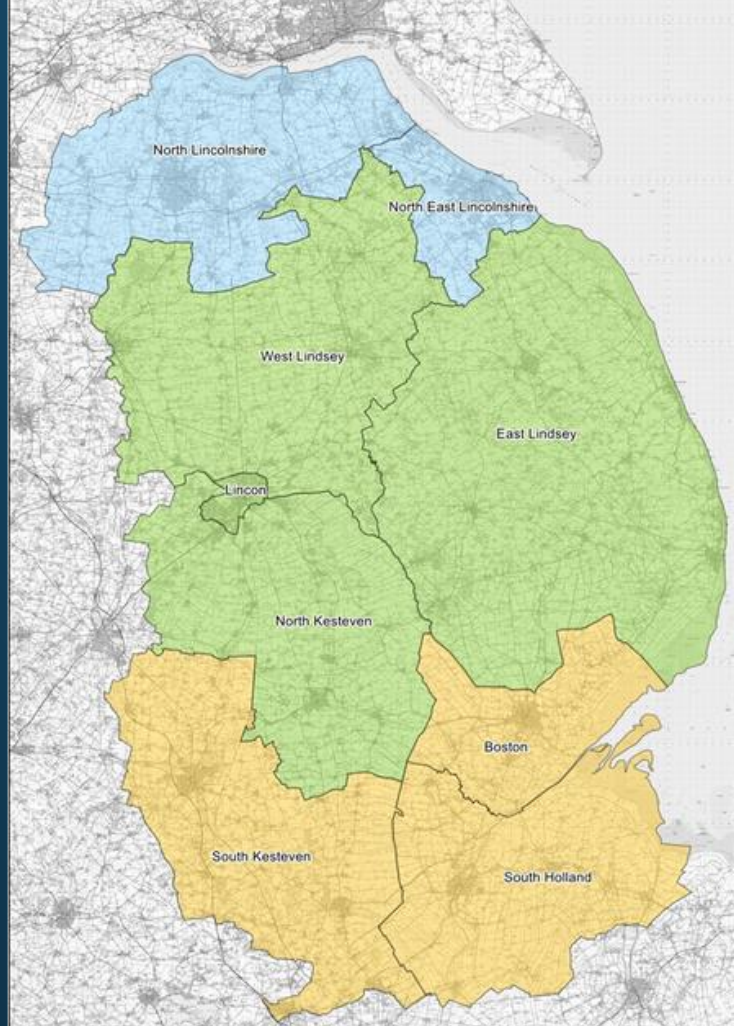




# Option A

Grouping including:

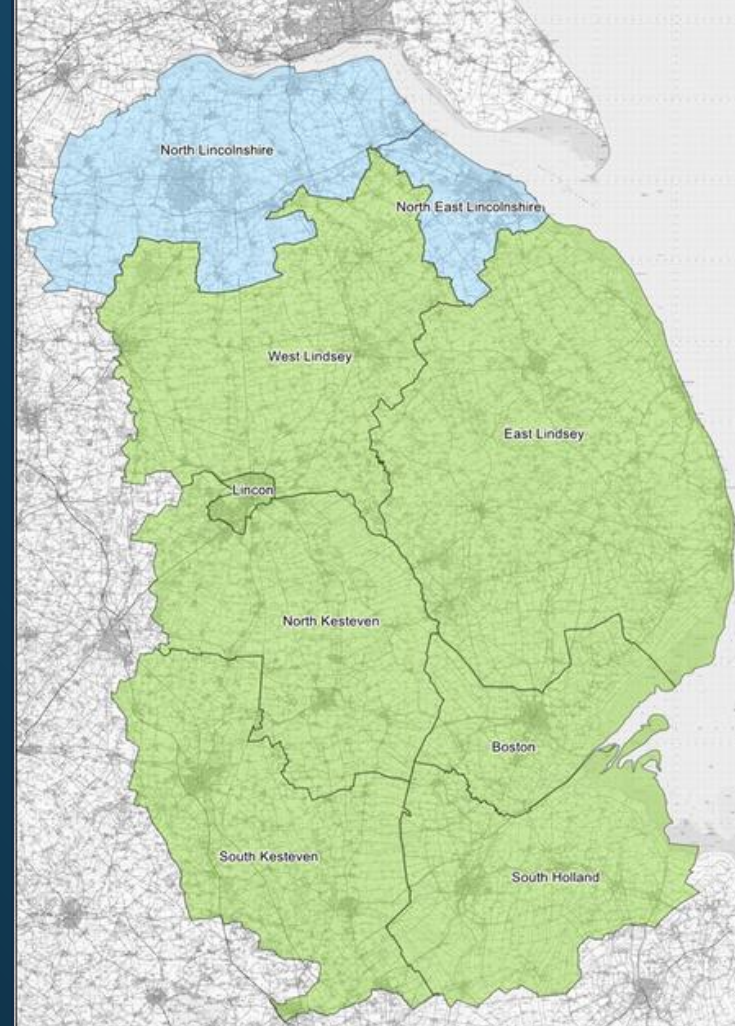
- WLDC
- City of Lincoln
- North Kesteven



# Option B

Grouping including:

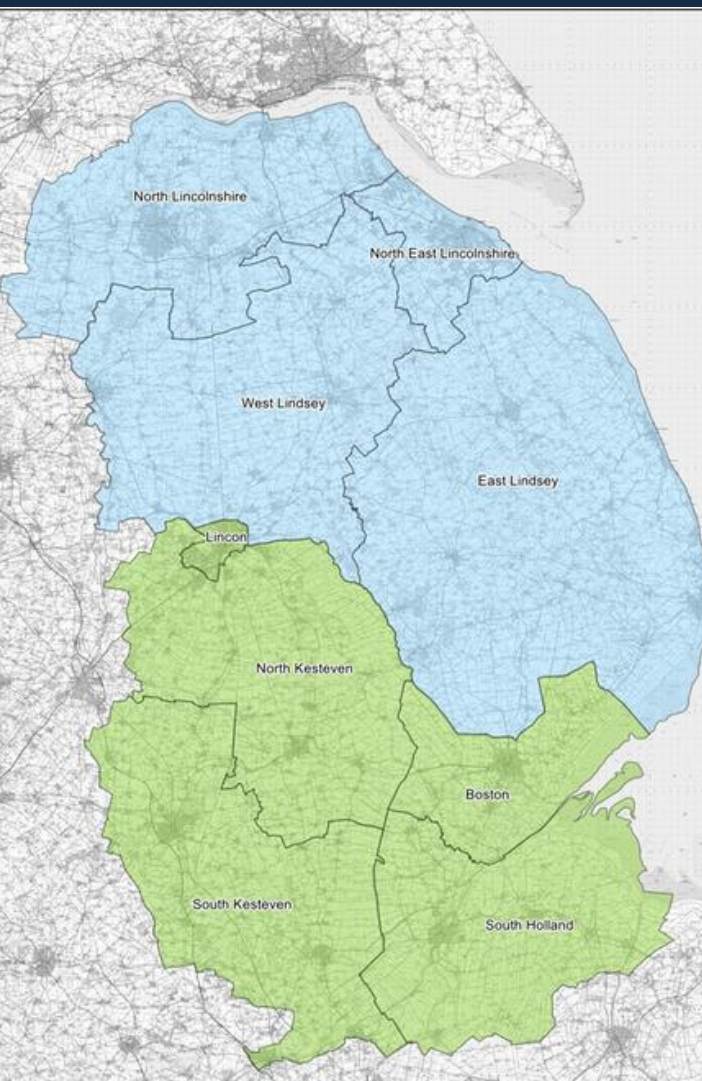
- WLDC
- City of Lincoln
- North Kesteven
- East Lindsey



# Option C

Grouping including:

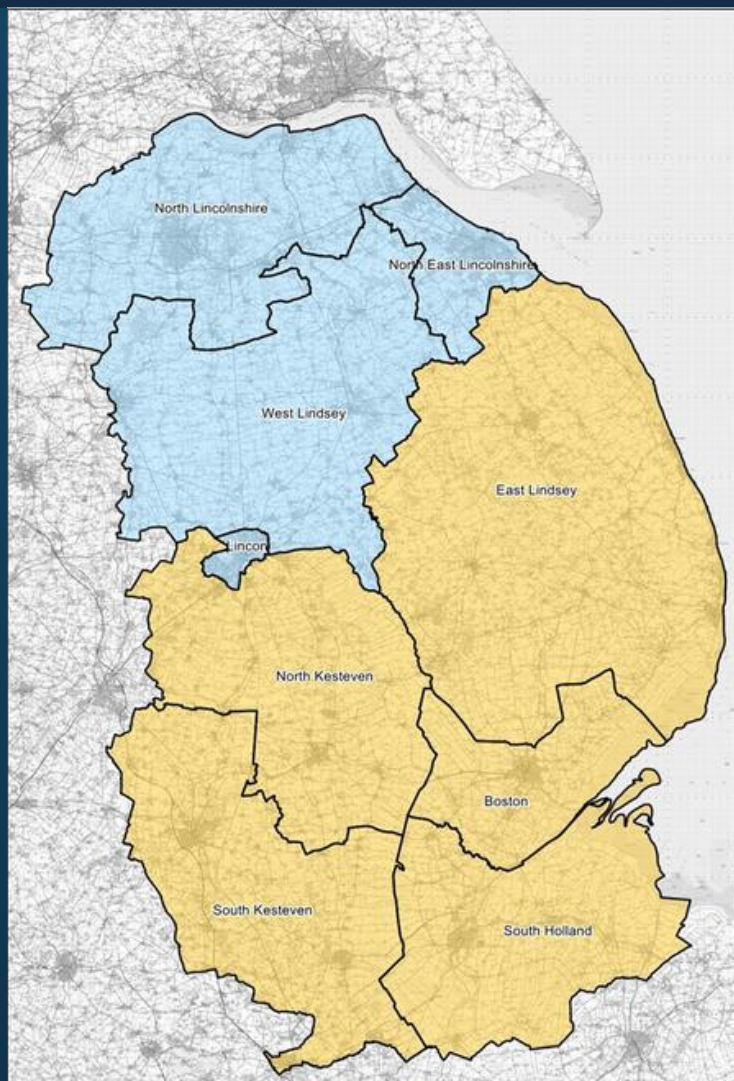
- County (all Councils)



# Option D

Grouping including:

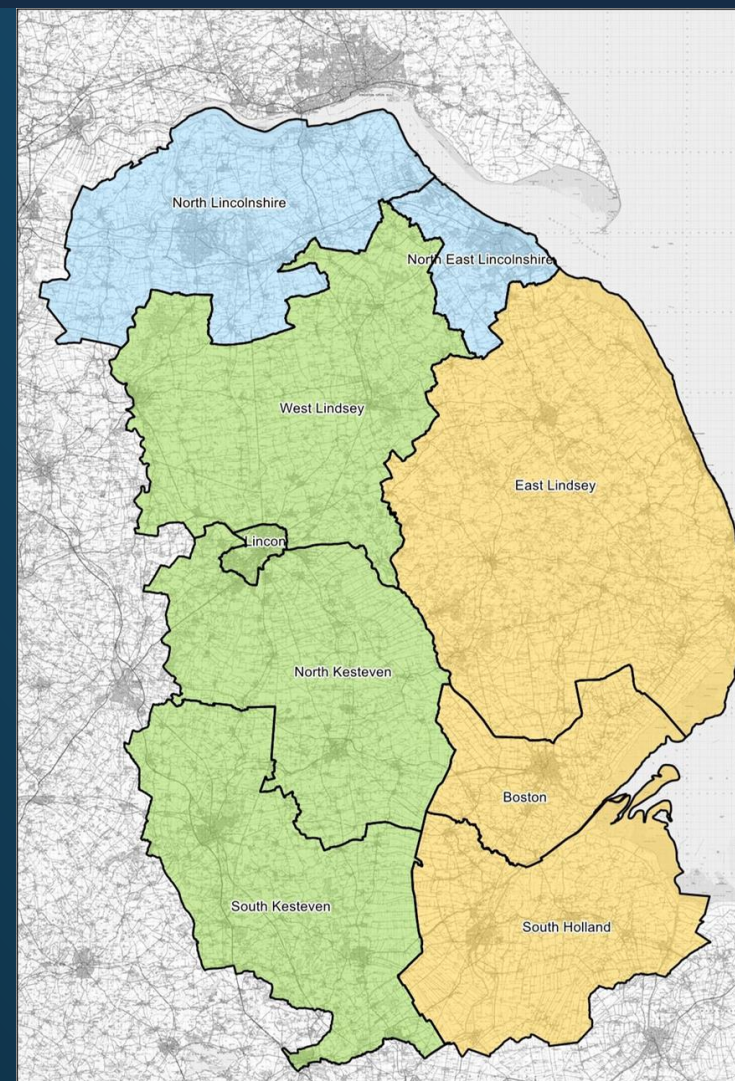
- WLDC
- East Lindsey
- North Lincolnshire
- North East Lincolnshire



