



**SOUTH HOLLAND LOCAL PLAN  
TOPIC PAPER**

**CORE STRATEGY**

## TOPIC PAPER - CORE STRATEGY

### 1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 This topic paper is one of three produced to assist debate at the Local Plan Inquiry. This paper explains the Council's key objectives as contained in the Re-deposit Local Plan (RLP) (CD/SH/09). The other papers address the economy and housing. The purpose of the topic papers is to explain the background to, and therefore justify, the policies in these key areas contained in the RLP in order to assist the Inspector and others in the consideration of objections to those policies.

1.2 The paper explains the overall strategy of the plan for the period to 2021 and how it seeks to address the economic, social and environmental issues faced by the District. It summarises the wider strategic policy context for the plan including national, regional and sub-regional policy and how the key policies and proposals of the plan seek to apply and set this guidance into a South Holland context.

1.3 The issues dealt with in this topic paper are:

- the strategic framework;
- evolution of local plan core strategy;
- summary of representations concerning the core strategy;
- justification of the RLP Core Strategy
- justification of the settlement hierarchy; and
- justification of flood risk position.

1.4 The Local Plan policies covered by this Topic Paper are:

Policy SG1 – General Sustainable Development

Policy SG2 – Distribution of Development

Policy SG3 – Settlement Hierarchy

Policy SG4 – Development in the Countryside

Policy SG5 – Non-agricultural Development on Agricultural Land

Policy SG6 – Community Infrastructure and Impact Assessment

## **2 STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK**

2.1 The strategic policy framework for the core policies in the RLP is contained in national and regional guidance and in the Lincolnshire Structure Plan. Each of these levels of the strategic policy framework are summarised in the following section.

### **2.2 National Policy**

2.2.1 The RLP has been prepared to accord with and reflect government guidance. National guidance is principally detailed in Planning Policy Guidance Notes (PPGs), which are being replaced by shorter more concise Planning Policy Statements (PPSs) and Circulars.

2.2.2 Sustainable development is one of the core principles underpinning the planning system. National guidance is also concerned with the development of sustainable communities and integrating land use planning with wider community objectives. The Government set out four aims in its strategy 'A Better Quality of life – A Strategy for Sustainable Development in the UK' (CD/GO/32). These have been carried forward into the 'Sustainable Communities Plan' (CD/GO/33) and PPS1 – Delivering Sustainable Development (CD/GO/01). These aims include:

- Social inclusion and cohesion;
- Protection and enhancement of the environment;
- Prudent use of natural resources; and
- Sustainable economic development.

2.2.3 These themes are picked up and amplified in other PPGs and PPSs focusing on specific topics, in particular:

- PPG3: Housing (as amended in January 2005) (CD/GO/03)
- PPS6: Planning for Town Centres (CD/GO/07)
- PPS7: Sustainable Development in Rural Areas (CD/GO/08)
- PPS9: Biodiversity and Geological Conservation (CD/GO/10)
- PPG12: Development plans (CD/GO/14)
- PPS12: Local Development Frameworks (CD/GO/13)
- PPG13: Transport (CD/GO/15)
- PPG25: Development and Flood Risk (CD/GO/24)
- Circular 6/98: Planning and Affordable Housing (CD/GO/25)
- Circular 05/2005: Planning Obligations (CD/GO/26)

2.2.4 PPS12 which sets out the new procedures for plan making under the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 effectively replaces PPG12. However, PPG12 remains in operation for plans being prepared under the 1999 Development Plan Regulations. This is the case for South Holland.

2.2.5 We believe that the RLP accords with these particular guidance notes. We have also had regard to other national guidance where appropriate. The general strategy and the whole thrust of the RLP reflects this over-arching emphasis on sustainable development and an integrated approach to the planning of the area. In this respect the plan seeks to promote urban concentration of development, particularly at the main town, Spalding through the redevelopment of previously developed land and buildings, and sustainable urban extensions. The Strategy also seeks an appropriate level of development at smaller settlements appropriate to the level of services and facilities available.

### 2.3 **Regional Spatial Strategy for the East Midlands (RSS8) (CD/EM/02)**

2.3.1 The East Midlands Regional Assembly (EMRA) has recently begun work on a new RSS, the East Midlands Regional Plan to 2026 which will include district level housing requirements. The provision and distribution of housing development in the RLP is consistent with the adopted RSS8 (2005) and the (soon to be adopted) Lincolnshire Structure Plan. The East Midlands Regional Plan to 2026 'Options for Change' (CD/EM/04) was published for consultation at

the end of October 2005 and includes 9 options for growth with a similar range of housing number options for each district. The emerging Regional Plan will inform and lead South Holland's Local Development Framework. To some extent, RSS8, the SP and our RLP represent the end of an era.

