

East Lindsey District Council  
Planning Department  
Tedder Hall  
Manby Park  
Louth  
Lincolnshire  
United Kingdom  
LN11 8UP

**Date:** 14 April 2022

**Our ref:** 04051/01/NT/KJ/20929800v4

**Your ref:**

Dear Sir / Madam

## **Representations Skegness Neighbourhood Plan**

On behalf of our client, Bourne Leisure Ltd ("Bourne Leisure"), please find below representations on the emerging Skegness Neighbourhood Development Plan [SNDP]. The draft Neighbourhood Plan [NP] is published for comment until Thursday 14 April 2022.

### **Background**

By way of background, Bourne Leisure operates more than 50 holiday sites across Great Britain in the form of holiday parks, family entertainment venues and hotels. These sites are operated under the Haven, Warner Leisure Hotels and Butlins brands. Bourne Leisure is therefore a significant contributor to the national tourist economy, as well as local visitor economies. Within the proposed neighbourhood plan area, Bourne Leisure has recently acquired Richmond Holiday Centre which will operate under its Haven brand. The company also operates Butlins Skegness, which lies outside the SNDP area. Bourne Leisure also operates Golden Sands Holiday Park, Mablethorpe, within the East Lindsey district but this is not affected by the emerging SNDP.

At a local level, the draft SNDP recognises the importance of Skegness as a tourist destination and highlights that the first Butlins holiday resort was built here in 1936 (paragraph 2.6). Whilst the emerging SNDP acknowledges the decline in tourist numbers towards the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Skegness remains a popular tourist destination and has been identified as the 4<sup>th</sup> most popular tourist resort in the UK by visitor numbers (paragraph 3.27). Tourism is essential to the local economy, helping to attract visitors, creating and securing local jobs and also supporting local businesses through the Multiplier Effect. It is therefore essential that local planning policy is supportive of the visitor and tourist sector, including the need to improve and expand facilities to meet demand as well as cater to new and repeat audiences, through upgraded facilities.

## Wider Policy Context

As you will be aware, the development plan for the area includes the East Lindsey Core Strategy [ELCS], which was adopted on 18 July 2018, and the East Lindsey Settlement Proposals Development Plan Document [ELDPD]. The Core Strategy is subject to ongoing review, having completed an ‘Issues and Options’ consultation in April 2021.

## Representations

The proposed policies within the draft SNDP are considered in the context of the requirements of the Localism Act 2011, Neighbourhood Planning Regulations 2012 [the regulations], the National Planning Policy Framework 2021 [the NPPF], and East Lindsey District Council’s [ELDC] current statutory development plan, given the early stage of progress of the Core Strategy Review.

Paragraph 8(2) of Schedule 4B of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 states the basic conditions that a NP must meet to be put to a local referendum:

- a Have regard to national policies and advice contained in guidance issued by the Secretary of State;*
- b Have special regard to the desirability of preserving any listed building or its setting;*
- c Have special regard to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of any conservation area;*
- d Contribute to the achievement of sustainable development;*
- e Be in general conformity with the strategic policies of the development plan for the area;*
- f Be compatible with European Union [EU] obligations; and*
- g Prescribed conditions are met in relation to the order and prescribed matters have been complied with in connection with the proposal for the order.*

Consideration is given to the following policies in respect of the above requirements.

## Draft Policy V1 (Tourism and Visitor Economy)

Draft Policy V1 forms part of the emerging plan that deals with the tourism and visitor economy. Policy V1 states that the SNDP will encourage, support and promote the town’s leisure, culture, heritage and tourism offer. It goes on to state how applications for tourism-related development will be supported where it can be demonstrated that:

- a They promote the principles of sustainable tourism through realising the potential of the town’s cultural and heritage assets, in particular the Skegness Esplanade and Tower Gardens, and the built and natural environment of the Skegness Foreshore; **and***
- b They maintain and enhance the quality of the public realm in terms of visual impact and amenity throughout the year; **and***
- c They are of an appropriate scale so as not to have an adverse effect on the character or vistas of the immediate location; **and***

