

Decision Statement – Belchford and Fulletby Neighbourhood Development Plan

In accordance with Regulation 19 of The Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012, East Lindsey District Council has published this 'Decision Statement' with regard to Belchford and Fulletby Neighbourhood Development Plan (BFNP), as submitted by Belchford and Fulletby Town Council.

The BFNP has been subject to independent examination and East Lindsey District Council has considered the examiner's report, as required under Regulation 18 of The Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 and made decisions in respect of the recommendations as set out in Appendix 1 to this statement.

The Plan, its background documents, the Examiner's Report and the decision statement can be viewed on the Council's website at

Background

The Belchford and Fulletby Neighbourhood Plan has been prepared by a Steering Group on behalf of Belchford and Fulletby Parish Council. The Plan has been subject to consultation by the Steering Group throughout its preparation and was formally submitted to East Lindsey District Council on 22nd March 2024. It was subject to a formal 6 week period of consultation from 1st May 2024 and until 17.00 on 12th June 2024.

An independent examiner was appointed on 14th August 2024 to carry out an examination of the Plan to ensure that it meets the Basic Conditions and to determine whether the Plan should proceed to referendum. The basic conditions are:

- Having regard to national policies and advice contained in guidance issued by the Secretary of State it is appropriate to make the neighbourhood plan;
- The making of the neighbourhood plan contributes to the achievement of sustainable development;
- The making of the neighbourhood plan is in general conformity with the strategic policies contained in the development plan for the area of the authority;
- The making of the neighbourhood plan does not breach, and is otherwise compatible with, EU obligations;
- Prescribed conditions are met in relation to the neighbourhood plan and prescribed matters have been complied with in connection with the proposal for the plan.

The examiner has formally recommended changes that will enable the Plan to meet the Basic Conditions and, with those changes, the Plan can proceed to referendum. East Lindsey District Council considered the recommendations of

the examiner at a meeting of Planning Policy Committee on 26th June 2025 and Executive Board on 2nd July 2025, and determined that the examiner's recommended modifications in respect of the Belchford and Fulletby Neighbourhood Development Plan are accepted, with the exception of the recommendation on Policy BF3 : Protected Local Green Spaces as it relates to the removal of site 1 – land to the rear of the Blue Bell Inn.

The Council is required to publish this statement and send a copy to the qualifying body (the Parish Council), anyone whose representation was submitted to the examiner and any consultation body that was previously consulted and to allow a period of 6 weeks for representations to be made.

The period for representations will run from Friday 11th July to 5pm on Friday 22nd August 2025. Representations should be sent to local.plan@e-lindsey.gov.uk or in writing to Planning Policy Team, East Lindsey District Council, The Hub, Mareham Road, Horncastle, Lincolnshire, LN9 6PH

The representations will be reported back to a future meeting of both the Planning Policy Committee and Executive Board.

The consultation will end at 5pm on

Appendix 1 - Examiner's Recommendations on the Belchford and Fulletby Neighbourhood Development Plan

Examiner's Recommendation	Section in Examiner's Report	Reason	East Lindsey District Council's Decision on Recommendations
That the title of the plan should be Belchford & Fulletby Neighbourhood Development Plan 2023-41	The Examiner's Role. Page 6	Paragraph 11. The submission version of the plan does not indicate the start date for the plan. This has now been clarified and I have been advised that the plan start date should be October 2023. I do not think that it is important to refer to the month, nor is it general practise to do so and therefore I will be recommending that the date 2023-2041 should be included in the title of the plan on the front cover.	Agree. The recommendation just adds calcification.
Remove "Strategic" from each policy heading	The Neighbourhood Plan: An Overview. Page 11	Paragraph 49. I do need to raise a small number of presentational issues. The East Lindsey Core Strategy identifies all its policies as strategic policy. However, I do not consider that these neighbourhood plan policies can, under any circumstances, be described as strategic policy, which has specific meaning in planning policy terms as set out in the NPPF and the Planning Practice Guidance. I appreciate that the Steering Group has adopted this terminology to be consistent with the Core Strategy. However, that is not justified, and I will be recommending that all policies remove the word "strategic" from each title.	Agree. The recommendation is consistent with the requirement of the NPPF and the Planning Practice Guidance.
Highlight all statement of policy	The Neighbourhood	Paragraph 50. Importantly, it is the	Agree. It is important that the

