

Public Document Pack



Please note that the following document was published separately from the main agenda for this meeting of the Executive - Extraordinary Meeting to be held on Thursday, 20th March 2025 at 7.30 pm in The Guildhall, Saltergate, Lincoln, LN1 1DH.

2. Local Government Reorganisation - Appendix 1- (Pages 3 - 24)

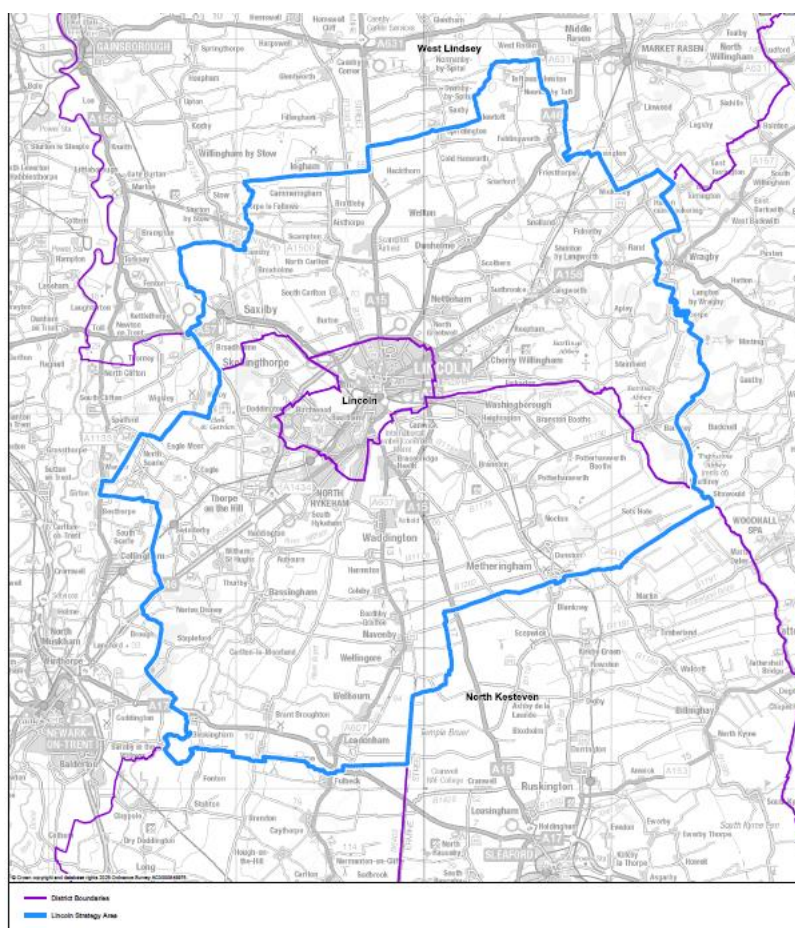
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Appendix 1

Local Government Reorganisation: City of Lincoln Proposal March 2025

1. Introduction

City of Lincoln Council's proposal for Local Government Reorganisation recommends a three unitary model for Greater Lincolnshire. This includes a larger Lincoln unitary council, which grows the city's boundary based on the current Lincoln Strategy Area in the Central Lincolnshire Local Plan, making the city and surrounding areas sustainable and focusing on a functioning economy and housing growth. This proposed geographical boundary for a new larger Lincoln authority has a population of 207,000 based on mid 2022 population estimates and is expected to grow to approximately 246,500 by 2038 and 276,000 by 2050. The proposal considers the city's unique identity and heritage and the opportunity an expanded city has for improving outcomes and providing the right services locally, that meet the needs of the city and neighbouring villages now and in future.



2. Lincoln- Identity and Heritage

Lincoln is a city with a rich cultural and historical identity with a heritage significantly linked with historic local governance and administration. The city's communities have a strong sense of belonging to their neighbourhoods and the city is a strong part of the

identity of individuals, communities, businesses, community organisations, local stakeholders and neighbouring villages.

In the centre of the cultural quarter of the city, on top of Steep Hill, stands Lincoln Cathedral, one of Europe's finest examples of Gothic architecture. Work on the cathedral began back in 1072 and it was consecrated in 1092. A short distance away stands Lincoln Castle. Built by William the Conqueror in 1068, the castle is home to an original 1215 Magna Carta as well as the 1217 Charter of the Forest. In the lower city stands the Guildhall and Stonebow.

The council's Full Council meetings are held in the historic Guildhall and have been held on that site for over 784 years, standing across the route of Ermine Street making Lincoln one of England's oldest cities.

Civic Pride

The City of Lincoln's Civic Party consists of the Right Worshipful the Mayor, supported by the City Sheriff, and their respective Consorts. Lincoln is one of only fifteen towns and cities in England and Wales to maintain the office of Sheriff, first granted by Royal Charter of King Henry IV in 1409 when the city was made a county. The Office of Mayor dates back at least 815 years to the first mention on the Lincolnshire Assize Rolls of 1206. The office of mayor is therefore one of the oldest in existence. Lincoln and its residents are immensely proud of its rich and ceremonial history.

