

SOUTH EAST LINCOLNSHIRE JOINT STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMITTEE

Report of: Joint Policy Unit Manager

To: Joint Committee – 13 July 2012

(Author: Peter Udy, Planning Policy Officer)

Subject: Assessment of the Sustainability of Rural Settlements

Purpose: To provide information on settlement assessment work

Recommendations:

- a) That members consider the contents of this report and the attached South East Lincolnshire - An assessment of settlements and their sustainability credentials; and
- b) That the contents be noted.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

In order to consider the relative role and function of each of the settlements in South East Lincolnshire - except for Boston and Spalding - they have been assessed using a methodology that was prepared by Boston Borough Council for a similar piece of work in 2007/8 (see Appendix A).

1.2 Options

There are no options as this report is for discussion only.

1.3 Views of the Head of Planning and Strategy, Boston Borough Council:

'It is imperative that Members, understand and approve of the underlying approach and reasons for establishing a settlement hierarchy and are comfortable and agreeable to the criteria approach adopted in establishing this evidence base. Members must adopt a view as to what makes a sustainable settlement that might take future development and what does not. In settlements that might be considered much lower down the sustainability ladder, Members will also be asked at some point as to what development, if any such settlements are capable of accommodating and in what circumstances. Members must also be clear that this in itself is not determining future development policy, but an important tool to enable that in the months ahead.'

1.4 He has further stated:

‘Concurs with the SHDC Planning Manager’s views as to the significance of this work and just as in South Holland, Boston has a number of larger settlements outside of Boston itself, which are likely to be more than capable of taking certain levels of growth. Indeed these will need to be considered most carefully, in close consultation with the specific communities and to explore the opportunities that can be offered. This is particularly relevant when issues such as flood risk might mean alternatives to development concentrations in the main town of Boston, but these will also need to be fully appraised to ensure the Local Plan delivers sustainable development.’

1.5 **Views of the Planning Manager, Breckland Council and South Holland District Council:**

‘It is important that the Local Plan contains a clear settlement hierarchy and the role of rural settlements is articulated and reflected in the development management process. The Rural Settlements Paper provides part of the proportionate local evidence base as required by the NPPF and is an approach/methodology utilised and found sound by other Local Planning Authorities. In analysing the contents of the Paper, it should be noted from a South Holland perspective that some larger rural settlements will have a level of service provision, employment and public transport that could support an appropriate level of growth, notably Holbeach, Long Sutton and Crowland which were all identified as Area Centres in the South Holland Local Plan. Additionally, communities such as Donington, Gosberton, Pinchbeck and Surfleet have a good level of service provision and Moulton, Moulton Chapel, Sutton St James, Weston and Whaplode a reasonable level of service provision and public transport. The settlement hierarchy needs to consider whether these communities should be distinguished in the Strategy document and having a policy framework geared to protecting services in these communities and making positive allocations of development. The Paper is a very thorough and comprehensive piece of work but Members should note it is a quantitative analysis and the quality of service provision and available capacity (i.e. can the local school accommodate the extra pupils?) will require further investigation. Members of the Committee are encouraged to give an early indication of how the results should be translated into the Strategy document.’

1.6 **REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

The assessment will be helpful in informing proposals for the location, nature and scale of development across South East Lincolnshire.

2.0 **IMPLICATIONS**

2.1 **Risk:** Without empirical evidence on the sustainability of settlements there is a risk the Secretary of State will find the local plan unsound as there is no evidence to support the decisions made on settlements.

2.2 **Financial:** There are no direct financial implications arising from the recommendations to this report.

2.3 **Legal:** There are no direct legal implications arising from the recommendations of this report.

2.4 **Equality and Diversity:** Planning seeks to balance the needs of all elements of society. This report is based on data of what exists at present and therefore is not biased in favour of one section over another.

3.0 **WARDS/COMMUNITIES AFFECTED**

3.1 The implications of the proposed new Local Plan affect all wards/communities.

Background papers:- Boston Borough Council: A sustainability study of rural settlements 2008.

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Appendices attached to this report:

Appendix – South East Lincolnshire - An assessment of settlements and their sustainability credentials