

Examination of the East Lindsey Core Strategy and the East Lindsey Settlement Proposals Development Plan Document (DPD)

Inspectors' matters, issues and questions (MIQs)

Stage 1 – Core Strategy

26 May 2017

Note: The MIQs for Stage 2 relating primarily to the Settlement Proposals Development Plan Document and 5 year supply of housing will be made available separately. Some cross-cutting issues relating to both plans will be considered in Stage 1.

Abbreviations:

ADM – additional minor modification proposed by the Council

CS – Core Strategy

Framework – National Planning Policy Framework

Regulations – The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012

The Council's answers are in italics with any suggested modifications in red italics

Matter 5 – The overall distribution of development, between the Coastal Zone/area and Inland, in particular for housing (Policies SP3 and SP17)

Context: The district wide housing target is 7768 homes. The plan seeks to restrict housing in the Coastal Zone/area to existing commitments (1308) because this is an area of high coastal flood risk. This leaves a minimum of 6460 to be met inland.

The plan states that the Council has chosen a 'zero population growth' scenario for the coast, amounting to 96 homes/year or 735 for the plan period. This assumes no significant growth in the coastal population and a rise in the formation of new households of approximately 4.9%. The figure of 735 is less than the existing commitments total of 1308 as of Feb 2016. [paras 9 and 12, pages 22-23]

Policy SP17 lists the settlements in the coastal area/zone.

Policy SP18 sets out the circumstances where new housing will be accepted in the Coastal Zone. In addition, to sites which already have planning permission this includes: (1) sites with permission where improved layouts, designs or flood mitigation come forward [provided house numbers do not increase], (2) open market housing meeting specified criteria (including brownfield and disused

sites, subject to active marketing for other uses and not being viable for other uses), (3) housing for specific identified vulnerable minority groups. This policy will be covered in detail under Matter 15.

The representation from the Environment Agency (23/1/17) states: 'We strongly support the Council's approach to direct housing growth to areas at lowest risk of flooding (ie away from the coastal settlements) in order to avoid increasing the population at risk of flooding. We commend the Council for its approach in adhering to national planning policy and directing vulnerable development away from areas of highest flood risk, whilst meeting the needs of the existing community with the provision of 1308 new homes in the form of existing commitments.'

Main issue: Is the division of the District into discrete Coastal and Inland Zones justified? Is the overall policy of restraining housing development in the coastal zone justified by coastal flood risk?

Questions:

1. Is the Coastal Zone clearly shown on the submission policies map? Does the Plan clearly set out which Towns, Large Villages and other settlements are in the coastal zone.

The map is incorrect and requires modifying to show clearly which settlements are relevant to the Coastal Zone. This modification will be carried out.

2. Is the extent of the Coastal Zone justified and how was it established? What is the probability of river and sea flooding in this area? How many people live in this area? Have there been any incidents of tidal flooding?

The population of the Coastal Zone is approximately 42,000 which is 31% of the total population of the District.

The Coastal Zone is the area covered by the Environment Agency's Coastal Flood Hazard Maps, The zone is split into four areas, with the majority falling into red and orange zones.

1. Red – Danger for All
2. Orange – Danger for Most
3. Yellow – Danger for Some
4. Green – Low hazard (caution)

The maps show the level of flood hazard to people if the coastal and tidal flood defences are breached. The hazard rating depends on the depth and velocity of flood water in different locations. The flood hazard maps are based on computer modelling of simulated breaches at intervals along the coastline. The Council is confident that the maps are accurate because the flood event in December 2013 resulted in parts of Boston being extensively