As identified, civic pride is an important feature of the city, it brings the community together, makes people feel proud about where they live and is a key feature of the identity of individuals and organisations from across sectors.

It is part of what defines and shapes a place and visible Civic leadership is key to supporting the aims of the council and all organisations within Lincoln. The Gothic cathedral and medieval castle and the Bishops' Palace mark the centre of a rich and tight-knit heritage including the ancient Roman and medieval streets to the Victorian shops, factories and terraces and the Edwardian villa suburbs which characterise the lower part of the city.

The city has been a seat of local and regional government for two thousand years. Tangible traces of each era of its development are evident in the cityscape today. Lincoln is particularly renowned for its standing Roman remains, beautiful medieval buildings and significant archaeological remains. The Romans founded Lincoln as a fortress on the top of the escarpment north of the River Witham, later extending the city down to its banks. As a Roman Colonia, Lincoln was one of only four of the top-ranking settlements in the country. During this period Lincoln was linked to the River Trent by the Fossdyke Navigation, which survives as England's oldest canal. The Roman infrastructure persists like nowhere else in England. From standing remains of the city's walls and buildings, the patterns of roads and streets, to the only standing Roman arch still used by pedestrians and cars in England, Lincoln's Roman heritage is unique.

History and Traditions

There are several notable events of the 12th century that signify the start of Lincoln's journey to early self-governance. In the year 1130, the citizens of Lincoln gave 200 marks of silver and 4 of gold to "hold the city of the King in Chief", the power of accounting for the fee farm themselves at the exchequer, a significant grant of self-governance which was not seen in London until around 60 years later. Next, a charter of King Henry II of 1155 declares the King has delivered the city to the citizens for the accustomed farm, and then in 1194 a charter of King Richard I allows the citizens of Lincoln to appoint a *prepositus*, or a head of the city, from among themselves. This charter signifies where the city first becomes self-governing in its entirety both financially and administratively.

Evolution to what is quite an advanced administration for the time is swift. John's charter of 1200 to the city allows the prepositi to be removed only by the "citizens in common counsel", a freedom to make those decisions without Royal intervention. Casual references in sources from 1202 show that there is already a large civic establishment. In addition to the citizen-appointed prepositi and bailiffs, there are four coroners and four Bedells, an office which remains to this day in the form of the Mayor's Officer. There were also two clerks of the city to keep records of the city courts.

City of Lincoln Council possess several items of Mayoral insignia; each were given by the Monarch themselves. These include;

- A state sword – King Richard II gave his personal sword two-handed sword to John Sutton, with the right for it to be carried before him and all his successors.
- A grant Cap of Maintenance was given by King Henry VIII in 1534
- A great mace - was given by King Charles I in October 1640 when the City Sheriffs and citizens met the King at the edge of the city.

These three items are still proudly used during Civic processions on numerous occasions throughout the year. The mace is still used at the opening of full Council meetings, and the full regalia of sword, mace and Cap of Maintenance are used many times throughout the year on occasions such as Battle of Britain Service, Remembrance Services, University and College graduation ceremonies and Freedom Parades, to name but a few.

Royalty and Governance

Almost 950 years ago, Lincoln's first significant association with the Crown was when William the Conqueror moved the seat of the Bishop from Dorchester on Thames to Lincoln, creating the largest diocese in England which existed for many centuries. Bishop's Manor in Nettleham is the site of the manor of the Bishops of Lincoln dating from the late 11th century. This followed the building of one of his first castles in Lincoln in 1068, and Lincoln became a significant city for the Crown. Parliament was held in the city by Kings Henry III in 1226, Edward I in 1300-01, Edward II in 1312, 1315, 1316, 1318 and 1327.

Lincoln's heritage and identity is inherently linked with local governance.

City of Lincoln and Lincoln City Football Club

Historically, there are strong ties between football teams and the communities in which they are formed. As such, football clubs are seen not only to reflect local culture and identity but make their own distinctive contributions to local civil society. The football club symbolises pride not just in the neighbourhood it is based in but in the wider city/town regions.

Lincoln City Football Club plays one of the key roles in facilitating an authentic experience of Lincoln and is one of its liveliest cultural assets. The football club is over 134 years old and leverages both residents and visitors' perceptions and adds an emotional value to Lincoln that cannot be replicated in places without a professional football team.

Lincoln City Football Club average attendance is 8,123, which puts them 35th out of the 72 football league clubs, which equates to 94% stadium occupancy. 30% of the fanbase travel 1.5 hours to watch the team's home games, which demonstrates Lincoln's wider place identity beyond its traditional city boundary.

The map of the fan base for the club correlates strongly with the proposed unitary footprint, reinforcing the sense of affinity and identity that Lincoln engenders.

Universities and College

The University of Lincoln established its main campus in the heart of Lincoln in 1996 on former industrial/railway land remediated to enable its creation. It has supported the growth of key sectors of the economy including a new School of Engineering established in 2009 and the recent Lincoln Medical School. Since then, student numbers have grown from 4,000 to 16,000, direct employment remains at over 1,000 jobs and the GDP value created is more than £100m. Alongside the financial impacts, its very existence has inspired young people academically and through business entrepreneurship and supported the growth of the local business community.