# Option E

Grouping including:

- WLDC
- City of Lincoln
- North Lincolnshire
- North East Lincolnshire

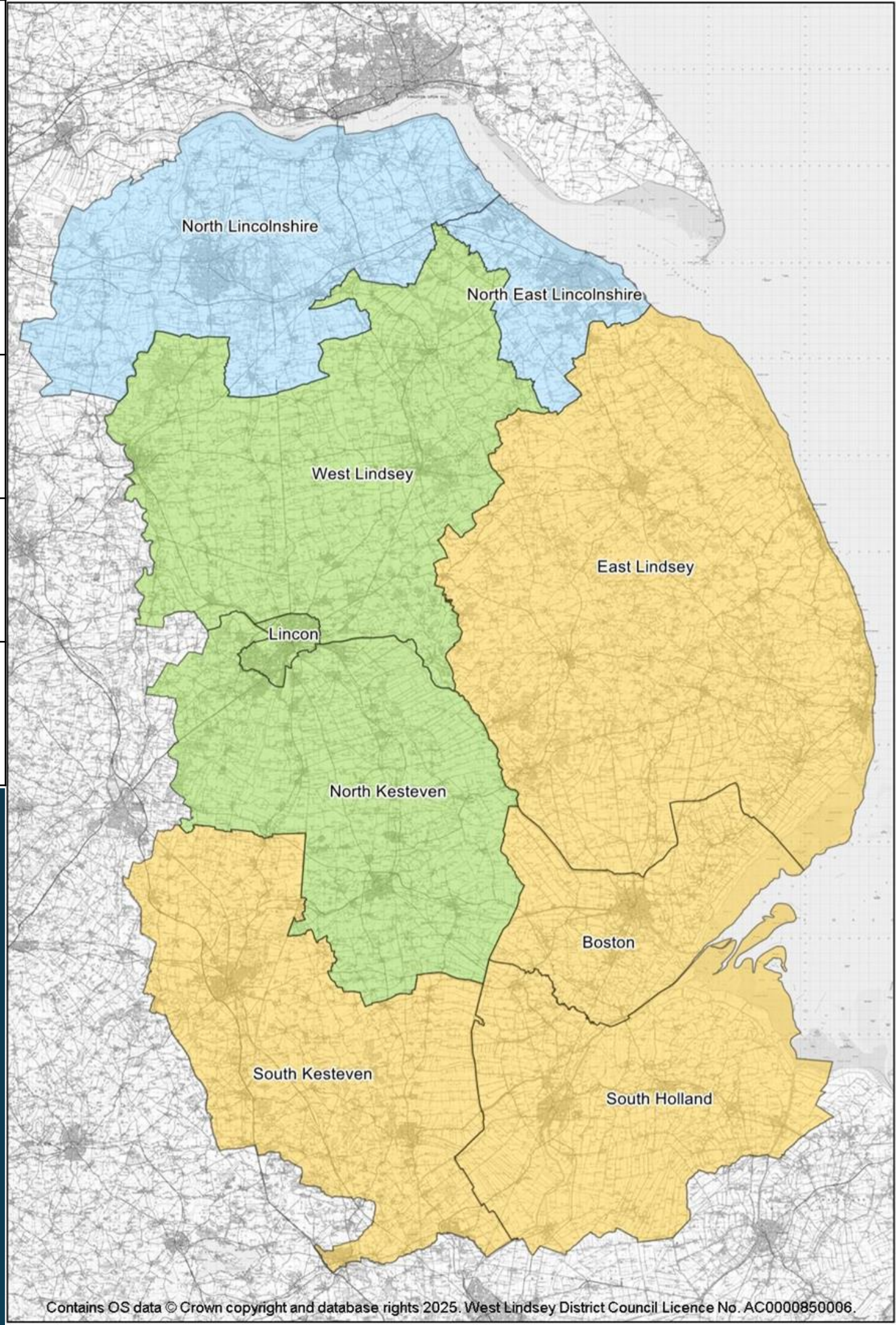


# Option F

Grouping including:

- WLDC
- City of Lincoln
- North Kesteven
- South Kesteven

Key	Area	Geographical Area	Current Population 2023	Population Projections 2043	Current No. of Councillors
	Northern Lincolnshire	1,040 sq km	328,422	337,152	85
	Central Lincolnshire	2,114 sq km	322,397	339,153	140
	Southern & Coastal Lincolnshire	3,824 sq km	460,411	510,426	220



# Option A

West Lindsey, City of Lincoln, North Kesteven

No Boundary Commission Implications



# Option A - Profile



Measure	WLDC	Option A	Greater Lincs
<b>Demographics</b>			
Area (Km2)	1,156	<b>2,114</b>	6,976
Population	97,880	<b>322,397</b>	1,095,011
Age 0-15	16.8%	<b>16.6%</b>	17.1%
Age 16-64	58.0%	<b>62.0%</b>	60.3%
Age 65+	25.3%	<b>21.5%</b>	22.6%
Population Density	82.3	<b>1039.7</b>	520.6
<b>IMD</b>			
Health	6	<b>6</b>	<i>IMD is a 10-point ranking system, A decile of 1 is the most deprived, and 10 is the least deprived</i>
Skills	6	<b>5</b>	
Employment	6	<b>5</b>	
Income	6	<b>6</b>	
Crime	7	<b>7</b>	
Housing	5	<b>5</b>	
Living Env	6	<b>7</b>	

POPULATION

Measure	WLDC	Option A	Greater Lincs
<b>ECONOMY</b>			
GVA per hour	£92.20	<b>£93.43</b>	£90.01
Gross median pay	£567.30	<b>£582.97</b>	£567.44
Employment rate (16-64)	58.2%	<b>71.4%</b>	73.4%
Economic activity rate (16-64)	72.7%	<b>77.2%</b>	77.6%
% pop - Level 3 skills	26.93%	<b>27.5%</b>	26.7%
% pop - Level 4 skills	31.09%	<b>24.6%</b>	22.1%
% of low paid jobs	5.0%	<b>6.7%</b>	8.3%

ECONOMY

LGR Metric	Option A
Population	<b>322,397</b>
Shared services	Local Plan, NNDR, ICT, Payroll, Out Of Hours, Ecology
Tax Base	129,407
Alignment with regional bodies	Creates subset area within existing ICB/PCC boundary
Shared economic priorities	Strong sector alignment: Security and Defence; Clean Energy; Agri-food

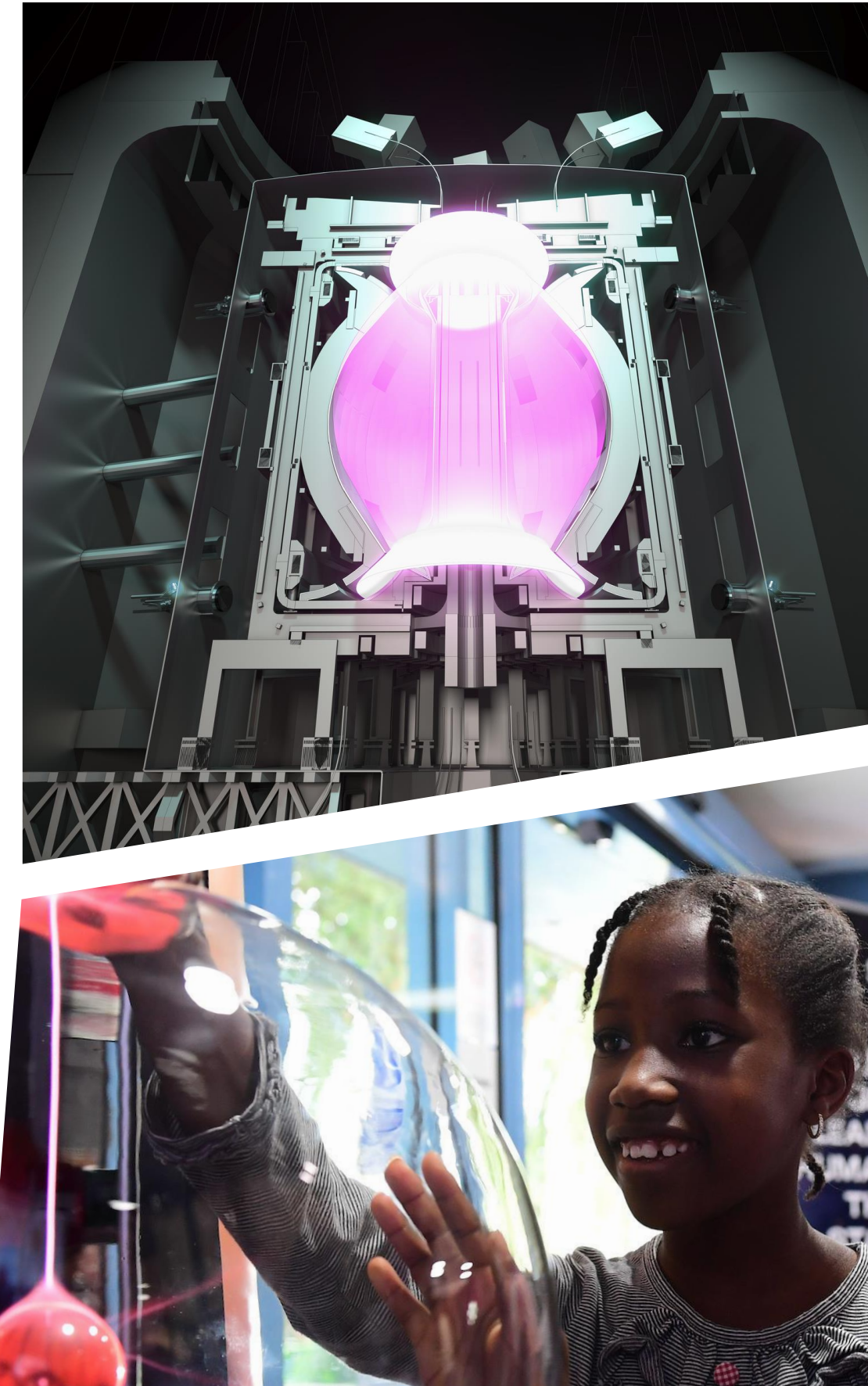
# Option A: Summary Analysis

The data provided on each profile is split into three tables, these cover area, population and basic demographics, as well as seven indicators taken from the indices of multiple deprivation as well as an overview of pay, economic activity and skills. The last table provides an overview of the strategic alignment of each of the organisations included within the suggested option. The RAG rating indicates the level of alignment and uses West Lindsey's current metrics as a baseline to indicate if the partnership is 'better or worse.'