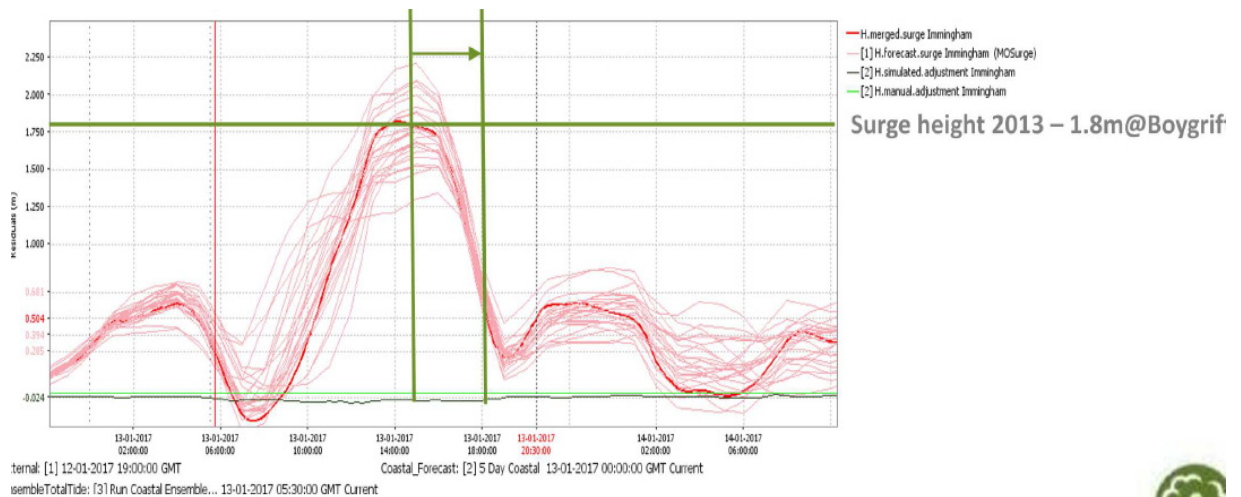
flooded, Boston is also covered by the same maps and the water went in the places set out on the maps.

This is the most up to date modelling for assessing flood hazard along the East Lindsey Coast. The Council could have chosen the area covered by Flood Zones 2 and 3 but this is much larger and the maps are formulated without defences taking into account. The area of the Coastal Flood Hazard Maps is considerably smaller than Flood Zones 2 and 3 and was felt to be the most robust, accurate model for flood risk which ultimately did not affect so many settlements.

The main threat in the Coastal Zone comes from the risk of coastal flooding with the risk of an event high. There is some river flooding but this normally involves tide locking (where inland waters try to drain blocked by an incoming high tide) when an event occurs.

There have been two major recent events, both involved a deepening pressure system, high astrological tides and strong north westerly winds which caused a tidal surge to move down the Lincolnshire coast. The first one on the 5th December 2013. Between 18-20 km of flood defences overtopped, causing four breach locations. A number of buildings, including significant sites, were damaged, such as the historic St Botolph's Church ('Boston Stump') and Gibraltar Point Visitor Centre. An estimated 1,700 hectares of agricultural land was inundated, and £8.1m worth of damage caused to infrastructure in the county. A total of 6072 residential properties, the majority in Boston, plus a further 121 businesses were flooded. Approximately 350 tonnes of flood-contaminated waste was safely collected and disposed of in the days following the flooding. Partners dealing with the event were also faced with the additional challenge of managing commitments to the Lincoln Christmas Market, which attracted an additional 200,000 visitors to the city over the same period, and a major power cut impacting most of Lincoln, including both the market and the County Emergency Centre (CEC) at the height of surge response operations on the 6th December. East Lindsey in the main missed the full impact of the event because of a slight change in the wind direction but if it had not happened then the Coast of the District would have had more damage and a greater impact. The information on the event is set out in CD64

The second event occurred on the 17th January 2017, there is no report on this yet because the event only happened at the beginning of the year. But it was the same set of circumstances as the 2013 event.



The diagram above from the Environment Agency shows the progress of the event and the how close the time was between a low at around 6.00am to the high at 2.00pm, then the wind changed direction and by 6.00pm the level of the water had dropped again. If the wind had not changed direction then the situation would have been serious. Some evacuation did take place along the coast and soldiers were deployed.