Bishop Grosseteste University offers a different university option and has established itself as a high-quality teacher training place of choice with a complementary set of courses providing Lincoln and Lincolnshire people access to the full range of higher education opportunities. The University has developed key expertise in social enterprise and works well within the local community, including running the library/community provision in one of the most deprived areas.

Lincoln College provides that further education opportunity with a focus on vocational and apprenticeship-based options for young people.

This educational heart of the city works closely with businesses to equip and skill our existing and future workforce to deliver economic and social prosperity.

3. Evidence Base

3a) Economic Area

The larger Lincoln Area being put forward for consideration as a new unitary authority is based on a long-established and functioning self-contained economic area called the Lincoln Strategy Area. This area is supported by a solid evidence base and one which has already been tested in the public arena and found sound on numerous occasions by Central Government appointed Planning Inspectors.

The Lincoln Policy Area was first defined in the Lincolnshire Structure Plan and was officially endorsed when the Plan was adopted in 2006. The area was also taken forward in the East Midlands Regional Plan and identified as an appropriate location for significant sustainable housing and employment growth.

The Lincoln Strategy Area was reviewed again in 2016 as part of the Central Lincolnshire Local Plan to define and recommend an optimum spatial growth strategy to be both sustainable and deliverable over 20 years.

In this Local Government Reorganisation proposal for a larger Lincoln, this rationale is followed and includes;

- The whole of the city of Lincoln
- The following wards in the district of North Kesteven: Bassingham Rural, Bracebridge Heath, Branston, Heighington & Washingborough, Hykeham Central, Hykeham Fosse, Hykeham Memorial, Metheringham Rural, Navenby & Brant Broughton, Skellingthorpe & Eagle, Waddington Rural, Witham St Hughs & Swinderby
- The following wards in the district of West Lindsey: Bardney, Cherry Willingham, Dunholme & Welton, Nettleham, Saxilby, Scampton, Sudbrooke

Due to the constrained nature of the city's boundary that doesn't correlate with place many of the residents of the above wards already consider themselves residents of Lincoln which highlights the sense of identity of the city stretching beyond the existing boundary.

Planning for growth and development of the Lincoln Strategy Area considers the intra-area relationships between Travel to Work Areas and Housing Market areas at a local level. This represents the area within which development to meet the housing and employment needs of communities who look to Lincoln as their main urban centre could be considered. Additionally, Lincoln is the focus of many young people in the city and surrounding towns and villages for study, for school, college or university. There are positive connections between the city and neighbouring villages with children attending schools across the current boundaries.

For local government reorganisation, it makes sense to review the city in this context.

National priorities for inclusive growth, sustainable economies and addressing poverty need to be delivered at place level in cities. Cities are where jobs, businesses and innovation, along with poverty and health inequality are most concentrated. Across Greater Lincolnshire the causes and impact of deprivation and health inequality are different across city, rural and coastal places, and the opportunities for jobs, businesses and innovation are different in these functional economic areas too.

As a city, Lincoln has a significant economy and a larger population than all other urban areas in Greater Lincolnshire. It generates jobs and economic activity for wider areas as demonstrated in travel to work times. Lincoln is a city with significant major cultural assets and anchor institutions that attract people to the area and is a knowledge-intensive place, with greater economic complexity than smaller urban areas in Greater Lincolnshire and is a centre for creativity and innovation.

The LGA estimates that by 2030, key cities (Lincoln is a member of the Key Cities network that represents urban living in the UK) and core cities will have at least 220,000 jobs in the low carbon economy, rising to 380,000 in 2050. Cities will have a major role in greener futures, designing solutions and working with partners in the private sector and universities. New industries such as low carbon will require new skills in higher-level advanced technologies and management.

Cities often serve as gateways to global markets. They attract foreign direct investment (FDI) and multinational corporations due to their connectivity and infrastructure. This international integration enhances local economies through increased trade, investment, and the exchange of ideas and technologies.

Lincoln has a strong history of innovation, research and development and has made valuable contributions to the industrial and manufacturing heritage of the country. It is the focal point of Greater Lincolnshire's defence and advanced manufacturing capabilities, high workforce concentrations versus the national average indicate significant skills levels in key high-technology classifications such as electronics manufacturing, machinery and equipment manufacturing, computer, electronics and optical products manufacturing. Up to 6% of the population are ex-military, providing a further source of workers with specific relevant expertise. This pool of talent was a key driver in Lone Star Analysis opening its new headquarters in Lincoln. This new space was necessitated by the Lone Star's rapid growth in the U.K. and enhances the company's capacity to serve customers in the United Kingdom, Europe, and the Middle East. The company plans to leverage the new Lincoln site to expand offerings in AI and solutions for customers outside the defence community, in addition to current offerings in Defence and Energy.

Lincoln is poised for further FDI interest in the Defence sector with the opening of the 'Centre for Defence and Security AI Centre'.