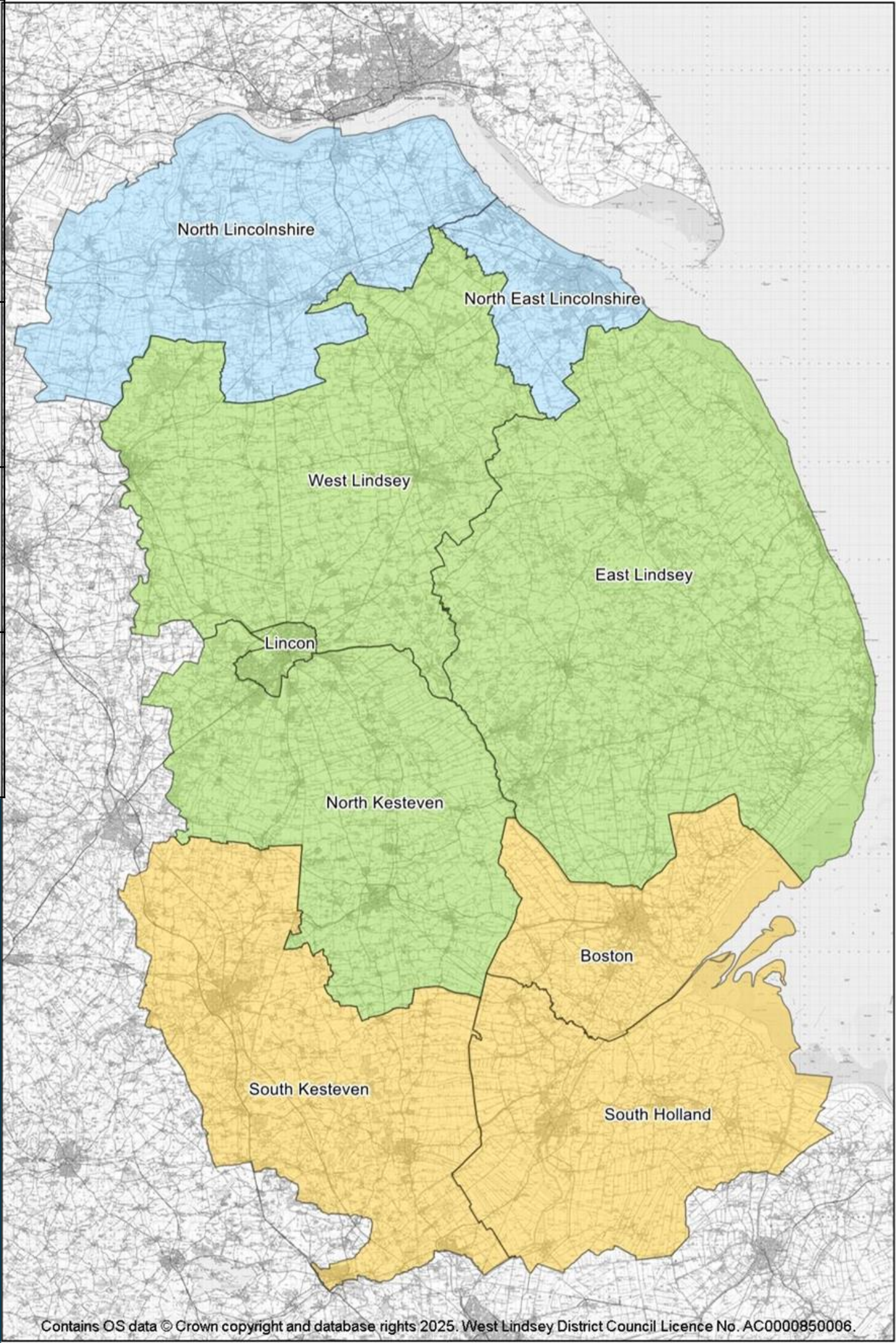
It can be seen from the metrics that there is already existing strong alignment with organisations with the Central Lincolnshire option. This is because it is an established housing market area, led by the success of the Central Lincolnshire Local Plan and supported by shared economic drivers through key industries which have created successful clusters across the area.

With the City of Lincoln at the heart of Central Lincolnshire the area has become a focus for science and innovation, defence and security industries and leading agri-tech development at a national and international level. Equally, new opportunities in clean energy development have been realised for Central Lincolnshire following the decision of the UKAEA in selecting the previous West Burton power station site for the World's first prototype commercial fusion energy plant, known as STEP (Spherical Tokamak for Energy Production).

It is considered that the metrics for this option show an effective and balanced proposition for Local Government Reorganisation, which delivers both for communities in this area, as well as business, industry and supports the growth in housing and the economy government see being led by the newly established MCCAs.



Key	Area	Geographical Area	Current Population 2023	Population Projections 2043	Current No. of Councillors
	Northern Lincolnshire	1,040 sq km	328,422	337,152	85
	Central Lincolnshire	3,881 sq km	467,768	500,871	208
	Southern Lincolnshire	2,057 sq km	315,040	348,708	152



# Option B

West Lindsey, City of Lincoln, North Kesteven, East Lindsey

No Boundary Comissions Implications

# Option B - Profile



Measure	WLDC	Option B	Greater Lincs
<b>Demographics</b>			
Area (Km2)	1,156	<b>3,881</b>	6,976
Population	97,880	<b>467,768</b>	1,095,011
Age 0-15	16.8%	<b>16.2%</b>	17.1%
Age 16-64	58.0%	<b>60.5%</b>	60.3%
Age 65+	25.3%	<b>23.4%</b>	22.6%
Population Density	82.3	<b>799.9</b>	520.6
<b>IMD</b>			
Health	6	<b>3</b>	IMD is a 10-point ranking system, <b>A decile of 1 is the most deprived, and 10 is the least deprived</b>
Skills	6	<b>4</b>	
Employment	6	<b>3</b>	
Income	6	<b>4</b>	
Crime	7	<b>5</b>	
Housing	5	<b>4</b>	
Living Env	6	<b>5</b>	

POPULATION

Measure	WLDC	Option B	Greater Lincs
<b>ECONOMY</b>			
GVA per hour	£92.20	<b>£92.23</b>	£90.01
Gross median pay	£567.30	<b>£542.88</b>	£567.44
Employment rate (16-64)	58.2%	<b>75.7%</b>	73.4%
Economic activity rate (16-64)	72.7%	<b>76.9%</b>	77.6%
% pop - Level 3 skills	26.93%	<b>30.0%</b>	26.7%
% pop - Level 4 skills	31.09%	<b>24.1%</b>	22.1%
% of low paid jobs	5.0%	<b>8.0%</b>	8.3%

ECONOMY

LGR Metric	Option B
Population	<b>467,768</b>
Shared services	CoL, WLDC, NK share services. This splits the SELCP.
Tax Base	160,318
Alignment with regional bodies	Creates subset area within existing ICB/PCC boundary
Shared economic priorities	Strong sector alignment Security and Defence; Clean energy; Agri-food; Visitor economy

# Option B: Summary Analysis

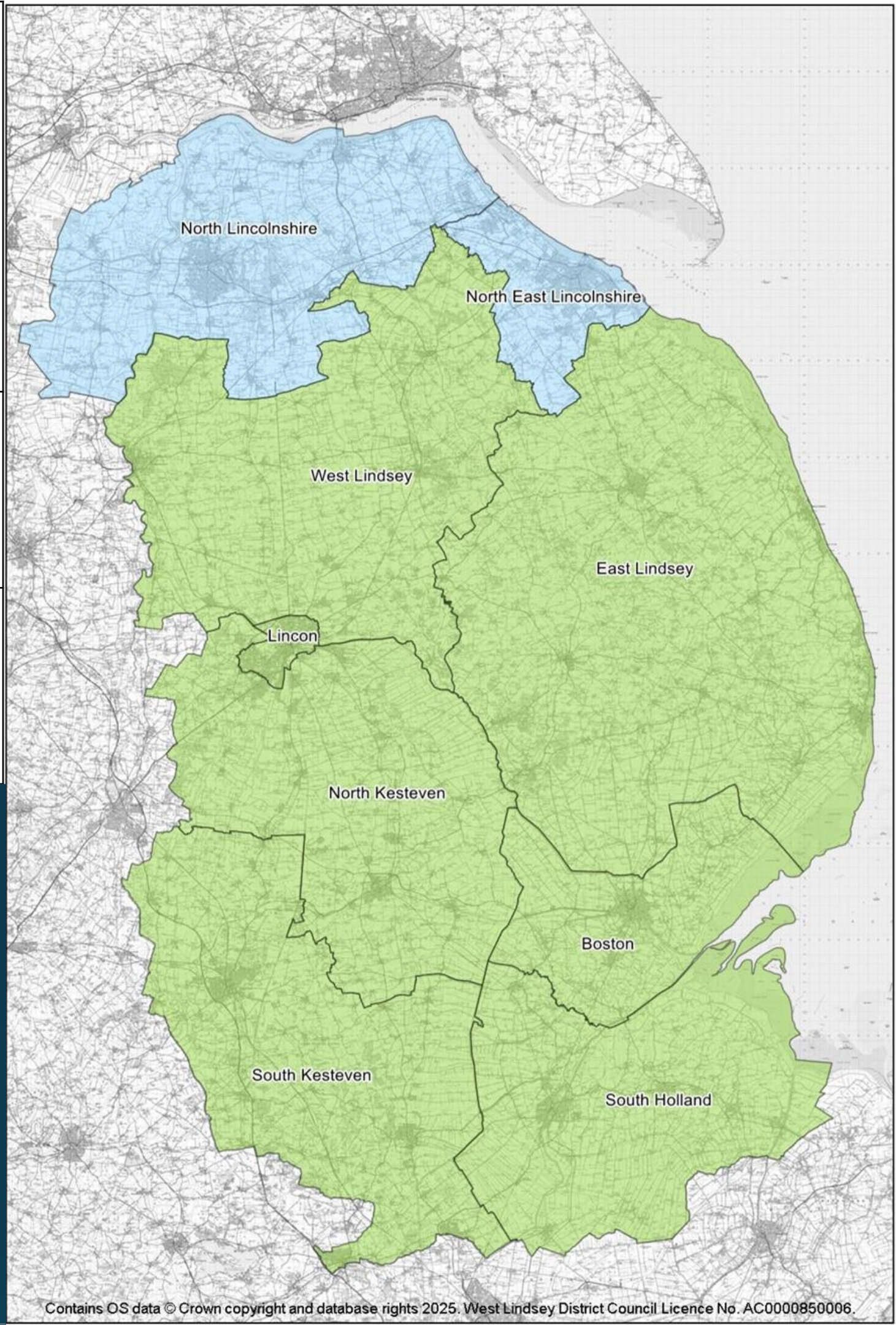
This option looks at retaining a Central Lincolnshire geography but also including East Lindsey. Here it can be seen that there are still some synergies across the area, however there is a marked impact across the indices of multiple deprivation metrics as well as strategic alignment.

Whilst there are some similarities in terms of the rurality of three of the four existing district councils, there are differences in terms of industry, housing market and needs of the population with East Lindsey having a greater focus on coastal challenges and opportunities and having historically developed relationships and service delivery structures with Boston Borough and South Holland Council.

It is considered on the basis of these metrics that were this option to go forward work in relation to supporting alignment of priorities would be crucial as well as balancing some of the differences in metrics around deprivation and service need.



Key	Area	Geographical Area	Current Population 2023	Population Projections 2043	Current No. of Councillors
	North Lincolnshire	1,040 sq km	328,422	337,152	85
	Lincolnshire County	5,938 sq km	782,808	849,579	360



# Option C

Lincolnshire County Geography

No Boundary Commission Implications

# Option C - Profile



POPULATION

Measure	WLDC	Option C	Greater Lincs
Demographics			
Area (Km2)	1,156	<b>5,938</b>	6,976
Population	97,880	<b>782,808</b>	1,095,011
Age 0-15	16.8%	<b>16.8%</b>	17.1%
Age 16-64	58.0%	<b>60.2%</b>	60.3%
Age 65+	25.3%	<b>23.0%</b>	22.6%
Population Density	82.3	<b>524.6</b>	520.6
IMD			
Health	6	<b>5</b>	IMD is a 10-point ranking system, <b>A decile of 1 is the most deprived, and 10 is the least deprived</b>
Skills	6	<b>5</b>	
Employment	6	<b>5</b>	
Income	6	<b>6</b>	
Crime	7	<b>8</b>	
Housing	5	<b>5</b>	
Living Env	6	<b>7</b>	

ECONOMY

Measure	WLDC	Option C	Greater Lincs
ECONOMY			
GVA per hour	£92.20	<b>£87.34</b>	£90.01
Gross median pay	£567.30	<b>£560.06</b>	£567.44
Employment rate (16-64)	58.2%	<b>73.8%</b>	73.4%
Economic activity rate (16-64)	72.7%	<b>78.0%</b>	77.6%
% pop - Level 3 skills	26.93%	<b>26.7%</b>	26.7%
% pop - Level 4 skills	31.09%	<b>22.3%</b>	22.1%
% of low paid jobs	5.0%	<b>7.6%</b>	8.3%

LGR Metric	Option C
Population	<b>782,808</b>
Shared services	Existing County, Central Lincs and SELCP
Tax Base	303,437
Alignment with regional bodies	Alignment with existing County boundary
Shared economic priorities	Some sector alignment but wider diversity of clusters

# Option C: Summary Analysis

It is not surprising when considering the impact of a county unitary on the metrics that it presents a mixed bag, this very much reflects the 'places within places' narrative which Lincolnshire is recognised for.