2.3.2 Regional Planning Guidance (RPG8) (2002) (CD/EM/01) reduced the strategic housing requirement for Lincolnshire by 18% from 3345 to 2750 dwellings per annum. A partial review of this document was undertaken and a new RSS8 approved in 2005. The East Midlands Regional Assembly (EMRA) has begun work on a new RSS which will be fully compliant with the requirements of the new forward planning system and will include district level housing requirements. The provision and distribution of housing development in the RLP is consistent with RSS8 (2005). The East Midlands Regional Plan to 2026 'Options for Change' was published at the end of October 2005.

2.3.3 RSS8 establishes a vision for the East Midlands to 2021 and adds a regional dimension to national guidance. In doing so it provides a spatial framework for other strategies in the region including the SP and Local Plans. RSS8 has been prepared within the overall vision set by the EMRA's Integrated Regional Strategy (IRS) which states:

*"The East Midlands will be recognised as a region with a high quality of life and sustainable communities that thrives because of its vibrant economy, rich cultural and environmental diversity and the way it creatively addresses social inequalities, manages its resources and contributes to a safer, more inclusive society". (pg 13, RSS8 2005)*

2.3.4 RSS8 gives a clear spatial strategy for new housing, employment and transport infrastructure at the regional level through 10 priorities. These are set out in Policy 1 (Regional Core Objectives) and are set out below:

1. Address social exclusion, through the regeneration of disadvantaged areas;
2. To protect and where possible enhance the quality of the environment in urban and rural areas;

3. To improve the health of the region's residents;
4. To promote and improve economic prosperity, employment opportunities and regional competitiveness;
5. To improve accessibility to jobs, homes and services across the region;
6. To achieve effective protection of the environment by avoiding significant harm and securing adequate mitigation where appropriate;
7. To adopt the principle of no net loss of priority habitats wherever possible;
8. To promote the prudent use of resources;
9. To take action to reduce the scale and impact of future climate change; and
10. To promote good design in development.

2.3.5 Chapter 3 of the RSS outlines the spatial strategy for the region. Policy 2 (Locational Priorities for Development) refers to the sequential approach to selecting land with Policy 3 (Sustainability Criteria) setting out a range of criteria to be used in applying this approach. Policy 5 (Concentrating Development in Urban Areas) and Policy 6 (Regional Priorities for Development in Rural Areas) provide guidance in order to achieve a balanced and integrated urban and rural strategy for the East Midlands. Other important strategic policies include Policy 17 (Regional Housing Provision) and Policy 22 (Regional Priorities for Employment Land).

2.3.6 Three levels of urban centres are defined within which development should be concentrated, namely:

- Principal Urban Areas (PUA) – e.g. Lincoln
- Growth Towns – none in Lincolnshire
- Sub-regional Centres – in Lincolnshire: Grantham and Boston.

2.3.7 No part of South Holland is identified in these levels of the hierarchy.

2.3.8 RSS8 identifies a number of sub areas within the region, of which South Holland falls within the 'Eastern Sub-Area'. Policy 7 (Development in the Eastern Sub-Area) and Policy 8 (Overcoming Peripherality in the Eastern Sub-Area) are of

particular relevance for the District. The spatial strategy of the RSS goes on to define the priorities for the Eastern Sub-Area.

2.3.9 The RSS outlines the settlement structure in this sub-area and states in paragraph 3.5.3 it *“contains relatively traditional settlement structure comprised of dispersed towns with predominantly rural hinterlands”*. Lincoln is identified as the only PUA with Boston and Grantham as sub-regional centres. The RSS goes on to state in paragraph 3.5.5 that:

*“The medium sized market towns such as Retford, Oakham, Louth and Spalding are in many respects the backbone of the sub-area's traditional settlement structure, serving the needs of their own communities and their often large rural hinterlands. Each has characteristics unique to them, but together they have similar needs and opportunities. There needs to be a determined effort to consolidate these towns as the sub-area's secondary employment and service centres”*.

2.3.10 Paragraph 3.5.6 also states that *“The smaller market towns.....were traditionally the focus for local trade and services, but now largely cater for day to day needs....The survival and future prosperity of these small towns is essential for the continued vitality of the sub-area”*.

2.3.11 RSS8 therefore provides some guidance with regards to Spalding and the smaller market towns of South Holland. We have used this guidance in the production of the revised settlement hierarchy, Policy SG3 of the RLP.