What this demonstrates to the Council is an event can take place in any one year, the risk is real and present and poses a risk to life for those living and working in the Coastal Zone.

3. Is the restriction of new housing in the Coastal Zone to existing commitments (apart from the exceptions set out in Policy SP18), including in the Towns of Skegness and Mablethorpe/Sutton/Trusthorpe, a justified response to coastal flood risk? If not, should an alternative approach have been followed based on an assessment of flood risk and development needs in individual settlements (for example, such as North Somercotes)?

The Council worked in partnership on the Coastal Study. The main agreed principle of the Study was to follow the current Shoreline Management Plan policies in relation to the line and standard of protection of coastal flood defences. The Study was therefore concerned with residual flood risk. The primary principle is to increase the safety of people by reducing the number of people at risk of flood hazard in the Study Area. The Council supported this principle which is set out in CD8 and continues to support it. Even though this was developed prior to the NPPF, the Council considers that it does conform to it in that paragraph 99 of the NPPF states that "Local Plans should take account of climate change over the longer term including factors such as flood risk.....New development should be planned to avoid increased vulnerability to the range of impacts arising from climate change". Paragraph 100 goes onto to say that inappropriate development in areas at risk of flooding should be avoided by directing development away from areas of highest risk.....Local Plans should apply a sequential, risk-based approach to the location of development to avoid where possible flood risk to people, property and manage any residual risk....." Sequentially the District has safe settlements away from flood risk to locate its main growth into and this is what the Council has done.

The Council continued to work with the Environment Agency after the end of the East Midlands Plan to find a way to approach flood risk that allowed for housing for the formation of existing households but did not strategically grow the population of the Coastal Zone. This followed the key principle of the Coastal Study.

Therefore the Council looked at the formation of new households in the Coastal Zone and worked out through the work of Edge Analytics (CD9 and CD10) what the dwellings needed to accommodate this driver would be over the plan period. The population of the Coastal Zone like all of East Lindsey actually grows through the in migration of mainly older persons and therefore any mechanism for growth for the Coast would only be looking at the formation of new households from households already in the coastal zone, not the in migration of older persons moving in from outside the flood risk area. They would therefore be moving from safe areas into unsafe areas with regard to flood risk.

Taking a zero population growth scenario, which fitted with the Coastal Study principle in that it allowed new household formation but was not business as usual. Using the same methodology as for the rest of the District that would mean the Coastal Zone would need 735 homes over the plan period. There was in February 2016, 1308 housing commitments in the coast already and this being above the housing needed there was no requirement for any new housing allocations.

The housing commitments for the Coastal Zone are quite widely distributed and are set out on page 163 of the Settlement Proposals Document; taking Skegness and North Somercotes as examples, as at 30th April 2017, Skegness had 585 commitments and North Somercotes 58.

From the work done by Edge Analytics in 2016 (CD10) the number of dwellings needed to ensure existing household formation in the Coastal Zone has actually gone down to 630 for the plan period, the number of commitments as at 30th April 2017 has only dropped to 1284. Therefore there is still an oversupply of housing available to be developed.

Given the size of the population of the Coastal Zone and its demographic makeup of many older persons, the scale of the risk, the scale of trying to evacuate a population of this size if a major event occurred and the fact that at the moment there appears to be no evidenced impact on the zone from the policy, the Council believed it was justified to try this new policy approach in the Local Plan. Protecting the lives of residents and trying to be in conformity with national policy in that sequentially there is somewhere else safer to place growth in the District is seen as a priority and must be given a place in policy otherwise the Council will never know if it could have worked. The Council is however committed to reviewing this policy approach because it is so different from past approaches.

4. There appear to be housing allocations in some Large Villages which may fall within (or partially within) the coastal zone shown on the Key Diagram (page 5) [eg Grainthorpe, Hogsthorpe and Marshchapel]. What is the justification for this?