This option provides a geography which meets and exceed the threshold of 500,000 population and encompasses an area in which Lincolnshire County Council already operate services within, including highways, social care and children's services. As the county boundary already covers a number of existing formal and informal working relationships between districts, strategic alignment is considered relatively positively.

The size of population across this option provides opportunity for efficiencies and public sector reform, however conversely the scale of the geography may present barriers, as many services will still need a significant locational presence and travel times between service hubs for both residents and officers may undermine some of the efficiencies often enjoyed by unitaries whom cover a large population over a much smaller geographical area.

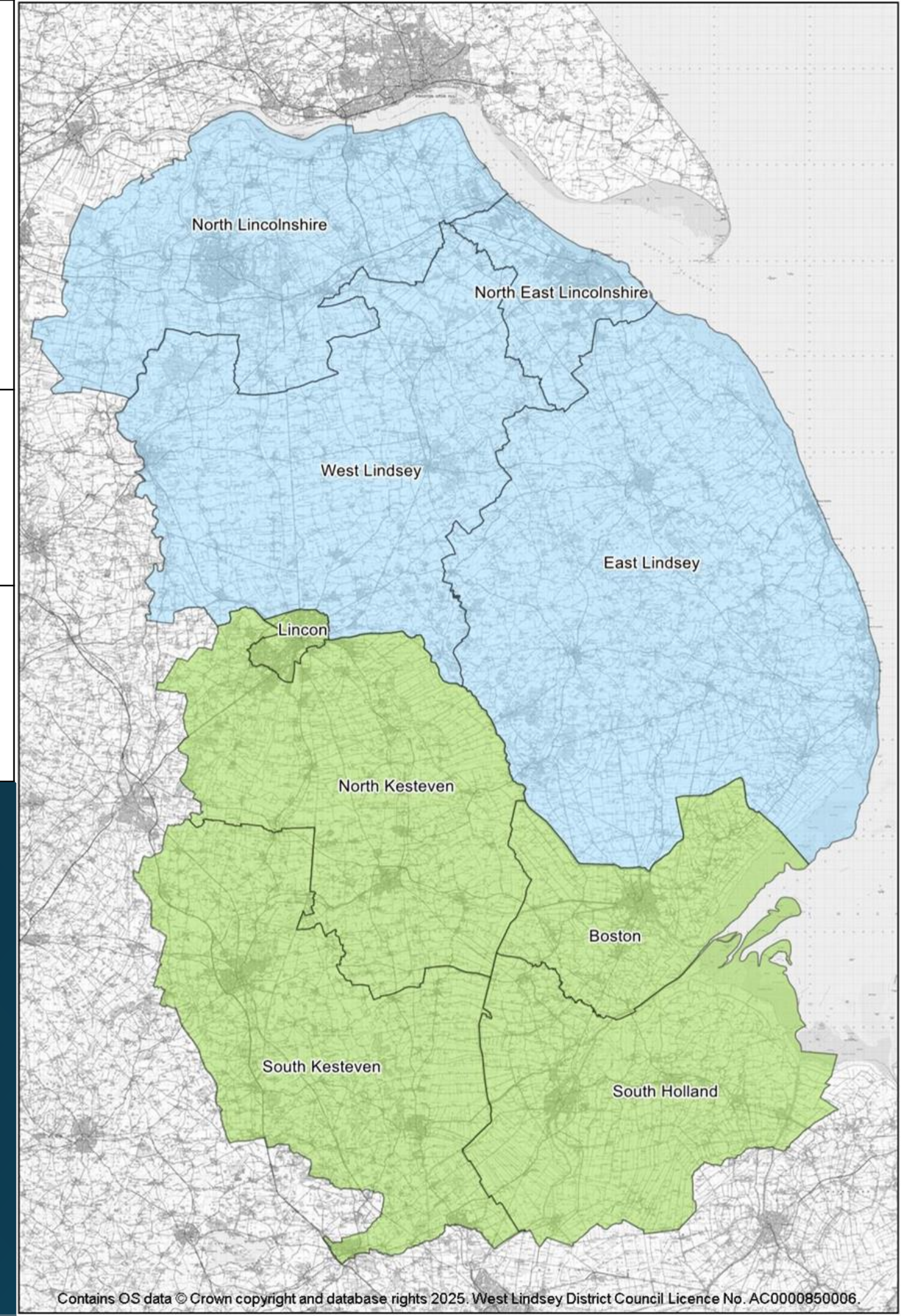
There remains concerns from elected members about the ability for communities to be properly represented in this option again due to scale and distances between key service hubs. Equally the diversity of needs, housing markets and economic drivers may also impact on the success of public sector reform in some areas as well as it's ability to deliver effectively on the strategic vision of the MCCA.

This option does however maintain the existing working relationships that the county has with district partners and retains a geography familiar to residents and business alike. The County of Lincolnshire brand remains strong in relation to place.





Key	Area	Geographical Area	Current Population 2023	Population Projections 2043	Current No. of Councillors
	Northern Lincolnshire	3,963 sq km	571,673	601,809	198
	Southern Lincolnshire	3,015 sq km	539,557	584,922	247



# Option D

West Lindsey, North Lincolnshire, North-East Lincolnshire, East Lindsey

No Boundary Commissions Implications

# Option D - Profile



Measure	WLDC	Option D	Greater Lincs
<b>Demographics</b>			
Area (Km2)	1,156	<b>3,963</b>	6,976
Population	97,880	<b>571,673</b>	1,095,011
Age 0-15	16.8%	<b>17.0%</b>	17.1%
Age 16-64	58.0%	<b>58.4%</b>	60.3%
Age 65+	25.3%	<b>24.7%</b>	22.6%
Population Density	82.3	<b>294.55</b>	520.6
<b>IMD</b>			
Health	6	<b>5</b>	IMD is a 10-point ranking system, <b>A decile of 1 is the most deprived, and 10 is the least deprived</b>
Skills	6	<b>5</b>	
Employment	6	<b>5</b>	
Income	6	<b>5</b>	
Crime	7	<b>6</b>	
Housing	5	<b>6</b>	
Living Env	6	<b>6</b>	

POPULATION

Measure	WLDC	Option D	Greater Lincs
<b>ECONOMY</b>			
GVA per hour	£92.20	<b>£94.88</b>	£90.01
Gross median pay	£567.30	<b>£564.80</b>	£567.44
Employment rate (16-64)	58.2%	<b>69.4%</b>	73.4%
Economic activity rate (16-64)	72.7%	<b>75.2%</b>	77.6%
% pop - Level 3 skills	26.93%	<b>29.5%</b>	26.7%
% pop - Level 4 skills	31.09%	<b>24.0%</b>	22.1%
% of low paid jobs	5.0%	<b>9.8%</b>	8.3%

ECONOMY

LGR Metric	Option D
Population	<b>571,673</b>
Shared services	<b>Separates County, Central Lincs and SELCP</b>
Tax Base	110,976
Alignment with regional bodies	<b>Creates subset within existing boundaries</b>
Shared economic priorities	<b>Some links, but not strong alignment</b>

# Option D: Summary Analysis

This option is the first option that considers a unitary council which breaks from the existing county boundary. The metrics show what is already understood through service delivery, that there is currently limited synergy between the two districts at the north of the county and the two existing small unitaries on the Humber estuary.

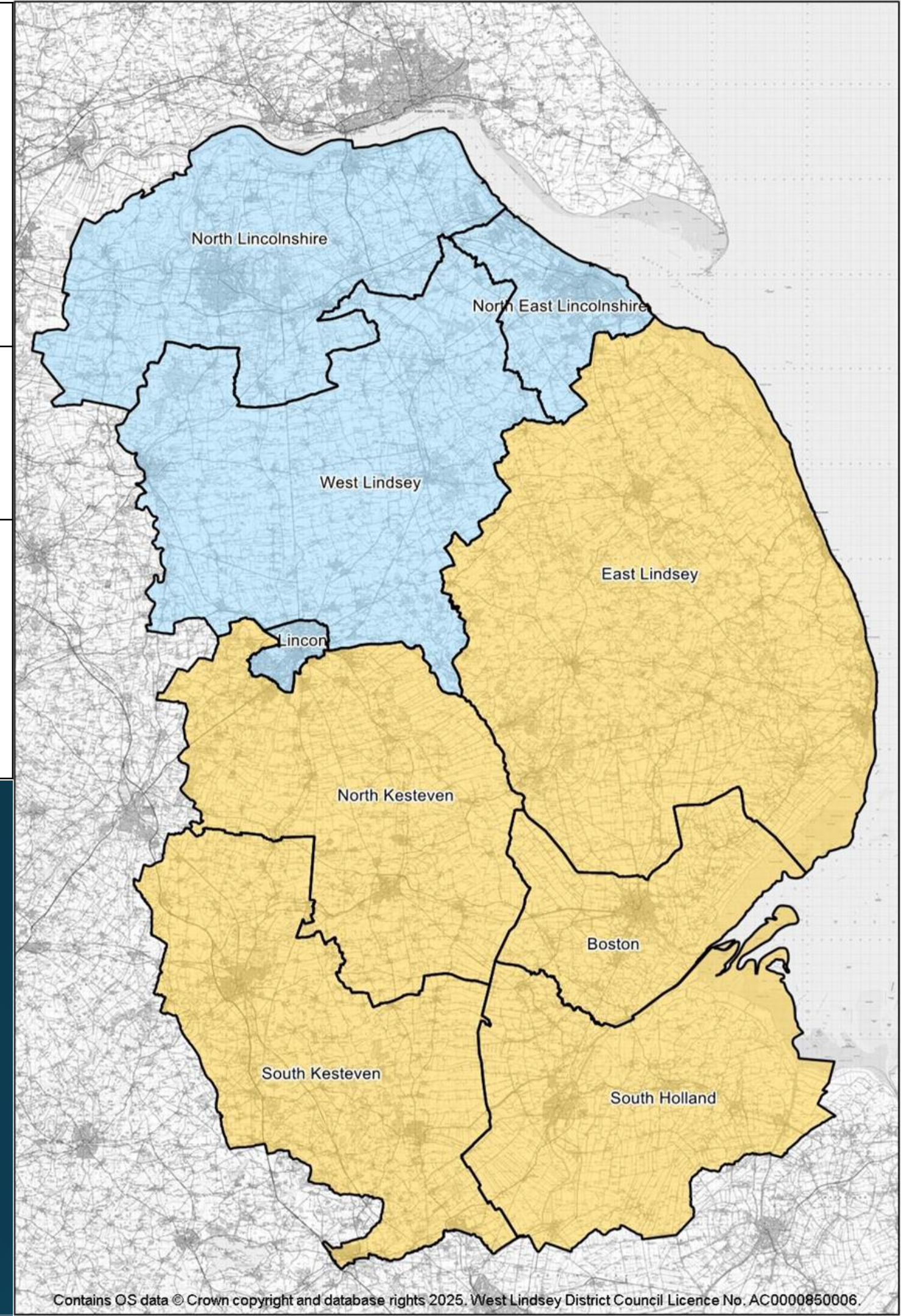
The two rural districts and the unitaries have quite different and diverse populations, which has a negative impact on the indices of multiple deprivation metrics, equally there is no alignment in relation to shared services or regional bodies, such as the PCC and ICB with the two Northern unitaries historically being part of Humberside and looking to other authorities around the estuary for partnership working and strategic alignment.

It is considered that if this option were to be considered that there would be significant disruption to current services and delivery against priorities whilst key services around health, social care and education are reprofiled across regional boundaries to ensure a continued, effective and safe service. It is unlikely that savings from public sector reform will be realised quickly in relation to this option, as well as carrying a number of risks around high-profile, high-demand service areas like children's services and social care.

This option also breaks up the existing Central Lincolnshire Local Plan area, which has proven to be a highly effective plan for the delivery of growth across the area and has successfully support the City of Lincoln during its intensive growth period since the establishment of Lincoln University.