2.3.12 Policy 7, pg 20 sets out a number of objectives for development in the Eastern Sub-Area. Amongst these the policy refers to the:

- maintenance and enhancement of the roles of small and medium sized market towns as locally significant service and employment centres through the protection of existing retail and community facilities, and support for sustainably located new housing and local employment generating development;

- the strengthening of the role of the food production and distribution industry by the creation of cluster related developments; and
- the promotion of sustainable patterns of development in those parts of the sub- area bordering major urban areas in other regions, in particular Peterborough.

2.3.13 The influence of large settlements outside the District, in particular Peterborough is an issue of increasing importance facing the District. We have acknowledged the concerns expressed in RSS8 concerning commuting to Peterborough and in response have introduced a revised settlement hierarchy in our RLP which establishes a sustainable framework for future development up to 2021. Through the core strategy the RLP aims to address issues expressed in RSS8 aimed at preventing some South Lincolnshire settlements becoming dormitories for Peterborough. We also support the work being done at the regional level which recognises the Peterborough Housing Market Area. Cross-boundary working between the East Midland's and Eastern Regions, involving the relevant Districts has now started in earnest.

2.3.14 We believe that the overall strategy in the RLP is consistent with the aims and objectives of the overall strategy and of these policies.

## 2.4 **Lincolnshire Structure Plan (SP)**

2.4.1 The County Council undertook a review of the Adopted Structure Plan (1982) (CD/LC/01) in 1998 to cover the period 1991-2011 (CD/LC/04). An Examination in Public (EiP) was held and the policies proposed for adoption were published in November 2000 (CD/LC/05), although the plan was never formally adopted. The County Council is now well advanced in preparation of a new SP covering the period to 2021 (CD/LC/06) and to comply with RPG8/RSS8. The EiP was held during the summer of 2005 with the Panel Report published in October 2005 (CD/LC/08). Adoption is anticipated in early 2006.

2.4.2 Chapter 3 of the SP outlines a number of key challenges such as promoting economic growth, protecting the environment, reducing social exclusion, increasing public transport opportunities and directing growth to sustainable

locations. The overall aim of the plan is *“to improve the quality of life for those who live, work, visit and invest in Lincolnshire through the promotion of sustainable development”*. (paragraph 3.17 SP – Proposed Changes 2005)

2.4.3 Chapter 4 outlines the spatial strategy for Lincolnshire. Policy S1 (Promoting Sustainable Development) sets out a range of key sustainability objectives that development should aim to meet. Policy S2 (Location of Development) outlines the sequential approach to development. The RLP applies this principle with the emphasis of the plan’s strategy on the use of brownfield sites in urban areas.

2.4.4 The chapter goes on to set out a settlement hierarchy for Lincolnshire and aims to *“interpret and implement RPG’s spatial strategy in a way which reflects the particular circumstances of Lincolnshire”*. (paragraph 4.7 SP – Proposed Changes 2005) The SP states that *“Lincolnshire is characterised by a dispersed settlement pattern, which reflects its traditional rural and agricultural activities. However, there are a number of “urban” areas, which are increasingly the focus for concentrating development and services. Consequently, there is a tendency for small towns and larger villages to provide “higher order” functions and services in locations that are distinctly rural in character and modest in size”*. (paragraph 4.7 SP – Proposed Changes 2005) A number of small and main towns have been identified based upon a range of criteria.

2.4.5 Spalding has been identified as the District’s only main town and paragraph 4.18 of the SP states that *“Spalding provides a very distinctive role as a sub-regional hub for the food processing, agricultural and horticultural sector and is the fourth largest settlement in the county”*.

2.4.6 Policy S3 (Development in the Major Settlements) applies this hierarchy and aims to direct the majority of new development to these major settlements with Policy 4 (Rural Communities) providing for limited opportunities in the rural areas. The Council believes these policies reflect locational guidance contained within RSS8.

2.4.7 The hierarchy is set out as follows:

- Principal Urban Area – Lincoln Policy area
- Sub-Regional Centres – Boston and Grantham;
- Main Towns – includes Spalding;
- Small Towns – includes Crowland, Holbeach, Long Sutton, and Sutton Bridge; and
- Rural Communities.

2.4.8 The Council supported this hierarchy at the EiP and agreed with Spalding being identified at least as a main town. However the Council still believes there should have been stronger recognition made of its strategic position as a sub-regional hub for the food processing, agricultural and horticultural sectors in the SP. The future role of Spalding within the East Midlands and the Peterborough sub-region will be an important issue for the new Regional Plan and our LDF.