to differentiate it from supporting text	Plan: An Overview. Page 11	wording of the policy, rather than the contents of the rationale and any evidence which will be used to determine planning applications. My consideration of the plan has concentrated on that policy wording in terms of my recommendations. As presented, it needs to be made much clearer the extent of the policy wording. For the avoidance of doubt, I recommend that the statement of planning policy under each policy heading, should be highlighted either as emboldened and italicised text or placed within a policy box or similar and there any supporting text is then presented in a less prominent manner to reflect that status. Paragraph 52. I will leave it to the Steering Group, to work with the planners at East Lindsey District Council to agree the changes to the supporting text and the mapping when it is preparing the Referendum Version of the plan, which will have to be published alongside Decision Statement.	Plan clearly differentiates between the wording of the Policy and the explanatory text.
Replace the policy with: The following buildings, structures or sites as shown in Map X and described in Appendix X are designated as non-designated heritage assets.	Policy BF1: Protected Historic Features. Page 13	Paragraph 56. The Planning Practice Guidance does recognise that neighbourhood plans can be used to identify non-designated heritage assets which are “buildings, monuments, sites, places, area or landscapes having a degree of heritage significance meriting	Agree. The revised wording of the policy formalises the list of non-designated heritage assets that the Plan is seeking to protect. It also attaches appropriate weight to their consideration in the decision

<p>Belchford</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Old Smithy • White House Farm • Blue Bell Inn and sign • Primitive Methodist Chapel • Wesleyan Methodist Chapel • Church View and Railings • White Cottage • Splash Cottage • The Cottage <p>Fulletby</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Blacksmith's Cottage and Railings • Old School House • Winn Cottage • New Manor House and Victorian Farm Buildings • Stone Barn • Vere Farm • Site of Medieval village <p>Proposals affecting directly or indirectly the above buildings, structures or sites will require a balanced judgement having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of it as a heritage asset.</p>		<p>consideration in planning decisions, but which do not meet the criteria for designated heritage assets". That is the status that the plan is seeking for those heritage assets which are not currently protected on a statutory basis.</p> <p>Paragraph 57. I therefore propose to amend the policy so that it no longer duplicates national policy but instead reflect the Parish Council's aspiration to recognise and protect such buildings in the parish which meet the PPG definition set out in the previous paragraph, by adapting this policy to identify and designate the buildings and places, which merit that protection.</p> <p>Paragraph 58. I have now been provided with information that sets out the heritage significance of the nominated buildings in the two villages. These cover some 18 buildings which have been the subject of early public consultation as well as being agreed by Heritage Lincolnshire. These descriptions need to be incorporated in the plan, possibly as an appendix, rather than just being listed in the Design Code so their significance can be understood by decision makers. That includes the medieval site which clearly is of, at least local archaeological importance.</p> <p>Paragraph 59. The neighbourhood plan policy for such non designated heritage</p>	<p>making process, as set out in Planning Practice Guidance.</p>
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		assets should reflect the approach as set out in paragraph 209 of the Framework which requires a balanced judgement to be made with regard to the scale of any loss or harm and the significance of the asset.	
Delete the final paragraph of the policy.	Policy BF2: Protected Views. Page 14	<p>Paragraph 60. I have no specific concerns regarding the plan identifying specific views which are set out in the policy text and shown in Figure 18. The choice of the views is really a matter of local judgement.</p> <p>Paragraph 61. However, I do have concerns with respect of the final paragraph which seeks to equally protect other, unidentified views to “Belchford and Fulletby and their context within the wider landscape”. This part of the policy does not offer any guidance to an applicant or decision maker as to whether the impact of development on an unspecified view, is expected to be material consideration. As such it does not meet the Secretary of State’s expectations as to how a neighbourhood plan policy should be drafted which is set out in the PPG which states that “It should be drafted with sufficient clarity that a decision maker can apply it consistently and with confidence when determining planning applications. It should be concise, precise and supported</p>	Agree. Policies should seek to provide a degree of certainty and constancy of application.