Key	Area	Geographical Area	Current Population 2023	Population Projections 2043	Current No. of Councillors
	North-West Lincolnshire	2,232 sq km	529,616	542,605	170
	Southern & Coastal Lincolnshire	4,746 sq km	581,614	644,126	275



# Option E

West Lindsey, City of Lincoln, North-East Lincolnshire, North Lincolnshire

This option has Boundary Commission implications

# Option E - Profile



Measure	WLDC	Option E	Greater Lincs
Demographics			
Area (Km2)	1,156	<b>2,232</b>	6,976
Population	97,880	<b>529,616</b>	1,095,011
Age 0-15	16.8%	<b>17.4%</b>	17.1%
Age 16-64	58.0%	<b>62.0%</b>	60.3%
Age 65+	25.3%	<b>20.7%</b>	22.6%
Population Density	82.3	<b>1001.7</b>	520.6
IMD			
Health	6	<b>5</b>	IMD is a 10-point ranking system, <b>A decile of 1 is the most deprived, and 10 is the least deprived</b>
Skills	6	<b>5</b>	
Employment	6	<b>5</b>	
Income	6	<b>5</b>	
Crime	7	<b>5</b>	
Housing	5	<b>6</b>	
Living Env	6	<b>6</b>	

POPULATION

Measure	WLDC	Option E	Greater Lincs
ECONOMY			
GVA per hour	£92.20	<b>£93.23</b>	£90.01
Gross median pay	£567.30	<b>£581.30</b>	£567.44
Employment rate (16-64)	58.2%	<b>68.6%</b>	73.4%
Economic activity rate (16-64)	72.7%	<b>74.7%</b>	77.6%
% pop - Level 3 skills	26.93%	<b>27.6%</b>	26.7%
% pop - Level 4 skills	31.09%	<b>22.3%</b>	22.1%
% of low paid jobs	5.0%	<b>9.0%</b>	8.3%

ECONOMY

LGR Metric	Option E
Population	<b>529,616</b>
Shared services	None existing with NL and NEL, maintains with CoL
Tax Base	128,666
Alignment with regional bodies	Creates subset within existing boundaries
Shared economic priorities	Some links, but not strong alignment

# Option E: Summary Analysis

This option is the second option that considers a unitary council which breaks from the existing county boundary. The metrics show again what is already understood through service delivery, that there is currently limited synergy between the districts within the county boundary and the two existing small unitaries on the Humber estuary.

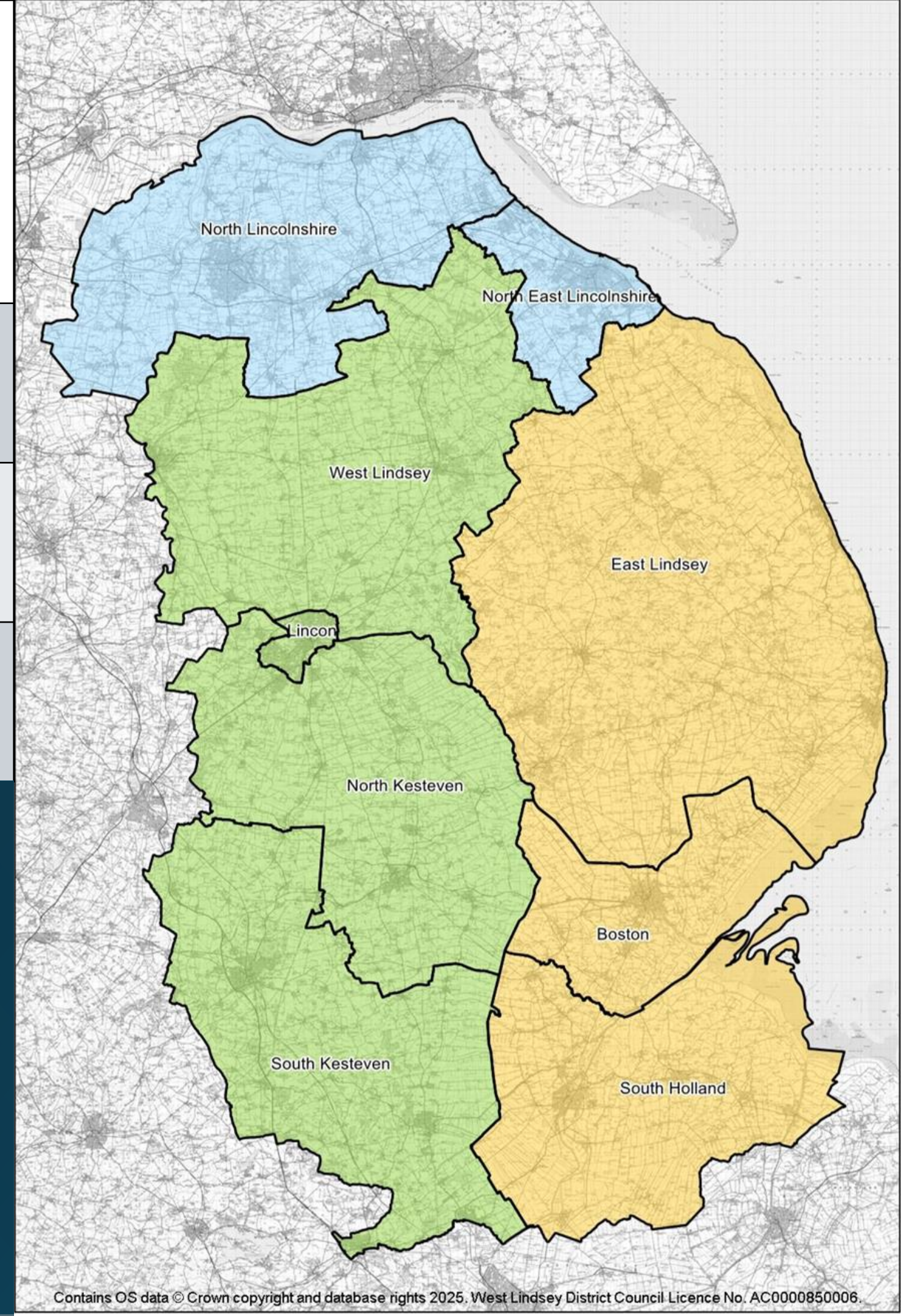
It does also, as with option D involve more complex boundary changes in relation to the provision of services around social care and the PCC, thus potentially creating delay in the realisation of public sector reform objectives and efficiencies, as well as creating risk around service continuity in the short term.

Whilst option D constrains the City of Lincoln's administrative boundary to the north and east of the City, this option constrains the city to the south and west and creates a disconnect between the city and those villages within the Lincoln Strategy Area, an established and defined housing market area which has clear interdependencies in relation to services and infrastructure both use and future delivery.

Economic activity and pay are improved through this model, and this is likely to be down to the inclusion of the city, as a recognised centre for economic growth.



Key	Area	Geographical Area	Current Population 2023	Population Projections 2043	Current No. of Councillors
	Northern Unitary	1,040 sq km	328,422	337,152	85
	Western Unitary	2,864 sq km	468,155	494,974	209
	Eastern Unitary	3,074 sq km	314,653	354,605	151



# Option F

West Lindsey, City of Lincoln, North Kesteven, South Kesteven

No Boundary Commission Implications

# Option F - Profile



Measure	WLDC	Option F	Greater Lincs
<b>Demographics</b>			
Area (Km2)	1,156	<b>3,057</b>	6,976
Population	97,880	<b>468,155</b>	1,095,011
Age 0-15	16.8%	<b>17%</b>	17.1%
Age 16-64	58.0%	<b>61%</b>	60.3%
Age 65+	25.3%	<b>21.5%</b>	22.6%
Population Density	82.3	<b>817.9</b>	520.6
<b>IMD</b>			
Health	6	<b>6</b>	IMD is a 10-point ranking system, <b>A decile of 1 is the most deprived, and 10 is the least deprived</b>
Skills	6	<b>6</b>	
Employment	6	<b>6</b>	
Income	6	<b>6</b>	
Crime	7	<b>8</b>	
Housing	5	<b>6</b>	
Living Env	6	<b>7</b>	

POPULATION

Measure	WLDC	Option F	Greater Lincs
<b>ECONOMY</b>			
GVA per hour	£92.20	<b>£90.08</b>	£90.01
Gross median pay	£567.30	<b>£582.58</b>	£567.44
Employment rate (16-64)	58.2%	<b>70.4%</b>	73.4%
Economic activity rate (16-64)	72.7%	<b>76.4%</b>	77.6%
% pop - Level 3 skills	26.93%	<b>28.2%</b>	26.7%
% pop - Level 4 skills	31.09%	<b>26%</b>	22.1%
% of low paid jobs	5.0%	<b>7%</b>	8.3%

ECONOMY

LGR Metric	Option E
Population	<b>468,155</b>
Shared services	Numerous services shared by most Councils
Tax Base	182,094
Alignment with regional bodies	Creates subset within existing boundaries
Shared economic priorities	Strong sector alignment Security & Defence; Clean energy; Agri-food; Visitor econ.



# Option F: Summary Analysis

This option looks at retaining a Central Lincolnshire geography but including South Kesteven too, creating a strong North, East, West split across Greater Lincolnshire, reflecting most strongly the synergies of the three areas in economic terms.

For that reason, there remains positive strategic alignments, a similar picture in terms of employment and economic activity. There are some changes in the indices of multiple deprivation with living environment, housing and crime becoming worse by a point across each measure, however the impact on the baseline metrics for West Lindsey is not a negative as options B, D & E.

Similarly to option B it is considered on the basis of these metrics that were this option to go forward some work in relation to supporting alignment of key priorities through the review of policy and strategy, including the Local Plans would be crucial. However, due to shared economic priorities and geographical and locational similarities, including all current organisations being within the County boundary, creating an organisation that can begin to deliver MCCA strategic priorities at pace would be relatively straightforward. The additional benefit of this option above option B is that the western unitary would act as the gateway into Greater Lincolnshire and as a single authority would be in a strong position to develop closer relationships across the Midlands Engine and the East Midlands MCCA for the broader benefit of the whole of Greater Lincolnshire.



# Securing the Future for Our People & Our Place

Ensuring that any future unitary proposal is the right proposal for our people, our communities, our businesses and our places in West Lindsey is of high importance, the Council has worked hard over many years to establish a thriving and sustainable district, and it is imperative that any future option continues to support and enhance the high aspirations of the district.

As such, as well as looking at standard metrics for population, deprivation and employment we have also assessed the six options against strategic priorities with our adopted Corporate Plan, which puts people and place at the centre of all we do.

Here again it can be seen that some options fare better than others, with option A, B and E presenting a positive position for our people priorities and option A presenting a positive position for our place. This is not surprising given the close and sustained working relationship Central Lincolnshire has maintained over the last 15yrs in relation to the Central Lincolnshire Local Plan created in response to a shared housing market and strong economic geography.



# Our People - Options Appraisal

Metric	WLDC	Option A (WL, CoL, NK)	Option B (WL, CoL, NK, EL)	Option C (County)	Option D (WL, EL, NL, NEL)	Option E (WL, CoL, NL, NEL)	Option F (WL, CoL, NK, SK)
% of population who are active more than 150 minutes per week (Sports England)	53.6%	55.4%	53.0%	49.9%	47.3%	49.8%	54.7%
% of residents who say they are in 'bad' or 'very bad' health (ONS)	5.6%	6.2%	6.0%	5.8%	6.6%	5.6%	5.2%
Full Fibre Availability (% of premises) (Ofcom)	26.6%	21.9%	20.8%	26.9%	20.9%	17.9%	26.2
Level of Deprivation (Health) (IMD)	6	6	3	5	5	5	6
Employment rate (16-64) (ONS)	58.2%	71.4%	75.7%	73.8%	69.4%	68.6%	70.4%
Economic Activity Rate (16-64) (ONS)	72.7%	77.2%	76.9%	78.0%	75.2%	74.7%	76.7%
Level 4 Skill level (ONS)	31.09%	24.6%	24.1%	22.3%	24.0%	22.3%	26%

# Our Place - Options Appraisal

Metric	WLDC	Option A (WL, CoL, NK)	Option B (WL, CoL, NK, EL)	Option C (County)	Option D (WL, EL, NL, NEL)	Option E (WL, CoL, NL, NEL)	Option F (WL, CoL, NK, SK)
GVA per hour worked (ONS)	£92.20	£93.43	£92.23	£87.34	£94.88	£93.23	£90.08
Proportion of low paid jobs (ONS)	5.0%	6.7%	8.0%	7.6%	9.8%	9.0%	7%
Shared Local Plan presence	N/a	Yes	Yes (+ East Lindsey)	Yes (Central Lincs and SELCP)	No	No	Across SELCP. Not shared with SK
IMD (Housing) (GOV.UK)	5	5	4	5	6	6	6
Housing Affordability Ratio (2024)	6.55	6.49	6.65	6.87	5.84	5.49	6.84
Net Score of Social Trust (Onward, 2023)	-1%	-4.7%	-5.0%	-6.0%	-5.8%	-7.0%	-3.75
IMD Crime (2019)	7	7	5	8	6	5	9

# High-level Financial Resilience Analysis

West Lindsey District Council has always maintained a strong financial position and has had unqualified accounts and positive value for money assessments with no significant weaknesses found.