2.4.9 The revised settlement hierarchy in the RLP groups Donington with the other towns. The SP EiP Panel Report suggested that any reassessment of the function and role of Donington would be better addressed through the RSS review.

2.4.10 Other relevant strategic policies include S5 (Accessibility), S6 (External Influences), H1 (Housing Provision), H5 (Affordable Housing Provision) and E2 (Employment Land and Buildings).

2.4.11 The overall strategy in the RLP is consistent with the aims of these policies. It is considered that the RLP accords fully with National Guidance, RSS8, the SP and accords with the recommendations in the Panel's Report.

## 2.5 **Community Plan (CD/SH/35)**

2.5.1 The Community Plan presents a vision of how the quality of life for all the people of South Holland can be improved over the next 10 years. The actions and targets within the plan have been put together by the Local Strategic Partnership which manages the Rural Action Zone (RAZ) and comprises a strategic alliance

of major organisations within the District, following extensive consultation with local people.

2.5.2 The priorities for action are set out under the following 8 key themes, in order of priority, namely:

- Access to services and transport;
- A safe and crime free space to live;
- Sustaining the green environment;
- Entertainment and leisure;
- Consumer choice;
- A healthy lifestyle;
- Education, training and lifelong learning; and
- Diversifying the economy and skills.

2.5.3 The RLP has been prepared in a form to ensure consistency and close integration with the South Holland Community Plan. Both documents share a common vision. As such the RLP reflects the key issues and priorities identified in the Community Plan. The RLP aims to reflect Community Plan actions and targets that are relevant and appropriate in the context of a land use plan. There is close correlation in terms of overall aims and objectives and the plan aims to ensure it takes on board aspects of the Community Plan where the RLP has a key influencing role. The Community Plan is currently under review and any changes will be dealt with through the LDF process.

### **3 EVOLUTION OF LOCAL PLAN CORE STRATEGIES**

3.1 This section considers the core strategy in the Adopted Local Plan (ALP) and subsequent changes in the RLP. The strategies are summarised below.

#### **3.2 Adopted Local Plan 1998 (CD/SH/02)**

3.2.1 The guiding principles or aims of the ALP were:

- To conserve or enhance the environment;
- To promote economic and social development; and
- To make the best use of resources.

### 3.2.2 The ALP aimed to:

- Recognise Spalding as the dominant sustainable settlement;
- Concentrate most new development in the towns with the remainder in the main villages and other settlements;
- Protect the unique nature of the fens landscape;
- Minimise the loss of the best and most versatile agricultural land;
- Protect and enhance the built heritage;
- Minimise the need to travel;
- Address issues of renewable energy; and
- Protect land and buildings from the risk of flooding.

### 3.3 **First Deposit Draft Local Plan 2001 (FDD) (CD/SH/04)**

#### 3.3.1 The aims of the FDD were to seek an appropriate balance between:

- Effective protection and enhancement of the environment;
- Social, community and economic progress; and
- The prudent use of natural resources.

#### 3.3.2 The FDD aimed to:

- Focus development on the market towns;
- Recognise Spalding as the dominant sustainable settlement;
- Control development at a more gradual pace in the other towns and villages;
- Advocate a sequential approach to identify new sites for housing;
- Address the oversupply of housing land;
- Protect the unique nature of the fens landscape;
- Protect and enhance the built heritage;
- Ensure provision of open space within new residential development;

- Diversify the rural economy;
- Address issues of renewable energy and energy efficient development; and
- Take into account potential flood risk.

### 3.4 **Re-Deposit Local Plan 2005 (RLP) (CD/SH/09)**

3.4.1 The strategy of the RLP to 2021 reflects the need to address the oversupply of housing land and the need to achieve a more sustainable pattern of development. The policies are based on a hierarchical approach set out in Policies SG2 and SG3. This approach reflects national government guidance contained in PPG3 and echoed in PPS7 which states that to promote more sustainable patterns of development and make better use of previously developed land, the focus for most additional housing should be on existing towns and identified service centres. The hierarchy of settlements adopted in the RLP is consistent with the advice given and is aimed at achieving a more sustainable pattern of development.

3.4.2 The overall strategy of the RLP is set out in Chapter 3 of the plan. The plan adopts the overall vision of the Community Plan as its vision:

*“To develop and promote South Holland as a thriving, living and working rural community”.*

3.4.3 To help with the development and promotion of this vision the Council’s Corporate Plan (CD/SH/38) sets out the four themes of the Council’s mission statement. These are:

- Leading – to be a leading edge authority providing value for money, quality services.
- Listening – to listen and involve the community and work with partners.
- Providing – to provide a safe, secure and healthy place to live.
- Developing – to develop a thriving rural community.