		<p>by appropriate evidence.”</p> <p>Paragraph 62. I believe the aspiration of this part of the policy is already covered by the general landscape protection offered by Policy SB 23 of the Core Strategy which confers the highest level of protection on the Lincolnshire Wolds AONB.</p>	
<p>Replace the first paragraph with the following “The following open spaces are designated as local green space as shown on the Maps X and Map Y as described below. Development proposals affecting these sites should be consistent with Green Belt policy.”</p> <p>Replace the first bullet point with Belchford and Fulletby Village Green – remove site 1 – land rear of Blue Bell Inn from all LGS mapping.</p> <p>In the fourth bullet, remove all text after “3 grass triangles”</p> <p>In in 5th bullet delete “(just the cairn, not the)”</p> <p>In the 9th bullet, remove all text after “5 grass triangles”</p>	<p>Policy BF3: Protected Local Green Space. Page 17</p>	<p>Recommendations</p> <p>Insert “New residential” before “development”</p> <p>After “conforms to” insert “all”</p> <p>In the final bullet, before “adverse” insert “significant</p> <p>Paragraph 65. I have raised questions about the community's use of the land to the rear of the Blue Bell public house. I had been told that it had been used for village events such as firework displays and camping but when I asked when it was last used for such events, I was told that it was in 2003, some two decades ago. Whilst in the past, the Parish Council had sought and received planning permission for the recreational use of that land, it never acquired the land, which is in private ownership. It appears that the land was separated from the Blue Bell Inn and the landowner has made several attempts to secure residential development on the site. That has been refused consistently including twice at appeal.</p>	<p>Disagree.</p> <p>The NPPF provides for the designation of areas of Local Green Space through local and neighbourhood plans.</p> <p>Paragraph 107 of the NPPF states that : The Local Green Space designation should only be used where the green space is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) in reasonably close proximity to the community it serves; b) demonstrably special to a local community and holds a particular local significance, for example because of its beauty, historic significance, recreational value (including as a playing field), tranquillity or richness of its wildlife; and c) local in character and is not an extensive tract of land.