The top metric, looking at level of reserves, using the same RAG rating principle assesses the ratio of the current level of reserves (total useable excluding public health & schools) to a council's net revenue expenditure, here it can be seen that the best options are Option A and Option C, noting that some other councils across Lincolnshire do not have such high reserves as West Lindsey.

Gross external debt is presented as a statement of fact in these slides, noting the relationship between debt and reserves, but also acknowledging that, practically the County and unitary Councils will also have significant asset portfolios, as well as those districts that retain a Housing Revenue Account and therefore will have significantly more external borrowing than West Lindsey.

Finally, acknowledging the continued financial pressure of local government we have also considered the percentage of local government services which are covered by fees and charges across each option. For West Lindsey, since austerity, significantly less income has been received from government and more from local sources such as Council Tax, Business Rates and fees and charges.

This assessment has not been RAG rated as it is accepted that this percentage can be viewed both positively and negatively, however from West Lindsey's point of view, as mentioned above, the council has become more sustainable in that it relies more on fees and charges than government grant, that way services can be more easily flexed to respond to demand and therefore more resilient to economic shocks outside of the control of the organisation.

With this in mind and looking at all the metrics in the round, both option A, C and E remain most favourable, this again is unsurprising as these options build on existing strong relationships and priorities and remain within existing established boundaries.



# Financial Resilience - Analysis

Source: CIPFA Financial Resilience Index (2023/24)

<https://www.cipfa.org/services/financial-resilience-index/resilience-index>

Metric	WLDC	Option A	Option B	Option C	Option D	Option E	Option F
<p>Level of reserves (average)</p> <p><i>Ratio of the current level of reserves (total useable excluding public health &amp; schools) to a council's net revenue expenditure</i></p>	100.0%	94.3%	70.7%	90.8%	64.2%	59.9%	95.7%
<p>Gross external debt (total)</p> <p>Gross external debt held by council(s)</p>	£24,000,000	£218,106,000	£218,106,000	£380,196,000	£328,490,000	£436,232,000	£311,740,000
<p>Fees and charges to service expenditure ratio (average)</p> <p>Proportion of fees and charges against a council's total service expenditure</p>	14.25%	16.1%	11.9%	15%	11.3%	14.4%	17.5%

# Criteria A: Barriers and Challenges

We are keen to build on the relationships that have been established to date. This has without doubt led to creation of the Greater Lincolnshire Mayoral Combined Authority. West Lindsey were proud to lead the work on the Vision 2050 and as one of the districts in the very heart of Lincolnshire, we would like to play a central role in developing work on LGR. We recognise that developing this joint working relationship, both with our partners locally, and with government is the key to unlocking maximum benefits for our people and our place.

There are six initial areas where support from government is required:

1. Direct Ministerial engagement with Leaders: We are grateful for the engagement to date with officials, this has helped to shape thinking. In order to move forward at pace we ask that those directly involved in the decision making engage with Leaders so that we can enjoy a level of confidence that the substantial resources we are deploying are pointed in the right direction.
2. Capacity Funding: the government have experience of and have highlighted the costs of undertaking the preparatory work required to support LGR – especially alongside the implementation of devolution. There is concern that this twin tracked approach could undermine the outcomes we are able to deliver through devolution in the short term. It is imperative that the government work with local places to provide adequate capacity funding in order that final business cases are robust and systems for implementation are sound and our devolution deal is not compromised.
3. Clarity around the application of criteria: Critically around the population threshold. We are committed to working wherever possible within the parameters of the government's guidance, However we are clear that in the case of West Lindsey – where each resident has the equivalent of 2 football pitches worth of space, one size literally does not fit all.
4. Speed of decision making: We have been asked to work at a pace that is practically undeliverable given the other constraints and challenges being faced within the public sector at this time. For West Lindsey this is set in the context of a reduced financial settlement, the establishment of the MCCA, an overhaul of the planning system and the ongoing impact of the cost of living crisis for our residents. Whilst we understand the governments ambitious timelines, we would ask that government commits to the provision of meaningful feedback within a timeframe that enables us to progress our work as efficiently as possible. This would look like written feedback on this interim proposal within four weeks and ministerial / civil servant briefings from May onwards.
5. Protection from further negative impacts of the governments proposed funding reforms: During this transition period further consideration should be given to the next settlement, in the context that our ability to manage further negative impacts will be severely constrained by engaging in the LGR process.
6. The allocation of a named civil servant that will lead discussions locally: Presently direct engagement from civil servants with our Council has been weak, and in order to collaborate effectively we believe that we need someone who can be part of the dialogue and can share 'without prejudice' the governments views in real time, as well as offering feedback and a pragmatic approach.

# Criteria B: Options for Consideration

Greater Lincolnshire is a large and sparsely populated area which presents challenges in relation to achieving high-levels of efficiency usually seen when economies of scale alone are used to drive efficiency savings.

The size and boundary of any new unitaries created in Greater Lincolnshire must consider the impact on all service delivery, including those services which are locationally sensitive, such as the prevention of homelessness and other outreach functions.

It is considered that in order for a new unitary to succeed and deliver at pace for its place and its people, as well as support the newly created MCCA the new boundaries must consider the existing priorities, strengths and opportunities of each of the organisations and use those existing metrics to direct how a place is most effectively subdivided.

The dashboards within the introduction of this Interim Plan submission include key metrics, across a number of important indicators, including the Indices of Multiple Deprivation, essential economic geographies and existing successful shared services, start to consider what the best unitary options would be for the area.

Whilst there are 6 options presented, it is clear, based on the RAG rating used across those metrics that some of the boundary options presented provide better outcomes for place and people than others. This is because there are existing economic geographies and existing housing markets which have already created the conditions for positive partnership working and effective service delivery which have been sustained for a number of years within Lincolnshire.

Whilst it is not being presented as a preferred option above any others, it can be seen from the metrics that option A based on a Central Lincolnshire area that this is a well-established, strong housing market area and economic geography which includes the City of Lincoln at the centre, with North Kesteven to the south and West Lindsey to the north. The three Local Authorities have jointly (for over 15 years) had a successful partnership established by Statutory Instrument to undertake spatial planning at this pan-regional level with a track record of both successfully delivering two Local Plans in that time the most recent being adopted in April 2023.

This relationship has enabled sustained and positive growth across the shared geography and industry clusters such as agri-tech, defence and security & clean energy, allowing the City of Lincoln to expedite its role as the economic engine for the area, whilst ensuring housing need, through an established housing market area, is met through delivery across the diverse urban and rural landscapes provided by North Kesteven and West Lindsey. The arrangement has also delivered an extremely sustainable, effective and efficient planning policy service.

It is important to West Lindsey District Council that any decisions made on unitary boundaries use both these metrics and other factors such as industry synergies, housing markets and past delivery as core principles for assessment on how the area is subdivided to create unitary councils capable of delivering high quality and efficient services to its residents into the future.





# Criteria C: Future Service Transformation

Ensuring that any reorganisation is truly transformative and delivers public services which are sustainable, of a high quality and secure better outcomes for our people and our places in West Lindsey and Greater Lincolnshire is fundamental principle and requires significant and thorough consideration. For that reason, no final proposal for these services as part of the option appraisal has been put forward at this time.

As part of the consideration of options we have indicated where there are existing shared services. Presently across Central Lincolnshire and the traditional county some services are shared or delivered collaboratively across a number of functions including:

- Planning, Homelessness, Energy Efficiency and home adaptations, Business Rates, Health and Well-being and Culture.
- West Lindsey are keen to engage with colleagues to develop this further and to consider how the present 'preventative agenda', delivered by districts and specifically in relation to the provision of services such as disabled facilities adaptations, home choices, leisure and culture services and health and well being can be considered in the transformation of the system moving forwards.

WLDC has demonstrable experience and expertise in being an effective place leader; our intention is to ensure that our local communities continue to benefit from the strong relationships and connections that the Council currently holds with them. It is this understanding of our communities and businesses that we are committed to carrying forward to any new unitary authority model, as a way of shaping the Public Service Reform agenda. We think there is an opportunity for a place leadership approach that focuses on collaboration between public and community services and gives people the support they really need.

Our strong preference is for any new unitary council to be mission led, informed by both place-based priorities and the government's five missions. A clear set of local priorities/missions/goals, developed with place-based partners and local citizens; informed by the views and lived experiences of the communities and businesses, has the potential to galvanise not just the new unitary council, but local businesses and the wide array of partners that operates across our place's complex web of public, community and voluntary services.

From a Social Care services perspective, dependent on where the final unitary boundary lines are drawn, we believe that there are four main delivery models which could be implemented as part of LGR in Greater Lincolnshire.

These are:

1. Split between the newly created unitaries
2. Use a Trust approach as per Northamptonshire
3. Establish a shared service with one of the newly created unitaries acting as the Lead Authority
4. Move these services into the MCCA

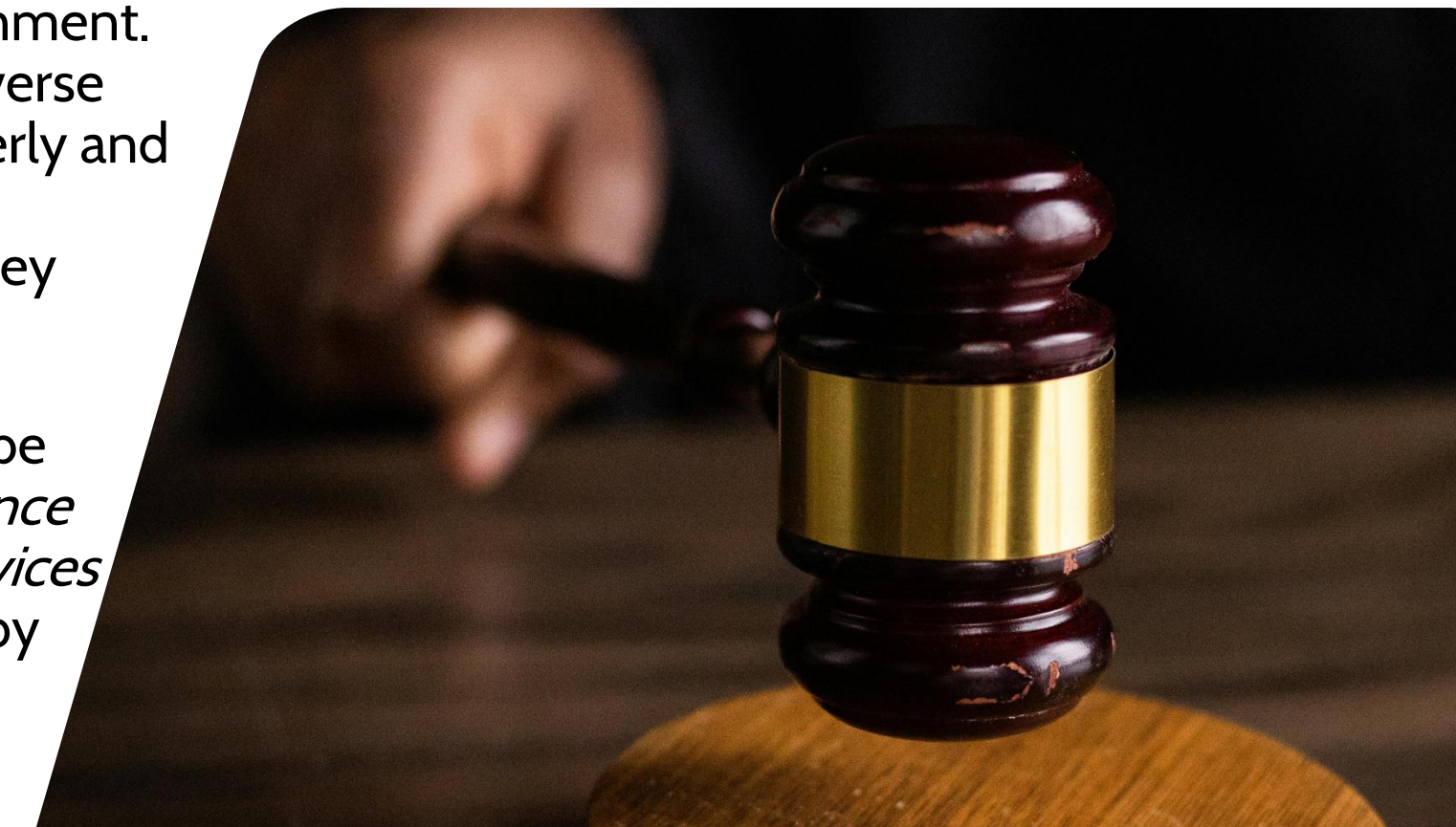
# Criteria D: Democratic Representation, Governance and Decision Making

West Lindsey is the 2nd least densely populated area in the East Midlands. Each of our residents has the equivalent of 2 football pitches worth of space. The Council consists of 36 District Councillors representing 20 wards. There are 97 parishes within the district. Currently West Lindsey has 26 adopted Neighbourhood Plans, covering a large part of the district and signalling the councils close working relationship with our Town and Parish Councils.