3.4.4 The core policies of the RLP have been influenced at all levels by the issue of sustainability. This over-arching issue has led to the identification of a number of objectives of the RLP:

- (1) To safeguard and enhance the quality and amenity of the built environment and the district's cultural heritage.
- (2) To safeguard, enhance and extend the amenity, wildlife and landscape quality of the district.
- (3) To conserve and enhance the water environment and to protect inland and ground waters from pollution and degradation and to minimise the risk of flooding.
- (4) To protect the countryside as a natural and economic resource.
- (5) To help meet housing need.
- (6) To seek a balance between the provision of jobs, services and housing.
- (7) To secure the role of market towns and their centres.
- (8) To safeguard rural services.
- (9) To support the rural economy.
- (10) To develop and extend the range and accessibility of tourism, recreation, leisure and arts facilities.
- (11) To facilitate the use of public transport, cycling and walking and railfreight and to reduce the reliance on the motor car, particularly in the towns.
- (12) To locate new development to maximise accessibility to jobs, services and cultural activity and to reduce the need to travel.

- (13) To promote and support road schemes which enhance economic development, safety and local amenity and which minimise any adverse environmental impacts.
- (14) To maximise returns from existing investment and infrastructure.
- (15) To make the most beneficial use of existing built up areas and particularly to promote the development of unused, underused or derelict land, the reuse of buildings and the better use of underused buildings.
- (16) To promote the development of renewable energy schemes and energy conservation measures.

### 3.5 **Conclusion**

- 3.5.1 The RLP has a clear and coherent strategy which closely reflects the adopted RSS and the emerging SP. It also integrates with the South Holland Community Plan.

## 4 **SUMMARY OF REPRESENTATIONS CONCERNING THE CORE STRATEGY**

- 4.1 Objections have been made to the first three chapters of the RLP which make up the Core Strategy.
- 4.2 Objections to chapters 1 and 2, 'About the Local Plan' and 'Plans and Strategies, Objectives and Priorities' included:
  - the Longer Term section paragraphs (2.41-2.44) could prejudice the longer term strategic framework.
  - an increased emphasis is needed regarding the balance of new housing and the provision of funding for community infrastructure.
- 4.3 Objections to the Core Strategic Policies (SG1 – SG6) included:
  - greater reference should be made to Environmental Impact Assessments;
  - the removal of boundaries from many of the villages, thus preventing development which is contrary to PPS7;

- there is no acknowledgement as to what the character of any particular part of the District is;
- guidance relating to the provision of community infrastructure should be a part of the RLP and not SPD; and
- the settlement strategy does not take sufficient account of relationships between settlements, in particular Spalding and Pinchbeck.

## **5 JUSTIFICATION OF RLP CORE STRATEGY**

5.1 The following section explains the overall strategy and key proposals of the RLP, as outlined in the Core Strategy and General Policies Chapter of the Plan. It will show how these are designed to address the key priorities and aims of the plan and how they accord with national, regional and sub-regional policy.

### **5.2 Priority Issues**

5.2.1 The RLP identifies 8 key priorities. Each of these priorities has a number of objectives to ensure the successful implementation of the core strategy. The 8 key priorities identified in the plan are:

- Achieving a sustainable distribution of new development.
- Improving the economic output of the District.
- Meeting accommodation needs, especially through more affordable housing provision.
- Seeking provision of services/facilities in step with housing and employment growth.
- Widening the range of services/facilities available and improving accessibility to them.
- Achieving a high quality built environment.
- Safeguarding the amenities of the District.
- Contributing to the better use of valuable resources, including land and energy.

### **5.3 Core Strategy**

- 5.3.1 As mentioned above, the key issues facing the District are a high level of demand for housing, improving the economy, diversification, protection of the rural economy and flood risk.
- 5.3.2 Policies (SG1-SG6) set out the core strategic aims. Policy SG1 (General Sustainable Development) establishes the plan's sustainability 'agenda'. Sustainable development is not only about the environment but also the social and economic well being of the community. The RLP also seeks to preserve and protect the cultural identity and heritage of the District making it a place in which people choose to live and work in.
- 5.3.3 The spatial framework and hierarchy of development of RSS8 is reflected in the SP which establishes the approach to be undertaken within the District. The RLP aims to apply and set this strategy into a South Holland context, applying local considerations and objectives.
- 5.3.4 Policy SG2 (Distribution of Development) sets out the sequential approach needed to promote sustainable patterns of development. The strategy aims to concentrate development in urban areas with priority given to the re-use of brownfield land and buildings. The RLP establishes a revised hierarchy of settlements based upon their scale and function as set out in Policy SG3 (Settlement Hierarchy). Regard was also had to the findings of our services and facilities study of the District's settlements, which looked at accessibility and existing levels of provision when identifying this settlement hierarchy. The RLP has taken on board the thrust of Policy S3 and S4 of the SP (2005) in deriving its settlement hierarchy. However, the main village of Donington has been included with the towns. The Council does not consider that the inclusion of Donington with the other urban areas detracts from the steer provided by the SP. The Pre-Inquiry Changes document also makes reference to need for a Area Action Plan for Spalding which will amongst other matters look at the relationship between Spalding and Pinchbeck. Justification for this hierarchy is outlined in Section 6 of this paper.