When the Council chose the settlements to be in the Coastal Zone those settlements that fell entirely within the zone, such as Mablethorpe, Skegness, North Somercotes went into the list. Those settlements that were nearer the edge of the zone on this occasion were classed as inland settlements. The question for the Council was could the residents go quickly out of the Coastal Zone and be safe and in the cases of Hogsthorpe, Grainthorpe and Marshchapel they could, it's only a relatively short journey. The residents of settlements like Skegness, Mablethorpe and North Somercotes are entirely within the Coastal Zone and have to move through large areas of red (danger for all) and orange (danger for most) zones prior to reaching areas of safety.

5. Is the overall split in housing numbers between the inland and coastal areas justified? Will any need arising in relation to the coastal area, which is not met by existing commitments and the various policy exceptions, be capable of being met in the inland area? Could this policy affect levels of in-migration to East Lindsey?

The Council believes the inland and coastal housing split is justified. The inland part of the District is capable of accommodating additional growth. The local plan went out for consultation twice in 2016 and all the statutory consultees responded, none of them came back with evidence that the inland part of the District is not capable of taking the growth it had been allocated.

The policy does not appear to be affecting in migration at the moment, in migration having a sharp fall in 2007/08 and 2008/09. In 2013/14 it rose sharply and has remained at a relatively high level compared to the 2011 low point. (Para 2.21 of CD10). This is one of the matters that the Council is monitoring. The Council has been carrying out a "Movement of Residents Survey" since 2012 with a survey going out to all residents moving into a newly completed house in the District. The response rate has not been good but out of the 1119 questionnaires sent out there have been 241 responses. The predominant District wide reason for moving was to retire (13%). Moving to the coast was higher with 19% retiring and 9% for work. The cost of property was the dominant factor in choice of property with 40.9% not being ELDC residents.

The Council believes that some of the in migrants are buying second hand houses along the Coast because these are in the main bungalows and this is why the second hand housing market is more robust than the new housing market. Given that 19% of 241 residents who replied to the movement of resident's survey forms were retirees, it shows that older persons are also buying new homes and this is adding to the churn of the population and the increase churn of second hand homes. Given the high number of older persons in the Coastal Zone the churn on second hand houses is high enough not to start seeing a shortage in supply of housing, this adds to the discussion set out in the answers to the supply questions.

6. In setting overall policies of restraint in the Coastal Zone, has adequate account been taken of the protection offered by coastal sea defences?

There are sea defences along the coast of the District and they offer a reasonable 1:200 standard of protection in some places and lower in others. Whilst they are good defences, an event can happen and has happened and will happen again. There are no plans to improve the level of defence along the coast only to maintain it in line with climate change, and there are question marks over the future funding of the defences. It is only guaranteed till 2021 at the moment. There are 42,000 residents in the Coastal Zone, many of them older and vulnerable, flood risk events are more likely to happen in the winter months, as demonstrated in 2013 and 2017 and in the hours of darkness. The Council in weighing up the risk that strategically growing the coast would pose for new residents coming into the Zone and believes that this growth can be accommodated in areas which are safer which would be in conformity with the NPPF in that development plans should sequentially plan growth.

7. The supporting text states that the Council will carry out a plan review *in 5 years* (page 28), a full review of its housing policy *within 5 years* (page 29) and a full review of the coastal policy *at the end of the first five years* (page 84). Given the approach taken in the coastal area, should the plan include a policy which sets out this intent? Should the policy set out what stage will be reached by a specific date (eg a target date submission for examination within # years of adoption)?

There is a commitment from the Council for an early review of the plan and the work has already been set out for that review including a re-assessment of the OAN. The Council can put this in a policy if it makes matters clearer, and expand paragraph 36 on page 28 of the Housing Growth and Inland Growth Section, a suggested modification could read as set out below;

There are a number of factors in the Local Plan which mean there is uncertainty around delivery and the impact of the policies, especially as this is the first time the Council has constrained housing growth on the Coast. The Council will carry out a full review of its housing policy with a review being submitted for examination by 2022. This review will examine the impact of the policy alongside the Coastal Policies SP17 to SP21 and re-assess the objectively assessed need for housing.