Across the 10 local authorities in Greater Lincolnshire there are 445 councillors. Whilst recognising the governments ambition to simplify the roles and accountability of elected representatives, the accessibility of councillors, and their ability to represent the electorate must be key considerations in the process.

The high level of rurality and low population densities across the whole of Greater Lincolnshire provide a robust and persuasive argument for considering unitaries which meet a population threshold of 300,000+ rather than the indicative 500,000 as initially proposed by Government. Smaller unitaries will ensure that the new organisations will be better placed to serve the diverse nature of places across Greater Lincolnshire whilst also ensuring that communities are properly and fairly represented by elected members. The role of town and parish councils should also be carefully considered and their views as key stakeholders used to shape future thinking.

Guidance issued by MHCLG on 14th March 2025 written by the Boundary Commission will be considered in detail as we develop the options. The 'General Principles' *'set out in this guidance that local government is as diverse as the communities it serves – providing leadership, services and representation suited to the characteristics and needs of individual areas'* is supported by WLDC.



# Criteria E: Support for Devolution Ambitions

Greater Lincolnshire is the second largest ceremonial county in England and is home to over 1 million people. Predominately rural, it has a relatively sparsely populated geography of diverse economies and identities - and challenges based around: education and skills; economic inactivity; pockets of deprivation and health inequalities/access to health care; challenges with public transport and connectivity across a large sparsely populated area; and; coastal erosion and flooding.

The large geographical area means that there are challenges in relation to achieving a fixed population figure (such as 500k) to drive new unitary boundaries, whilst also achieving the efficiencies and sustainability of public service reform associated with this quantum of population. The overriding objective of unitarisation must be to achieve a balance between efficiency and sustainability, whilst also maintaining key local services, as such it is considered that smaller unitary councils should be created across Greater Lincolnshire to deliver this. Although it is accepted that there are 'places within places' in Greater Lincolnshire - there are three main identifiable areas, which reflect broad housing and economic geographies, as well as established service delivery, both formally and informally including: (1) the Humber Bank (NLC, NELC); (2) Central and Inland (WLDC, COL, NKDC, SKDC); and; (3) Coastal (ELDC, BBC, SHDC).

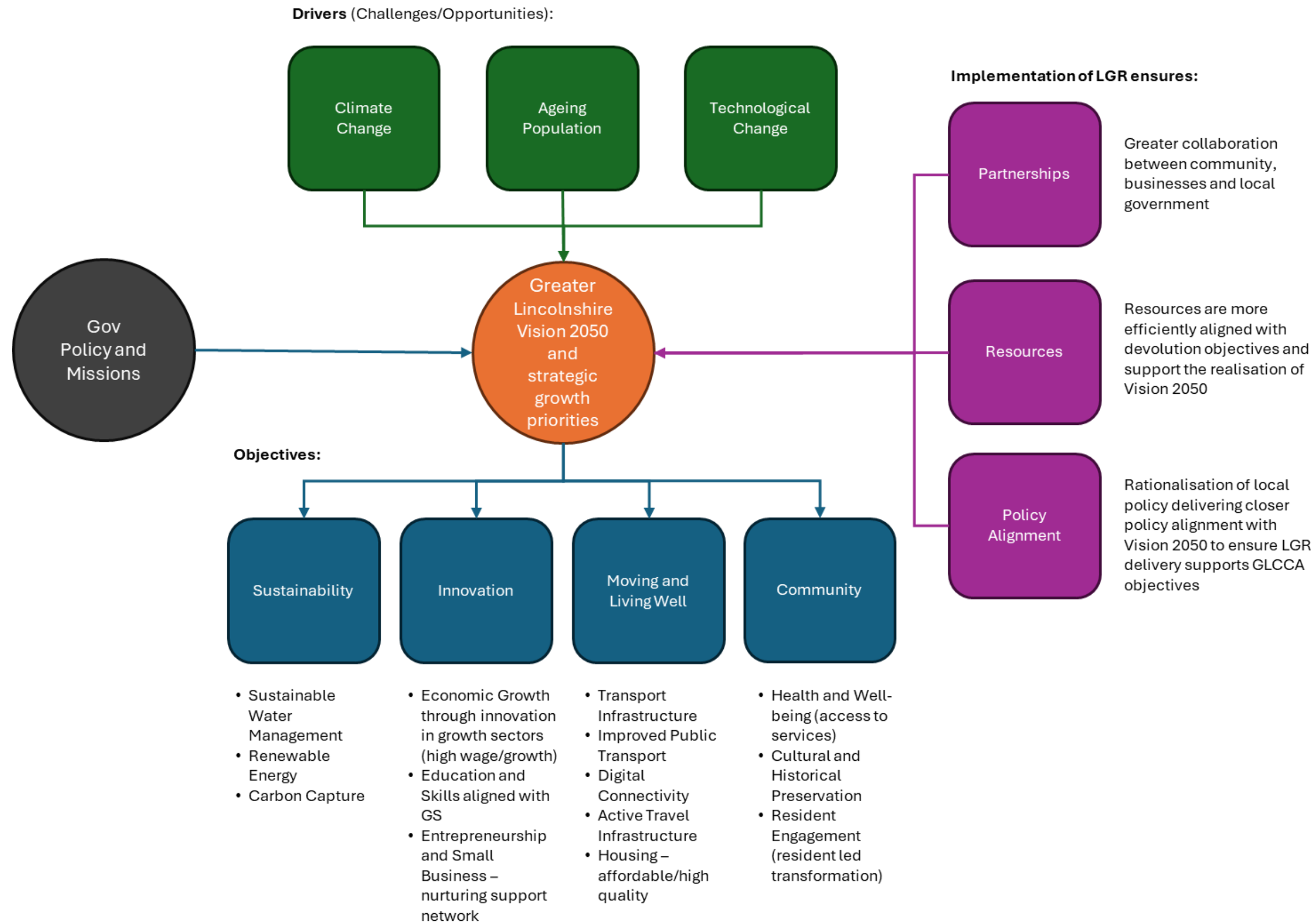
Whilst the MCCA is in its infancy (formally created in February 2025), the 10 Local Authorities which the MCCA covers have collaborated on a shared Lincolnshire vision ('Vision 2050') to support future delivery. Whilst this does not constitute a formal strategic vision for the MCCA, it provides an overarching framework which identifies priorities and challenges for Greater Lincolnshire that both the MCCA and future unitary councils must consider.

The vision not only considers the challenges associated with a large, sparsely populated rural area, but also the opportunities to create a sustainable and prosperous environment for business and residents alike linked to the MCCA's key economic drivers including: agri-food sector, clean energy and water management, ports and logistics, security and defence, the digital economy and tourism.

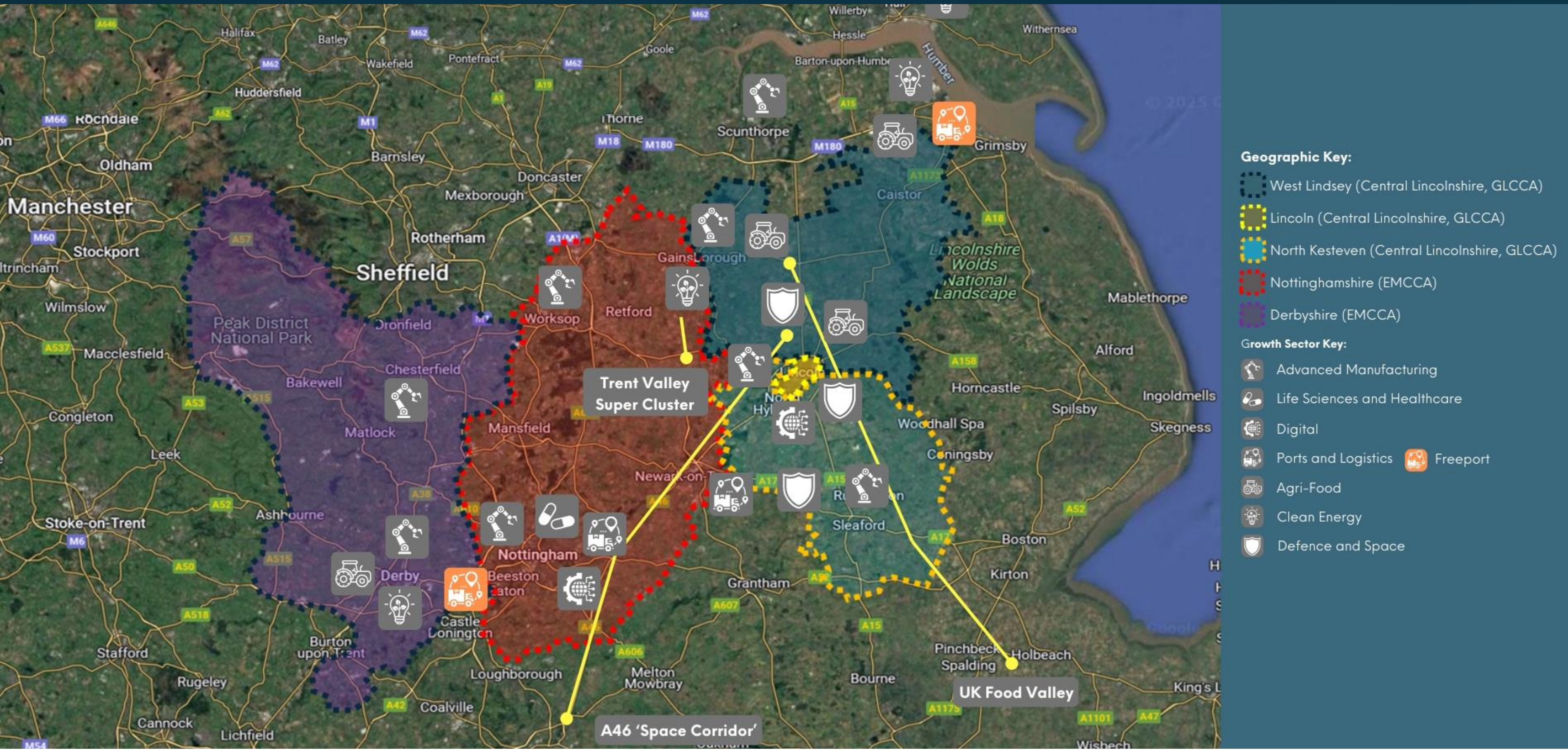
The vision also identifies four key ambitions, which include (1) Sustainability; (2) Innovation (Growth); (3) Moving and Living Well; and (4) Community Vitality. These ambitions also reflect emerging Government missions and strategy e.g. Invest 2035 (Industrial Strategy). The strategic landscape is identified in slide 36.