Cities are melting pots of culture and creativity, driving consumer demand and fostering unique markets. The diversity found in cities stimulates entrepreneurship

and leads to the creation of new products and services. Additionally, cultural and entertainment industries thrive in urban environments, contributing significantly to local economies.

Several research studies have highlighted the local economic impact of arts and culture, including references to financial return on investment, regional performance or contribution to overall UK economic performance. Strategic partners emphasised the value of a strong arts and cultural offer in helping to attract creative entrepreneurs and enterprises who, given their size, can be more flexible in their location decisions.

Location decisions, especially in the case of FDI, strongly influenced by infrastructure considerations such as transport connectivity, access to a skilled and qualified workforce, proximity to further and higher education institutions, premises availability and costs and competitive wage costs.

However, a strong arts and cultural offer is a more influential factor for businesses within the retail sector, given its recognised contribution to strengthening the visitor economy and generating footfall. A strong arts and cultural offer were also emphasised by many contributors as important in attracting creative entrepreneurs and enterprises who, given their size, can be more flexible in their location decisions. Lincoln's unique heritage and distinctive capabilities, position the city as a place that can capitalise from this and bring use to leverage further investment. The larger Lincoln proposals, based on the geography of the current Lincoln Strategy Area are robust as this has been determined through considering key placemaking proposals (consistent with objectives of the National Planning Policy Framework) and assessed growth options against sustainability criteria. It identifies where 64% of Central Lincolnshire's growth can be accommodated, maximising, sensitively, growth on urban and brownfield sites in the Lincoln urban area, concentrating major growth on a series of Sustainable Urban Extensions, allocating some sites in and on the edge of villages ensuring that villages thrive and are connected but are not overwhelmed by growth. A new unitary footprint for a larger Lincoln;

- supports a competitive, diverse and stable economy underpinning the city's role as a driver for the area
- reinforces and improves the city centre as a regional destination for shopping, leisure, culture, learning and business,
- supports strong commercial investment opportunities for developers and other partners
- meets identified needs for employment sites and improves access to high quality employment and training opportunities and provides employment land on economically viable and deliverable sites
- preserves and enhances built and historic environment
- conserves and enhances biodiversity through inclusion of green linkages and supports Green Infrastructure
- makes efficient use of existing transport infrastructure
- maximises opportunities for positive cultural, social and economic interaction to stimulate regeneration and equitable outcomes

- supports health communities and individuals

The proposed larger Lincoln unitary council has sector specific considerations that are different to other parts of Greater Lincolnshire. Lincoln and surrounding areas have more than a century of design and innovation experience in the defence sector, from being the birthplace of the tank to the home of the Dambusters The defence sector is intrinsically linked to the university and science park, creating a solid rationale for the RAF bases close to Lincoln's current borders to be included in the proposed larger Lincoln geography to maximise support for this sector

The area includes former RAF Scampton which is identified as an opportunity area with significant potential for redevelopment that will not only help secure the legacy of this historic site but also attract inward investment and secure the future of the area for both existing and any new communities.

The larger Lincoln area proposal also includes key strategic employment sites allocated in the Local Plan including Lincoln Science and Innovation Park, Teal Park for industrial, warehouse and trade and Indurent Park Lincoln. The newly established medical school at The University of Lincoln creates jobs and supports growth in the health and care sector for Lincolnshire. The city's reputation as a key location for engineering and scientific development is evidenced by growth in university opportunities and local business.

The visitor economy, which includes tourism, hospitality events and attractions has a key role to play in a larger Lincoln compared to other parts of Greater Lincolnshire, and is a significant contributor to Lincoln's economy. In addition to cultural attractions such as Lincoln Castle and Lincoln Cathedral, events such as Festival of History and Lincoln Ice Trail can see in the region of 50,000 visitors a day. The latest STEAM data estimates that the economic impact from tourism in Lincoln for 2023 was £264.5 million and supports 2,500 employees. For local government reform, new unitary councils that reflect functional economic areas allows for a clear investment case in each area to drive improved productivity.

3b) Housing Growth

High-quality housing that is affordable and flexible can help individuals grow and achieve their potential. Having a place to call home helps people not only feel that they belong in their community but are also more likely to look after their neighbourhood environment. There is a housing crisis throughout the country with an acute shortage of affordable housing. As the urban centre of an otherwise largely rural county, the effects of this are felt strongly in the city. The number of people on the city's Housing Register has grown exponentially over the last few years, since March 2021 there has been a 57% increase in people waiting for Council homes. Alongside this, numbers of those registering as homeless or rough sleeping have also grown as people are drawn to the city as support services 'safety nets' have been reduced in rural areas. Consequentially, nearly 60% of City of Lincoln Council's current allocations into local

authority homes go to those to whom the city has a Rough Sleeping or Homelessness duty.