- 5.3.5 One of the key responsibilities of the Plan is to ensure that there is sufficient housing land to meet the requirements of the District over the period of the RLP, 2001-2021. The strategy of the plan entails a sequential approach being taken to the identification of new sites for housing. In accordance with PPG3, the proposed housing allocations in the RLP are well related in scale and location to existing development and facilities, and have taken account of existing infrastructure, such as public transport. Further information on the housing policies and allocations are outlined in the Housing topic paper.
- 5.3.6 In accordance with PPG13, the Local Plan focuses development on the urban areas, avoids significant expansion of villages, seeks to ensure that sporadic development in the countryside does not take place and promotes alternatives to the private car. The RLP also conforms with the sequential approach of PPS6 in determining the preferred location of sites for retail and leisure development.
- 5.3.7 The RLP allocates a number of sites for housing, employment and leisure use. All of these sites are in locations where development will be consistent with the principles of sustainable development, by providing opportunities for people to work close to home and reduce the need to travel, and to make journeys by public transport, helping to reduce dependency on travelling to work by car.
- 5.3.8 The RLP removes the boundaries from a number of the smaller settlements which lack an appropriate level of services and facilities to sustain the community to make it clear that no additional development is envisaged in them. Many smaller villages and hamlets are characterised by loose knit ribbon patterns of housing making it particularly difficult to define settlement boundaries. It was felt the existence of defined boundaries gave the impression that development up to the boundaries was in principle acceptable. A number of objections were received on this issue. However, the removal of such boundaries is an appropriate solution to restrict growth although some potential may remain for small scale rural exceptions development to meet the affordable housing needs of local people.

- 5.3.9 The spatial strategy of the plan seeks to concentrate new development in the towns and, to a lesser extent, selected villages. Policies SG4 (Development in the Countryside) and SG5 (Non-Agricultural Development on Agricultural Land) support this strategy by seeking to protect the countryside from sporadic development. In accordance with national, Regional and SP policies there is a presumption against development in the countryside other than for specified activities requiring a rural location.
- 5.3.10 The District comprises almost exclusively grades 1 and 2 agricultural land which is important both nationally and for the local economy. The majority of economic activity in the District is either directly in agriculture or 'adding value' to agricultural produce in terms of processing, packaging and distribution. Nevertheless the economies of the agricultural industry are changing and PPS7 recognises the increasing importance to farmers of diversification into non-agricultural activities in order to supplement their farming incomes. Therefore, the RLP seeks to minimise the loss of agricultural land, whilst also realising that it is essential to encourage rural enterprise, including the diversification of farm businesses.
- 5.3.11 PPS7 states that *“away from larger urban areas Planning Authorities should focus most new development in or near to local service centres where employment, housing (including affordable housing), services and other facilities can be provided close together..... these centres should be defined in the development plan”*. Away from these areas limited development should be provided for in or next to rural settlements to meet local business and community needs and maintain the vitality of these communities. The RLP’s development strategy follows this guidance and in accord with PPS7 seeks to limit new housebuilding in the countryside to that associated with an agricultural or forestry use or to provide affordable housing to meet local needs.
- 5.3.12 Policy SG6 (Community Infrastructure and Impact Assessment) establishes the basis for the use of planning obligations that seek to ensure the provision of appropriate infrastructure, such as affordable housing, healthcare, education facilities etc.