- d They reflect the principles of good design including providing appropriate on-site landscaping to integrate the development into its wider surroundings; **and***
- e They should support the coherent uses of spaces and contribute to opportunities to improve access and movement by pedestrians and cyclists. Planning applications must also ensure that they preserve or enhance connectivity between the Skegness Foreshore and Skegness Town Centre; **and***
- f They do not adversely affect existing open spaces that contribute positively to the tourism economy and where necessary make provision for new open spaces that will enhance the usability of the local environment and the appeal to visitors; **and***
- g They do not adversely affect existing heritage assets, environmental designations or existing flood defences; **and***
- h They do not have a negative impact on the local highways network, as demonstrated through appropriate Transport Assessment.*

Draft Policy V1 goes on to state that applications for new caravan sites or extensions to existing caravan sites will be supported where the use is restricted to temporary holiday accommodation and the months of occupation restricted, in accordance with the requirements of the ELDC Core Strategy Policy SP19 'Holiday Accommodation'. Bourne Leisure endorses the supportive policy position for new caravan parks and the extension of existing caravan parks. The restriction on occupation is accepted as it conforms with strategic policies, namely SP19, within the development plan for the area.

Draft Policy V1 states that development that incorporate measures to attract visitors throughout the year, and increase appeal to a wider audience, through flexible or innovative land use and design, will be supported subject to their conformity with other policies within the development plan. Bourne Leisure endorses this stance and recognise the need to increase appeal to a wider audience. Bourne Leisure remains committed to upgrading its parks to improve the quality of accommodation on offer, and appeal to a wider audience.

It is not clear whether the policy regarding caravans also requires compliance with criteria a-h or not. We see this as a standalone clause, evident from its separation from the criteria listed above and a number of individual criterions that do not align. For example, Richmond Holiday Centre is located away from the Esplanade and Skegness Foreshore, and there are few heritage assets in close proximity to either park, aside from the Grade II Listed Gardeners Office near Butlins Skegness. Parts of criterion (b) are not feasible, such as maintaining amenity throughout the year due to the temporary occupation of caravan parks. Furthermore, parts of criterion (e) are dependent on the location of the proposal and may not apply.

It is difficult to see how these criteria would therefore be relevant in all cases. Reflecting this, we would recommend that the emerging policy is amended to make it clear that either criteria a-h do not apply to applications for new or existing caravans. Alternatively, the draft policy should include, "where applicable/relevant" to the second sentence of draft Policy V1, with the 'and' clause at the end of each criteria subsequently deleted.

Criterion f) should be reworded to "Taking into account any mitigation, they do not have any unacceptable affect on existing open spaces...." and criterion g) should be reworded to state that

“Taking into account any mitigation, they do not have any unacceptable adverse effects on existing heritage assets, environmental designations or existing flood defences”. It is important that policies are reworded to ensure they are effective in application and provide an opportunity to mitigate any unacceptable adverse impacts. This would ensure the policy is in line with the NPPF which requires policies to take a proactive approach to sustainable development, for example, mitigating and adapting to climate change, which includes taking into account long-term implications for flood risk. This would also ensure that proposals do not have an unacceptable adverse impact upon matters which have been identified as important for Skegness but would provide opportunities to deliver benefits as part of achieving NP and local plan visions and objectives.

Finally, criterion h) should be reworded to state that transport assessments (TAs) should only be provided “in accordance with NPPF requirements”. This would reflect more accurately paragraph 113 of the NPPF which states that transport assessments are required *“where developments are likely to generate significant amounts of movement”*. The need for a TA is heavily dependent on the scale and nature of particular schemes and, in the case of Haven parks for example, may not be needed where an application involves a simple upgrade to existing facilities. This should be reflected in draft Policy V1.

Together the representations on draft Policy V1 seek to ensure that the emerging NP conforms to the basic conditions set out in the Regulations and provides a positive planning framework for Skegness.