Housing stock numbers have been decimated by the Right to Buy regime; however, the Council has a mandate to replace these homes and a track record of doing so. Despite losing 206 homes in the last 5 years (to RTB), the Council has returned 255 to council stock being cognisant of the acute need for decent affordable/social housing. A further 830 new homes were delivered in the city over the last 5 years. The city's 30-year HRA Business Plan lays out a strategy to go quicker with additional affordable Housing. New sites are being identified to add to those already available whilst at the same time reviews of the city's High-Rise blocks and non-traditional homes is underway which may mean additionality by increasing density in local estate areas. The Business Plan itself demonstrates that the city's Housing Revenue Account is financially viable and as such will release circa £260m over the next 30 years to invest in and improve the current properties but also add significant additional affordable homes to our stock. Much of this investment will be in the local economy supporting local business and creating new jobs.

City of Lincoln Council is also committed to delivering new market homes. Charterholme, the largest project undertaken in the city for decades, will be jointly delivered by City of Lincoln Council and Lindum Western Growth Community Ltd, bringing more than £500 million worth of investment into Lincoln over its lifetime and providing hundreds of jobs locally. The development will supply the city with 3,200 (including 640 affordable) much-needed new homes, a neighbourhood centre, community facilities, a business park and transport infrastructure that will help alleviate some of Lincoln's worst traffic problems.

The Lincoln Strategy Area on which the larger Lincoln unitary proposal is based is forecast to deliver 64% of the housing numbers for Central Lincolnshire. The proposed larger Lincoln unitary will have a focus on delivering new homes and is committed to delivering over 17,000 new homes by mid-2038 and over 30,000 new homes by 2050.

Greater Lincolnshire Housebuilding Market Analysis undertaken by Homes England highlights that Lincoln, as the largest urban area in Greater Lincolnshire, arguably forms its own sub-market expanding around the parameter of the city, based on current private sector housing activity.

City of Lincoln's ambition to support sustainable housing growth is demonstrated by the Council's strategic priority, Let's Deliver Quality Housing and evidenced by delivery, building homes and communities. This is a solid foundation on which the proposed larger Lincoln unitary authority will base accelerated housing delivery.

A new unitary footprint for a larger Lincoln;

- Meets identified needs for a range of good quality housing and will ensure that the housing stock meets the needs of the area, including family homes, single-

person accommodation and appropriate housing for older people and those with additional specialist needs where identified

- Provides supply of new housing land on a broad range of economically viable and deliverable sites including 4 allocated Sustainable Urban Extensions in and around Lincoln
- Positively concentrates employment, housing and other development in sustainable neighbourhoods, creating a sense of community and promoting walking and cycling to reduce traffic, improve air quality and promote healthy lifestyles.
- Will raise the quality of housing as well as the supply which will support improved health and well-being outcomes
- Is sensitive to the character and needs of surrounding villages

It should be noted that wider policy context is still expected from the Government in the near future through the Long-Term Housing Strategy which will be a key consideration for housing growth proposals. What is clear however is the acceptance that the larger Lincoln Area is where new homes are being and will continue to be delivered at scale across a wide range of sites. Three of the four allocated Sustainable Urban Extensions in and around Lincoln have started on-site and will help deliver up to 12,600 new homes in the area.

3c) Sensible Geography

There is more than one Lincolnshire, each with its own identity and community needs. The Greater Lincolnshire area is spread over nearly 7,000 square kilometres, representing approximately 5.4% of England's land area across many villages, towns and a city and has distinct rural, coastal and urban identities. Lincolnshire has a diverse range of functional economic areas. Greater Lincolnshire has just one city, Lincoln, and two major towns (as defined by the ONS definition of over 75,000 population).

Lincoln's position as a city is a significant part of its identity. The needs of Lincoln residents, and that of residents in surrounding villages, are different to those in rural and coastal Lincolnshire, and Lincolnshire's market towns. Given the sparse nature of Greater Lincolnshire, a sensible geography for residents to be able to access services, and travel to work or for leisure is important. Particularly when looking at vulnerable residents and those living in deprived areas, of which Lincoln currently has several pockets significantly worse than the national average, being able to access support, skills and employment locally is key. The proposals for a larger Lincoln unitary include a significantly higher proportion of younger residents than other parts of Greater Lincolnshire and the needs of the city's residents for housing, skills, education, employment and health for this demographic are different and need a different approach to ageing rural and coastal communities. The rural communities in neighbouring towns and villages look to Lincoln's city for work, leisure, retail and services.

A sensible geography for a larger Lincoln is to grow the city boundary in line with the Lincoln Strategy Area. It allows for better connections around the city, economy and housing growth and reflects travel to work patterns and the currently under-bounded district. It is an opportunity to deliver long term investment, change and economic growth but retain a sense of local place and priorities.

In addition to the economic and housing growth rationale for a new unitary on a larger Lincoln geography, there are also wider environmental aspects to consider. This new footprint will allow for further work linking the urban nature of Lincoln with rural surroundings through nature recovery corridors; Lincoln is an urban city but has substantial green space and tree cover. The Lincoln and Witham Landscape Recovery Project is a key example of this, linking areas up from Newark to Lincoln. Providing access to nature on a wider footprint for all will support both climate and health benefits.