- 5.3.13 Planning obligations (or 'S106 Agreements') have been used widely for some time to deliver community infrastructure. The Government has been reviewing the way obligations work and has considered some other options. For the time being the established system remains in place and a revised circular (05/2005) was issued in July. This makes it clear that planning obligations are 'intended to make acceptable development which would otherwise be unacceptable in planning terms' (paragraph B3).
- 5.3.14 The Council now has a well-developed policy and procedure for quantifying planning obligations for affordable housing. Lincolnshire County Council has developed a model to assess the impact of new housing development on education provision. The methodology for implementation of this model has yet to be agreed and the implications for other competing demands for community infrastructure have yet to be thought through.
- 5.3.15 The Council recognises that when obligations are sought in respect of a development proposal, this has an effect on the viability of that development. We aim to reflect that in the RLP.
- 5.3.16 The strategy of the RLP also looks to the 'longer term' i.e. post 2021. This section of the plan updates the FDD equivalent section. The main thrust remains on placing greater emphasis on Spalding and a continued aim to achieve a better balance between jobs and houses and a more sustainable pattern of development. The RLP removes the potential plan for Spalding, however aspects of this plan have now been formally allocated, such as the extension of Holland Park together with its link road. Reference is also made to the opportunity for a rail halt in this location. We believe the long term section is an important statement as it aims to identify how we envisage the future development of the District. It is simply a visionary statement which will not affect the strategic framework for the District.
- 5.3.17 The policies allow for additional housing and employment development within the defined settlement limits of the towns of Spalding, Holbeach, Long Sutton

(employment site is in Little Sutton), Crowland and Sutton Bridge and the main village of Donington. Only limited housing is anticipated within the remaining villages with defined settlement limits. The underlying strategy is one of continued restraint outside the main urban areas. It is felt the core policies will help the Council to meet the objectives of the RSS, SP and RLP and address the key priorities and main issues. More detail on the housing and economic policies and their aims and objectives is given in the Housing and Economy topic papers.

## **6 JUSTIFICATION OF THE SETTLEMENT HIERARCHY**

6.1 The settlement hierarchy is a key component of the RLP. It is set out in policy SG3 and comprises the following:

- Main Town
- Area Centres
- Group Centres
- Other Rural Settlements

6.2 Spalding is the only identified Main Town. Holbeach, Long Sutton, Sutton Bridge and Crowland are identified as the Area Centres. This echoes the SP (April 2004) to which the RLP conforms.

6.3 The settlement hierarchy in the Adopted Local Plan (ALP) has three tiers – the towns, larger or main villages and smaller villages. The villages that are classified as larger or main villages in the ALP are Cowbit, Deeping St Nicholas, Donington, Gosberton, Moulton, Pinchbeck, Weston and Whaplode. This settlement hierarchy was carried forward into the FDD; however, the hierarchy did not adequately reflect the policy position. In particular, housing provision was only made for the town of Spalding, with the towns and villages only having provision made for sites that already benefited from permission. As the policy position in the RLP has been revised and developed, it was felt that the settlement hierarchy should also be re-visited and revised to reflect this.

- 6.4 Donington has been placed at the same level in the hierarchy as the smaller towns in response to its size, and the range of services and facilities present, as identified in the Services and Facilities Background Paper (CD/SH/11). The findings of the Services and Facilities survey carried out for the Background Paper showed that Donington is as well provided for in terms of services and facilities as Crowland and Sutton Bridge.
- 6.5 The Services and Facilities Background Paper was produced to provide a picture of what level of service/facility provision is available in each settlement. The survey of each settlement aimed to capture the maximum amount of information relating to the number and type of services and facilities available. This information was collected through a combination of site visits and desk-based research, with the aim of collecting comprehensive data for each settlement.
- 6.6 The site visits covered each of the villages, and in addition to benefiting data collection, officers were able to get a feel for the village, rather than having to depend entirely on maps. Following the site visits and data collection, the data was sent out to the parish councils for their comments on its accuracy.
- 6.7 Using the findings in the Background Paper, it can be ensured that development is directed to appropriate locations in terms of their sustainability, and requests for service provision can be reasonably justified. The information collected will also help the District Council in working towards reflecting and achieving the Government's key aim of creating sustainable communities.
- 6.8 In order to establish a hierarchy for the villages, we identified from the information collected for the Services and Facilities Survey 10 key services, namely:
- convenience shop
  - Post Office
  - public House
  - phone box
  - hall

- place of worship
- equipped play area
- nursery/pre-school
- primary school
- daily bus service

6.9 The villages were then ranked according to how many of these 10 services that they enjoyed.

6.10 It was determined that for a village to be classed as a Group Centre (the next level in the hierarchy after main Town and Area Centre) it should have at least 9 of the 10 key services and facilities. The presence of services at that level was considered generally to be a good indicator of a reasonably sustainable location to support existing and some new development. However, an element of judgement was considered still to be necessary in order to produce an accurate indication of sustainability, and as a result of this further sifting Surfleet, Quadring and Tydd St Mary, all of which have 9 of the key services, were excluded from the category of Group Centres, for the following reasons:

6.11 Surfleet is a linear village of nearly 2km in length, with the shop/Post Office at the eastern end, and the church and bus stop at the western end. The road along which the village is situated has a considerable number of bends, and only an intermittent footpath. The spatial distribution of the village, and the distribution of services within the village have prevented the formation of a village centre that is accessible by residents and it does not act as a service centre for smaller villages. Therefore it was not felt that Surfleet was sufficiently sustainable to be classed as a Group Centre.