		<p>Paragraph 66. The guidance is clear that local green space can include land in private ownership. However, the admitted oversight on behalf of the Parish Council in not notifying the landowner of the intention of including his land as local green space is a serious issue, with a significant risk of causing prejudice to his interests, bearing in mind the implication and consequence of LGS status on what is private land. The Planning Practice Guidance is clear that designation can include private land, but owners of proposed local green spaces should be consulted during the preparation of the plan, in view of the importance of the protection that would be accorded.</p> <p>Paragraph 67. I have discovered that the landowner was never contacted during the preparation of the neighbourhood plan, nor was he aware of the proposal although the Parish Council in its representations did argue that the landowner would have been aware of the strength of feeling against development of the land.</p> <p>Paragraph 68. Any decision to grant Local Green Space status must pass a particularly high threshold, in that it should only be used where it can be demonstrated that the green space is demonstrably special to the community</p>	<p>Paragraph 108 goes on to say “Policies and decisions for managing development within a Local Green Space should be consistent with national policy for Green Belts set out in chapter 13 of this Framework⁴⁵</p> <p><small>Excluding provisions relating to grey belt and previously developed land set out in chapter 13.</small></p> <p>Green Belt policy still allows for limited infill development within villages and the wording of BF3 : Protected Local Green Spaces is in accordance with the NPPF in that it supports development that does not negatively affect open spaces identified to be of importance.</p> <p>The Examiner has considered the open spaces identified in the Belchford and Fulletby Neighbourhood Development Plan for protection, against the criteria in paragraph 107 of the NPPF and has agreed with all the spaces, except for the area to the rear of the Blue Bell Public House. The examiner does not feel that sufficient evidence has been put forward</p>
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		<p>and holds a particular local significance. The examples quoted of having such local significance include because of its beauty, its historical significance, its recreational value (including as a playing field), its tranquilly or richness of wildlife. Paragraph 69. In terms of the justification advanced by the Parish Council defending its specialness to the community, I place very limited weight on the fact that this piece of land was used for community events some 20 years ago. Whilst the Parish Council may have aspired in the past to see the land used for recreational purposes, clearly it has not been able to pursue the matter as it does not have any legal interest in the land. There is, as far as I am aware, no public access. If the Parish Council were in the future able to purchase the land, then the position re that public access would change and its value then as a recreational resource could be revisited. Paragraph 70. It appears that the approach being taken has been to use the local green space designation to seek to frustrate and prevent development on this land. I note that its recent representations refer to the importance of the Blue Bell Inn as a vital community asset and I do not believe that is disputed. I do not necessarily believe that</p>	<p>to demonstrate that this green space meets the required criteria.</p> <p>Considering the criteria in paragraph 107 of the NPPF in turn. The land is in reasonably close proximity to the community it serves, lying at the heart of the community of Belchford. The site is special to the local community, and this has been demonstrated through repeated community consultations over a period in excess of than 15 years. The Parish Council also obtained planning permission for change of use of the land to recreation in 2003, although this could not be implemented as the land was not in its ownership. The land also holds a particular local significance, as it is an intrinsic part of the historic figure of eight settlement pattern in the village. The site is local in character and is not an extensive tract of land. The site is therefore capable of meeting the criteria set out in the NPPF.</p>
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		<p>the failure to gain LGS status would affect the financial viability of the Blue Bell Inn and clearly the adequacy of the road network is not material consideration in terms of local green space designation.</p> <p>Paragraph 71. My conclusion is that the parish council has not put forward sufficient and compelling justification for its proposal to designate this piece of land as local green space and accordingly I will be recommending that the designation be deleted. I have noted the planning appeals have referred to the importance of this open space in defining the character to the village and that is a matter that can continue to be part of any development management consideration when development proposals are advanced. It was not something that I personally appreciated on my site visit.</p> <p>Paragraph 72. The Parish Council have now accepted that the stone cairn cannot be classed as a green space as it is a structure. I have no concerns regarding the inclusion of the verges and indeed the triangles, although the works to what is highway land could take place without recourse to the planning system where the local green space designation would be relevant, as the works would be covered by highway powers. I will</p>	<p>The assessment of the site against the Local Greenspace criteria in the NPPF is an assessment of the inherent qualities of the space and how that space meets those criteria. Whereas the assessment carried out on a site subject of planning permission is an assessment of the impact that the proposed development would have on that space.</p> <p>The land has been subject to a number of refusals of planning permission in the past and a further application, submitted in November of 2024, was withdrawn in February 2025. Any proposal on that site would be judged against the policies of the East Lindsey Local Plan – including SP4 - Housing in Inland Small and Medium Villages, SP10 – Design, and SP25 - Green Infrastructure, which allows for the consideration of the value of open spaces not identified on inset maps, against a number of criteria, which are different</p>
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		<p>recommend the element of the policy that deal with this matter be removed.</p> <p>Paragraph 73. The expectation of the policy in terms of supporting development that does not negatively affect the local green spaces is not consistent with national policy which is as set out in paragraph 107 of the NPPF which is that policies for development on LGS should be consistent with those for Green Belts. I will propose an alternative wording to ensure that it meet basic conditions.</p>	<p>from those in the NPPF. The determination of any application will rest on the details of the proposal and how it complies with the policies of the Local Plan and, if made by the time any application is received, the Belchford and Fulletby Neighbourhood Development Plan.</p>
Insert “New residential” before “development”	Policy BF4: Settlement Density. Page 18	<p>Paragraph 74. The Parish Council has clarified that the requirements of this policy relate to new properties, which I have interpreted as meaning “new residential properties”. It would not necessarily be appropriate for new commercial or agricultural development, for example, to have to meet the requirements of this policy.</p>	<p>Agree. This is a point of clarification.</p>
After “conforms to” insert “all”	Policy BF4: Settlement Density. Page 18	<p>Paragraph 75. I am satisfied that the criteria being put forward is appropriate having regard to the character of the villages I saw for myself. I will provide clarity that all the criteria should be applied to any proposal.</p>	<p>Agree. This is a point of clarification.</p>
In the final bullet, before “adverse” insert “significant”	Policy BF4: Settlement Density. Page 18	<p>Paragraph 76. In terms of the consideration of the impact of a proposal on the neighbouring properties, I consider that the threshold should be higher, namely “significant adverse impact” as</p>	<p>Agree. This creates consistency between the approach in policies BF4 and BF8.</p>