It is recognised that the sensible geography proposed to support economic and housing growth and local service delivery has a population below the suggested 500,000. The strong rationale for delivery outcomes needs to be balanced with financial efficiencies. Whilst this will not deliver initial financial efficiencies to the same degree as larger populations, in the context of Greater Lincolnshire, 3 unitaries will still deliver savings. This proposal also acknowledges that there will be some functions that could be delivered more efficiently through transformation and collaboration with neighbouring authorities over a wider footprint. This would include shared services for organisational support functions that could deliver the same back-office processes or systems. Resilience would also be supported through reciprocal arrangements for professional & technical skills, for example, Building Control and Housing repair services, where there are known challenges nationally in the sector. In these instances, resources across a wider area would be positive, but not weighted enough to tip the rationale for a new authority over a wider footprint just to resolve those issues. The priority remains public service delivery, delivered locally that meets local needs and understands local communities. Place-based models with local knowledge and accountability build credibility which supports investment and working in an agile way, which allows services to respond quickly to community needs. Additionally, through this proposed sensible geography, residents will feel better represented by a larger Lincoln unitary because they can feel an affinity to the place it represents. When people feel more connected to their local area, it makes it more effective for organisations to tackle difficult issues and lead on preventative approaches and combining issues into more logical geographical structures can drive service delivery savings.

Local government reorganisation with the right geographical footprint gives the opportunity for long-term viability by applying criteria for re-organisation that offers the best chance of building place-based leadership in tune with the needs of the local economy, communities and the environment.

3d) Local Representation and Local Engagement

The proposed larger Lincoln will allow for meaningful local democratic representation through elected members who know their communities and neighbourhoods. They will be able to effectively engage, advocate and champion for individuals and neighbourhoods locally, which is much more challenging over a county footprint given Lincolnshire's sparse geography.

It is important that local decision-makers understand how a locality works and how services and policies are received and impact local residents, communities and partners. Through recent consultation on Lincoln's priorities, communities have expressed that engagement, neighbourhood involvement, and local service delivery are important. A larger Lincoln geography will support all residents to feel meaningfully represented as their elected members are close to the neighbourhoods and the services being delivered. It will support effective involvement with communities in designing and delivering services tailored to local needs.

City of Lincoln demonstrates strong engagement with local communities across the city. Ward surgeries are a regular occurrence and delivery of community schemes through UKSPF has a good track record of delivering meaningful work with local residents. The recently adopted corporate priorities and delivery plan has a clear focus on engagement with local neighbourhoods and these are all areas of excellent practice that can be replicated across the larger Lincoln unitary area, complementing existing engagement mechanisms in those communities and relationships with parish councils.

The role of local engagement and truly knowing local communities should not be underestimated. During the COVID-19 pandemic, it was ward-level engagement and district councils that Government looked towards to support and reach local communities and businesses. A key example of the importance of place knowledge and engagement was supporting health services to target vaccination take-up.

The total number of existing ward councillors that make up the proposed larger Lincoln unitary authority is 71. Wards are represented from between 1 – 3 ward councillors and ward populations range from 2,538 people to 12,159. The larger Lincoln unitary area also includes areas supported by parish councils. Collaboration with local parishes and community leaders will be important. Local Government Reform proposals are built on a structure that reinvigorates local democracy, inspires people to have a voice and facilitates local communities to better participate in how they are governed and what decisions are made to support local communities will be key in delivering successful outcomes.

Local democracy and local engagement is one of the key criteria outlined for Local Government Reform and there are clear roles and benefits for a newly elected Mayor, forward councillors in any new unitary council, and for parish and town councils where they currently exist. Local engagement and local know how benefits from ward councillor knowledge for both neighbourhood and wider council service delivery.

Proposals that focus on a larger geography and population base for new unitary councils, and a significantly larger electors per councillor could lead to an overreliance on parish and town councils only for local engagement and democracy. This is cautioned against and should be reviewed against the current percentage of contested parish and town council elected seats nationally Greater Lincolnshire. The larger Lincoln area proposal allows for meaningful engagement across neighbourhoods and involvement in local democracy.

4. Devolution

4a) Wider Context Geography and Strategic

Supporting the Greater Lincolnshire Mayoral Combined County Authority (GLMCCA) with local knowledge, stakeholder engagement and resources, a larger Lincoln unitary authority will be a key partner in leveraging additional investment to deliver infrastructure, housing and economic prosperity, balancing scale with local knowledge that builds credibility. The GLMCCA will benefit from having a larger Lincoln unitary authority that is organised around place and functional social and economic areas to help drive reform and skills needed for that area, driving economic growth and aligning shared interests.

Engagement with the first mayor of Greater Lincolnshire for their view will be key, following their election in May 2025.

Further consideration will be given to delivery models for a number of key services. There is broad agreement that strategic services or services that should be delivered at scale sit best at the GLMCCA footprint and operational service delivery sits with the new principal authorities. This will make it easier for stakeholders and communities to engage with local government, strategic services can be discussed with the GLMCCA, for local delivery of services, contact the principal authority. Opportunities for service delivery need further assessment to determine the best outcome in each case.