It is highly likely that LGR will improve alignment with Vision 2050 and expedite the delivery of MCCA's strategic objectives - realising the economic opportunities linked to Greater Lincolnshire's growth sectors. Creating positive economic conditions across the MCCA geography will also support the establishment and embedding of public services which are both efficient and sustainable and capable of withstanding economic shock and other external influences which may have in the past impacted on delivery. The inter-connectivity of the MCCA's central and inland economic geography is identified on slide 37 which also expands that inter-connectivity to reflect economic linkages with growth sectors in the East Midlands CCA.

# Criteria E: Support for Devolution Ambitions



# Criteria E: Support for Devolution Ambitions



# Criteria F: Engaging and Consulting on Our Proposals

In further developing our proposals for LGR, we are committed to transparent and inclusive consultation and engagement, ensuring that a range of voices are heard as part of the conversation. We consider our key stakeholders to be residents, local communities, local businesses, and key public sector partners.

Delivering successful outcomes for Our People and Our Place would not be possible without our greatest asset, our staff. We have already committed to regular all staff updates on key developments, decisions and milestones. We will continue this regular engagement as we move through the reorganisation timeline.

Grounded in our role as place leaders, and guided by the principles in our Consultation & Engagement Strategy, our approach to local engagement will be characterised by:

- Collaboration – we will create a collaborative environment where key stakeholders can provide input, share perspectives and contribute to the development of our full proposal.
- Inclusivity – we will ensure that any consultation is accessible to all our residents, communities, businesses and key partners.
- Openness – we will communicate clearly about our proposals and how to participate in any consultation events. This includes a commitment to sharing the results of any consultation exercises in a timely manner, including how the results have been fed into the development of our proposals.

We will use a variety of methods to ensure our consultation and engagement is meaningful and effective. This includes engaging with existing networks, forums and groups as well as wider community engagement. We will use digital platforms where appropriate, but we will also seek to engage our hard to reach groups, thus ensuring our final proposal is inclusive of a broad range of views gathered from a variety of platforms.

In anchoring our consultation plan around our place leadership approach, we will ensure our proposals for LGR are guided by the needs and aspirations of Our People, thus giving confidence that our proposal will result in an engaged, informed and cohesive society that is working collectively for the future prosperity of Our Place.

# Criteria G: Developing proposals for Local Government Reorganisation

Area wide arrangements - Our assumption is that a central LGR Implementation Team would be established across the area to oversee the design, transition and implementation of a new unitary council. Should the intention be to establish two or more new unitary councils across the area, the assumption is that each new unitary would require a separate Implementation Team.

Each central Implementation Team would operate within an agreed governance structure, involving representation and decision making from each of the in-scope councils.

Local arrangements - From a West Lindsey District Council perspective, it is essential that we actively contribute to the design, transition and implementation of a new unitary council. We are committed to ensuring service continuity and transferring our corporate experience, knowledge and intelligence related to our place leadership role and knowledge of what works for our communities and businesses. We view the reorganisation of local government as an opportunity for transformation public services; our corporate knowledge and intelligence can help to shape place based public service reform that realises meaningful benefits for our communities and businesses.

As such, the Council anticipates operating our own LGR Implementation Team over the course of the LGR programme. Our Implementation Team would work closely with the area's central Implementation Team throughout the LGR programme. The Council's Implementation Team would have a detailed understanding of our place leadership role, service structure, information management systems, financial arrangements, estate, support services infrastructure, shared services with other Councils, contractual arrangements with third parties and staffing structure.

# Criteria G: Developing proposals for Local Government Reorganisation

This corporate knowledge will assist the areas Central LGR Implementation Team to design and implement arrangements that reflect the needs of our local communities and businesses. The Council's LGR Implementation Team would also oversee ongoing communication and engagement with our local stakeholders over the duration of the LGR process.

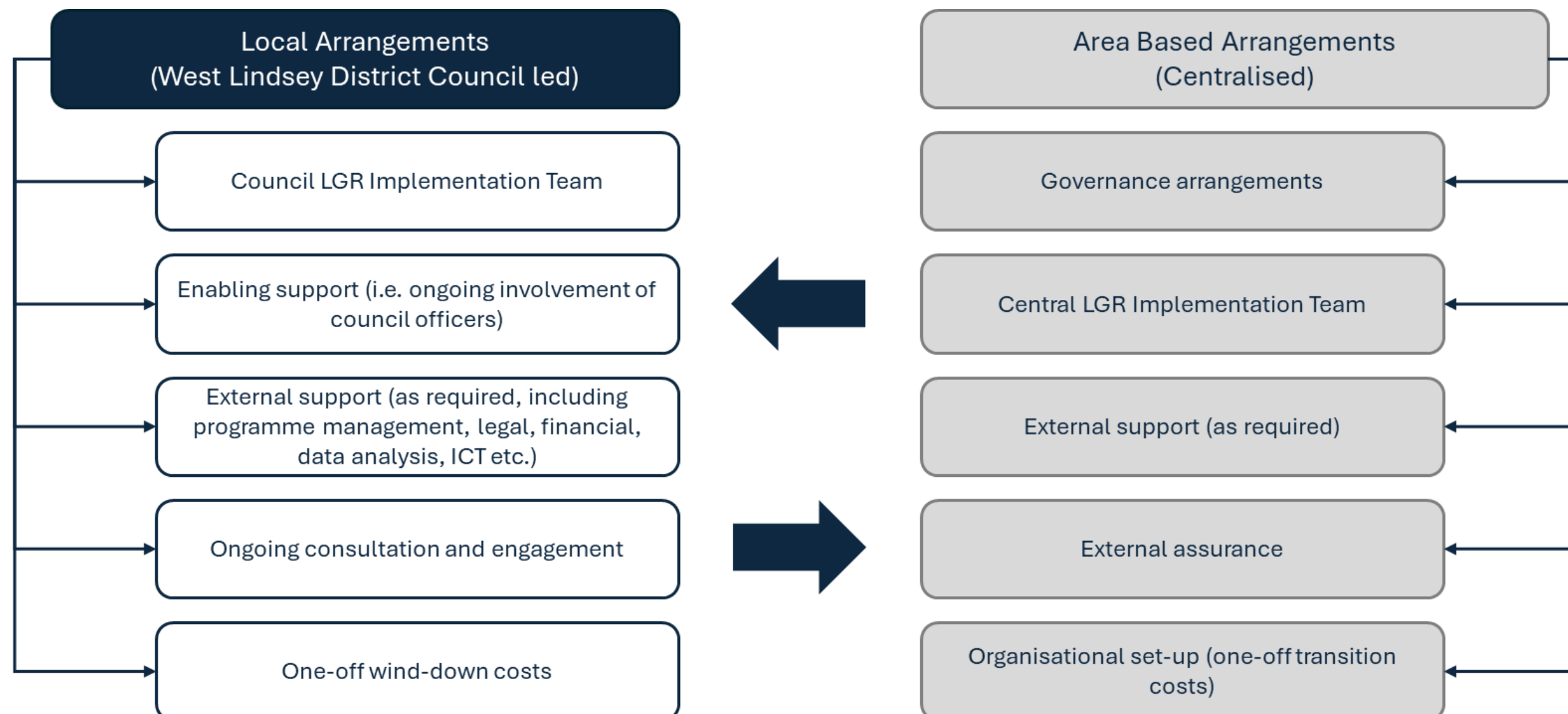
Key cost centres – Informed by the above approach, the Council has identified several key areas of cost associated with the design and implementation of a new unitary council:

- Area wide - A central LGR Implementation Team, (covering proposal development, organisational design, transition and implementation stages), including procuring external expertise where required.
- Area wide - One-off transitional costs associated with the establishment of the new unitary council(s).
- West Lindsey District Council - A Council led LGR Implementation Team, led by Place, Policy & Strategy (covering proposal development, organisational design, transition and implementation stages), including procuring external expertise where required.
- West Lindsey District Council - Access to enabling capabilities across the Council, including vital ongoing contributions from the Chief Executive, Directors, Assistant Directors, Head of Policy & Strategy, Service Managers and senior representatives from corporate functions (i.e. HR, IT, Procurement, Estates etc.).
- West Lindsey District Council - The costs associated with ongoing engagement with communities, businesses, third sector organisations and other local stakeholder groups (consultation and reassurance).
- West Lindsey District Council - Wind-down costs and transitional costs incurred by the Council, including redundancy and transfer costs.



# Criteria G: Developing proposals for Local Government Reorganisation

Implementation arrangements - West Lindsey District Council is committed to engaging in an LGR process that prioritises transformation over a transactional lift-and-shift approach, that simply aims to create a new 'safe and legal' unitary council. An overview of the anticipated resources required by the Council to effectively contribute to a process that places an emphasis on transformation and effective place leadership is highlighted below. Each of these areas of activity would incur a cost:



# Criteria H: Voluntary working arrangements

On 24 February 2025, all ten Lincolnshire Leaders publicly committed to work together to develop a proposal in the best interests of the people of Lincolnshire.

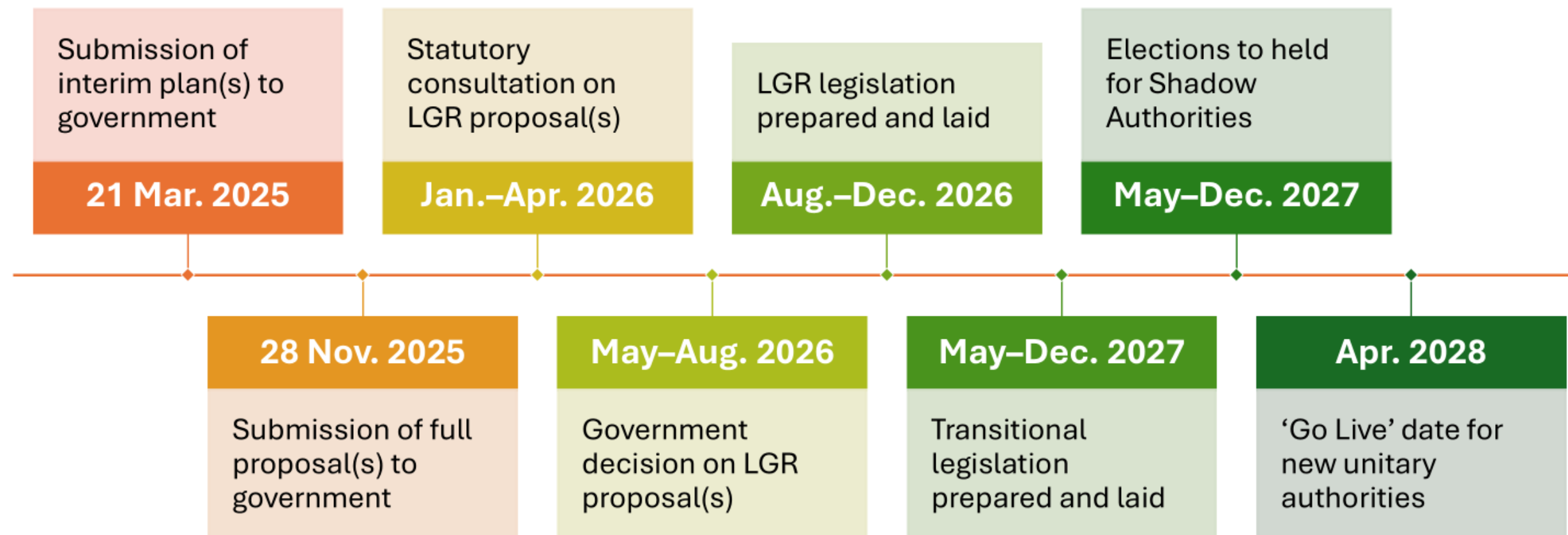
To support Leaders in this endeavour, existing officer networks will continue to collaborate and undertake the necessary work to progress these proposals.



# Conclusion

West Lindsey District Council is a high performing council delivering services that improve outcomes for the people and places we serve. For LGR to be a success the government must work with local places, including district councils and our partners to deliver a public sector that is stable, resilient and able to meet the needs of communities now and into the future.

As our interim plan sets out there are many options for how for the Greater Lincolnshire map could be redrawn. Aligned with the timeline below, this work will continue post 21 March 2025, to be informed by the ongoing commitment to collaboration between Leaders and officers and informed by feedback from government.



# Contact us:

For more information, and any queries, please contact:  
[corporate.plan@west-lindsey.gov.uk](mailto:corporate.plan@west-lindsey.gov.uk)