		<p>minor impacts may not justify the refusal of an otherwise acceptable development. I know that that is the same criteria used in respect of Policy BF8. I will recommend the removal of the example “by restricting vehicular access, especially to emergency vehicles”, as in my experience, that there is rarely a relevant development management consideration, particularly when it relates to infill development.</p>	
<p>Replace the second bullet with “New buildings should reflect the scale of development within the locality”</p>	<p>Policy BF5: Development Design. Page 18</p>	<p>Paragraph 77. The policy relates to how residential development should be designed rather than the assessment of the acceptability of the principle of the development. I did raise the question of subjectivity of the requirement the development is “not excessively tall”. In my Initial Comments document, I suggested an alternative form of wording, namely that “new buildings should reflect the scale of development within the locality”. I recognise that the concern relating to overlooking neighbouring properties was raised in the context of the height of the building. However, in view of the revised criteria which I will be recommending, I believe the issue of overlooking can be dealt with under the terms of Policy BF4 in terms of assessing the impact of new development on the amenity of neighbouring properties.</p>	<p>Agree. The recommended wording will allow the policy to better reflect differing circumstances in the parish and different aspects of proposed development.</p>

Replace “lower cost” with “smaller” and delete “supported” and replace with “encouraged”.	Policy BF 6: Housing Type. Page 19	<p>Paragraph 78. This policy seeks to support “lower cost terraced and semi-detached housing” as well as “smaller detached cottages”. I can fully understand the aspirations behind the policy, which is to provide smaller houses which are likely to be more affordable to “younger working families”. I did enquire whether the policy was particularly encouraging “affordable housing” which has a particular meaning in terms of housing policy, based on the definitions set out in the Glossary to the NPPF.</p> <p>Paragraph 79. The Parish Council response was that it was not seeking to define affordability but rather to support smaller dwelling units which are intrinsically cheaper. That is appropriate, but I do not consider the policy can, with confidence, refer to “lower cost housing” but it can legitimately support the building of small units, which the Rationale section refers to as two-bedroom units. I will therefore recommend that two bed units will be encouraged. That does then mean that proposals for larger properties, will inevitably be refused.</p>	Agree. The recommendation reflects the aspirations of the parish with regard to a mix of housing, while removing the need to establish what is low cost.
Delete the first sentence and replace “In particular,” with “Commercial development”	Policy BF 8: Commercial Development. Page 19	Paragraph 81. Core Strategy Policy SP 13 is referenced in this policy and that supports new employment within a settlement or adjoining and /or as an extension to an existing employment use,	Agree. The implementation of the original policy regarding the footprint of a business would be difficult to determine and potentially inconsistent. It also

		<p>subject to criteria. In particular, the policy supports development in small villages which provide local employment or allow the reuse of buildings for rural business businesses as well as supporting farm diversification. It does not necessarily limit the scale of that development to those with a “limited footprint in keeping with the commercial enterprises in the villages”. That would be difficult to necessarily determine e.g. how would you measure the footprint of the caravan site, and would that be a reasonable comparator?</p> <p>Paragraph 82. I do not feel that there is a need to have a policy that requires compliance with an existing local plan policy, which will already be applicable to the parish.</p>	does not need to refer to the Local Plan policy.
Replace the last two bullet points with a new paragraph “New commercial development will be expected to be served by safe access arrangements and have adequate on-site parking and servicing facilities and should not have a significant adverse impact on the amenities of neighbouring residents or properties.”	Policy BF 8: Commercial Development. Page 20	Paragraph 83. It would be perfectly acceptable for the plan to seek to encourage certain forms of commercial development such as microbusinesses. I have no concerns with the criteria, but I believe the issue relating to access, parking and not having a significant impact or neighbouring policies should be set out as policy requirements rather than something that should only be encouraged.	Agree. The recommended change strengthens the wording of the policy with resulting benefits to the community.
Delete “only”	Policy BF 8: Dark Skies. Page 20.	Paragraph 84. The NPPF (para 16b) stresses that plans should be prepared	Agree. Policies should be worked positively.

		positively, and I believe that the policy should not “grudgingly refer” to proposals “will only be supported” but instead should be worded that proposals will be supported if the criteria is met.	
At the end of the second bullet point insert “as set out in the Guidance Note 01/21 “The Reduction of Obtrusive Light” or any subsequent equivalent document”	Policy BF 8: Dark Skies. Page 20.	Paragraph 86. For the sake of clarity, the policy should refer to a specific document which is the Institute of Lighting Professionals Guidance Note 01/21 “The Reduction of Obtrusive Light” or any subsequent equivalent document.	Agree. This recommendation provides clarity.