A three unitary proposal, including larger Lincoln, allows for the interests of local communities to be represented at the GLMCCA Board and provides a strong platform for local voices to be heard. A two unitary model across Greater Lincolnshire would create a power imbalance and local voices would be lost.

4b) Local Service Delivery

The larger Lincoln unitary proposal maintains a focus on local place, that is sympathetic to local need whilst doubling its population and expanding its boundary. The proposal has a strong focus on local service delivery and addressing long-standing challenges that a countywide approach, on a geography as sparse and diverse as Lincolnshire's, has not yet delivered improved outcomes for Lincoln residents. This can be seen in persistent health inequalities, deprivation and economic inactivity in adults. Local models for prevention and social connectedness will deliver improved outcomes.

The three unitary model proposed, in the context of Greater Lincolnshire, seeks to ensure a sensible approach to service delivery that ensures that effective and efficient value-for-money public service delivery remains the priority. The need for some services to be delivered at scale over the wider Greater Lincolnshire footprint for financial sustainability and practical purposes is understood. This could be achieved through the well-established shared services model that currently operates very effectively across a range of service area functions. This would then be balanced with truly local commissioning and delivery of services at an identifiable local level within communities, reinforcing pride of place and recognising distinct local priorities and needs.

For example, strategic highways functions could be more suited to a wider geographical footprint and operationally fixing potholes could be in the remit of principal authorities.

Adult Social Care, Children's Social Care and Education should all be reviewed for the optimum delivery model. This could be delivered by;

- Principal authorities
- The Mayoral Combined County Authority
- Trust model
- Shared Service

These options could also be applied to other services and functions to determine the most effective delivery model for services and functions and assess each opportunity.

The proposed larger Lincoln unitary offers opportunities for improved outcomes for vulnerable people. The needs in Lincoln for social care, public health and homelessness support are different to Lincolnshire's rural, coastal and market towns. City of Lincoln Council has good examples of meeting the need locally, for example, private sector housing supporting safe homes and delivering Disabled Facilities Grants quickly to those who need it, delivering housing aids and adaptations supporting people to stay out of hospital which has wider public sector benefits and can be delivered to a wider population under the larger Lincoln proposals.

Shared processes and best practice governance can be applied as frameworks across a larger area to support inspections or audits but for improved outcomes addressing deprivation, skills and education, a robust local focus and delivery within principal authorities will be beneficial. The 2019 Indices of Multiple Deprivation records the proportion of Lower Super Output Areas in the most deprived 10% nationally. In terms of local need Lincoln has 18% of its LSOAs which fall within the top 10%. District neighbours South Holland and North Kesteven have no LSOAs within the top 10% of the most deprived areas nationally, South Kesteven has 1%, Boston has 3%, West Lindsey has 8% and East Lindsey has 16% (coastal deprivation). Lincoln, with surrounding communities such as Branston, which has an area within the fourth most deprived decile, and both Langworth and Fiskerton, which have areas within the fifth most deprived decile, require a focused and targeted approach to confronting these

entrenched challenges, which cannot be addressed as part of a much wider geography and population who experience significantly different needs. The larger Lincoln proposal supports the breaking of the cycle of demand for support through boosting preventative services and acting upstream, by understanding local need and connecting with local communities through local service delivery.

Services currently delivered on a wider geographical footprint can be viewed as distant, centralised, bureaucratic and unresponsive to local needs and are not perceived to be designed and delivered in partnership with local communities. Additionally, as services become increasingly evidence-based and data-led, current countywide services can be targeted to local areas of need. Given the fewer commonalities with an urban city environment the rest of Lincolnshire has, focused service delivery within a larger Lincoln will have benefits.

Housing Landlord Services will be a key focus for the new Lincoln authority. City of Lincoln is a stock holding authority and the larger Lincoln proposal covers some wards in North Kesteven which is also a local authority landlord. Work would be undertaken to assess stock conditions, review rent harmonisation and understand the potential numbers for social and affordable housing. There are opportunities here for efficiencies and improved service delivery on housing repairs and void times.

There are synergies between current district and county services which, when brought together will result improved service delivery. This includes;

- Links between Trading Standards with Public Protection & Antisocial Behaviour and Food Health & Safety
- Public Protection & Community Safety with Public Protection & Antisocial Behaviour which can help address challenges as a system
- Registrar services with the Crematorium & Cemeteries
- Environmental flood risk services with emergency planning
- Heritage, culture and leisure together over a meaningful footprint and economic area
- Combining county level planning with district planning functions which will remove duplication and confusion
- Bringing waste collection and disposal together which will be more resilient to government policy changes
- Homelessness and rough sleeping alongside wider support services.

The larger Lincoln unitary proposal supports local services focused on local need and outcomes delivered, rather than purely the way that they are delivered.