## **Draft Policy V3 (Applications for Overnight Tourist Accommodation)**

Draft Policy V3 relates to new serviced and non-serviced tourist accommodation proposals, outside of the defined Serviced Holiday Accommodation Areas. It states that such proposals will be permitted where it can be demonstrated that:

- a *They promote good design and demonstrate regard to the qualities of the surrounding built and historic environment; **and***
- b *Where possible, they seek to open views of the beach and the sea beyond and look to exploit the opportunities within the upper floors of buildings; **and***
- c *They respect the character of the area; **and***
- d *They would not prejudice the visual and other amenities of nearby residential properties; **and***
- e *For application sites located within the Town Centre it will be necessary to demonstrate that the proposed development would not affect the viability of the existing town centre including as a result of the loss of existing retail (Class E(a)) floorspace.*

Bourne Leisure endorses the approach to draft Policy V3 which seeks to provide a positive framework for overnight tourist accommodation.

## **Draft Policy D1 (Design in New Developments)**

Draft Policy D1 requires all new development to be of a high quality design, which enhances the built environment; positively contributes towards local character; enhances heritage assets and better reveal intended views, especially towards the sea; respects the prevailing density and a pattern of development

that surrounds the application site; allows for adequate daylight and sunlight; makes provision for an appropriate amount of landscaping and outdoor amenity/green space; and provides visual interest particularly at street level.

The requirements of Policy D1 follow design expectations outlined in Policy DEC 1 of the Core Strategy. Bourne Leisure generally endorses this policy and, indeed, is committed to providing high quality designs, which at times, may result in the need to upgrade and expand its holiday parks, through its ongoing programme of improvements to existing accommodation and facilities. Depending on the nature of the proposal, it may not be possible to meet all the criteria listed above. In order to recognise this, and to ensure the policy is effective and appropriately applied in decision making, the second sentence should be amended to “Where appropriate, proposed developments should:” and, for consistency with this, the final sentence of the policy should be deleted.

### **Draft Policy D3 (Gateways)**

Draft Policy D3 requires that *“applications for development at key gateway locations [...] will be supported where these would deliver enhancements and improvements to the visual approaches and main arrival points of the town”*.

Bourne Leisure endorses Roman Bank being identified as a key gateway location. Draft Policy D3 looks to deliver enhancements to the visual approaches to the town for tourists visiting the park. This aligns with Bourne Leisure approach to continually improve and upgrade its own facilities, including at Butlins which is within close proximity to Roman Bank.

### **Draft Policy INF11 (Ultra Low Emission Vehicles (ULEV) Parking Standards and Future Provision**

Draft Policy INF11 outlines the requirement for planning applications to provide charging points for Ultra Low Emission Vehicles. For existing non-residential developments, it is recommended that 1 charge point is provided for every 20 parking spaces. We request that this is amended to state that *“1 charge point is provided for every new 20 parking spaces”*.

Retrofitting existing spaces with EV charging infrastructure would be costly for large caravan parks, such as those owned by Bourne Leisure, which may hinder their ability to invest in facilities and upgrade accommodation to attract visitors as a result.

This change in wording would align with the principles of sustainable development within the NPPF, by minimising pollution and aiding the transition to a low carbon economy, whilst also supporting economic growth, including sustainable rural tourism and leisure developments, such as those operated by Bourne Leisure.

### **Summary**

Bourne Leisure welcomes the consultation on the SNDP and generally endorses the draft policies contained within it. The comments that are presented in this letter look to ensure that the SNDP meets the basic requirements of the Localism Act 2011 and, alongside this, provides sufficient flexibility for the tourist sector which continues to be a key contributor to the local economy. We would ask that the emerging Neighbourhood Plan is revised to respond to these comments.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any queries on the comments made in this letter. We would also be grateful if you would keep us updated on the progress of the SNDP.

Yours faithfully



**James Cox**  
Associate Director