6.12 While Quadring also has 9 of the 10 key services, two of these – primary school and parish church – are situated a significant distance from the village. Quadring does not act as a service centre for any smaller villages, due to its position between Gosberton and Donington, which are higher order centres, in particular it is within close proximity to Donington.

- 6.13 Tydd St Mary is located on the A1101 between Long Sutton and Wisbech. Tydd St Mary does not act as a service centre to any smaller villages to any significant degree due to its proximity to the much larger settlement of Wisbech. A number of the services within the village are shared with the adjacent village of Tydd Gote, and for this reason some services are located outside the village, for example the village hall is located on the A1101 between the villages.
- 6.14 There are also a number of villages that do not have 9 of the key services, but have nevertheless been classified as Group Centres following a similar analysis. These villages are Deeping St Nicholas, Fleet Hargate and Weston, all of which have 8 of the 10 key services.
- 6.15 Deeping St Nicholas has historically been classified as a 'main village', and as a result it has experienced a significant amount of growth which will help to support the services and facilities within the village. The 2005 Annual Monitoring Report estimates that Deeping St Nicholas has a population of 1008, up from the estimate of 769 in the 2004 Annual Monitoring Report. Deeping St Nicholas is on the A16, one of the main road links between Spalding and Peterborough. At present there is no daily bus service, but there is the potential through the identification in the Provisional 2<sup>nd</sup> Lincolnshire Local Transport Plan Bus Strategy of a future new Interconnect Route between Spalding and Peterborough.
- 6.16 Fleet Hargate has a role as providing services for some of surrounding smaller villages. The village school is shared with Fleet Church End, and is in the smaller village; however, the distance between the two villages is only approximately 1km. Fleet Hargate is on the main east-west transport corridor, and is on the route of the Interconnect 505 Spalding to Kings Lynn bus service.
- 6.17 Weston is a smaller village than a majority of the others classified as Group Centres, but while it only has 8 of the 10 key services, it does have a significant leisure facility in the Baytree area, including the Fun Farm and Laser Quest. There are good employment opportunities, with major employers being situated

on the edge of the village. Weston is on the A151 corridor and benefits from being on the route of the Interconnect 505 bus service.

- 6.18 Recent appeal decisions have supported the approach of the council in relation to the settlement hierarchy. In particular the positions of Gosberton Risegate and Gedney Black Lion End, both of which are classified as Other Rural Settlements, have been supported in light of their poor service provision.

## **7 JUSTIFICATION OF FLOOD RISK POSITION**

- 7.1 PPG25 states that local planning authorities should adopt a risk-based approach to proposals for development in or affecting flood risk areas. In order for South Holland to be able to take such a risk-based approach a Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) was undertaken in accordance with the guidelines in Appendix F of PPG25.
- 7.2 The First Deposit Draft Local Plan did not benefit from a completed SFRA, and therefore contained the Environment Agency's Indicative Flood Risk Map. Our SFRA was published early 2003, having been completed by our consultants Posford Haskoning in December 2002.
- 7.3 The Council belongs to the inter-regional forum known as the "King's Lynn Group", which is a group set up by the county council to discuss flood risk issues in Eastern England, and exchange knowledge and experiences. South Holland has been able to partake actively in this group, having been one of the first authorities to complete its SFRA.
- 7.4 Following the completion of the SFRA, development control staff worked closely with EA staff to develop a matrix, closely linked to the SFRA, for development control purposes to help determine when a site specific FRA is required.
- 7.5 The SFRA (CD/SH/12) has also influenced the contents of the RLP, with a new Development and Flood Risk Policy SG9), and a Sustainable Urban Drainage

Systems (SUDS) policy (SG11) that seeks to ensure that new developments will not exacerbate flood risk. The results of the SFRA have also influenced the new allocations that have been made, as a part of the sequential approach, and have been included in the Urban Capacity Study. The Pre-Inquiry changes reduce the employment allocation at Wingland significantly on the ground, amongst others, of flood risk.

## **8 CONCLUSION**

- 8.1 The RLP strategy accords with National, Regional and sub-regional guidance. The core strategy translates the overall vision of the plan into policies which can be used to shape the future sustainable development of the District and guide the determination of planning applications.