The proposal for a larger Lincoln, which is based on functional areas both socially and economically will drive better outcomes and added value by organising services around functional markets, including housing, health & care, and employment. This allows for a more logical identity both for a larger Lincoln and the other new unitary councils across Greater Lincolnshire, delivering services that are right for each local

place. This in turn allows for authorities to achieve a good balance of success measures and transparent monitoring of performance against service delivery.

Indirect savings relating to the cost of the system from service provision offer greater scope of benefit from redesigning how services are delivered. Proposals for new unitary authorities in Greater Lincolnshire should focus on outcomes and objectives for service areas that supports residents and places to:

- Live well – through increasing opportunity and average wages
- Age well – by changing trajectory of demand for care services
- Reduce inequality and deprivation – reducing demand for services and focusing on prevention
- Connect – improving productivity and growth
- Improve skills – transitioning to higher wages and productivity economy

A three unitary model which includes a larger Lincoln, focused on the needs of the current city footprint and wider area, will support these outcomes - reducing demand for services over time across the public sector and improving lives of local residents

5. Collaboration

5a) With Other Authorities

The leaders of all ten greater Lincolnshire councils have agreed to work together on proposals for local government reorganisation, to explore all options, and form plans that are in the best interest of the people of Lincolnshire. Chief Executives, policy leads, S151s and communication leads from across authorities are working together, sharing data and intelligence and exploring options. Active discussions with neighbouring authorities are ongoing and there are a number of options and configurations to consider. All of these options need more robust financial analysis and testing.

As proposals progress for final submission in November, these discussions will continue. Additionally, there will be greater engagement with other public sector partners including Lincolnshire Integrated Care Board and Lincolnshire Integrated Care Partnership, Lincolnshire Police and the Police & Crime Commissioner. This will include a discussion of options for Lincolnshire Fire & Rescue which this proposal suggests fits well with the Office of the Police & Crime Commissioner. The views and ambitions of the new Mayor in 2025 will be important to inform the final submission in November.

Initial engagement with other district local authorities indicates that there is broad agreement that one large-scale unitary covering either the geography of Greater Lincolnshire, or the current county of Lincolnshire, would not be suitable given the sparse geography of the county as a whole. There is also some commonality in view that strategic services go up to the Greater Lincolnshire Combined County Authority and operational deliver to the new principal authorities. In some cases, there may be a small proportion of services that deliver good outcomes and efficiencies when

delivered across a larger footprint, as outlined in section 4a and these will be reviewed through ongoing engagement and collaboration with partners.

A three unitary model with a north-south split and a larger Lincoln unitary would allow the other two unitary councils to focus on the more rural, coastal, market town issues while the city can focus on urban city centre, and surrounding area, issues relevant to Lincoln's place and people across a larger footprint. Alternative boundary proposals being considered which separate, rather than strengthen, existing connections with neighbouring communities such as Hykeham, Waddington and Bracebridge Heath are not a viable option.

The final proposals for Greater Lincolnshire need to focus on function rather than form to ensure that the model delivers ambitious change for the future that is right for local communities, now and in future. It is not structural changes or initial cost savings from reorganisation that will drive sustainable growth for Greater Lincolnshire. It is organised around functional areas, balancing the need for sufficient scale with local knowledge and accountability.

5b) Local Engagement

There has been positive engagement with Local MP for Lincoln, Hamish Falconer, who has welcomed this initial proposal.

Local Government Reform has been debated at Full Council on 4th March where members expressed:

- concerns about proposals for new unitary councils on too big a scale
- views that when implemented correctly and at the right scale, unitary authorities can be the right form of local government
- views that most surrounding villages would identify as 'Lincoln' and the current boundary could be expanded to cover these areas
- passion for Lincoln, its vast history and that it is a vibrant city
- that Lincoln is one of the country's oldest cities and a history of an ability to continue to self-govern.

Direct public consultation on the proposal submission has not yet taken place given the time constraints. However, there are effective communication, engagement and consultation routes that can be used for public consultation once the initial proposals are ready for further review. Meaningful consultation will be undertaken in good time to shape the final submission in November.

From very recent consultation on the Council's revised corporate priorities, there is a clear understanding of services that are important to local residents which has a strong focus on local delivery and communities.

From informal conversations, it is clear that some residents living in neighbouring villages identify more with Lincoln, accessing work, services and leisure in the city

rather than their home district. Direct engagement with local residents and parish councils proposed for inclusion in the larger Lincoln unitary area will take place.

City of Lincoln currently has a meaningful focus on neighbourhood engagement and involvement which can be shared wider into the larger Lincoln area proposed.

6. Financial Case

There is a strong rationale for Lincoln's identity, social, cultural, economic and housing growth and further work is needed to test the financial viability on a population that makes sense for a larger Lincoln.

Government have indicated that reviews of boundaries can now be considered where there is a case to do so. The growth of the City into a larger Lincoln has a compelling case in terms of economic growth, housing growth and place identity.

Local Government Reform in Greater Lincolnshire which sees a reduction from ten local authorities to three will result in significant savings across the place. It provides an opportunity to realise financial and improve service delivery and the financial sustainability of local government. The aim is to unlock efficiencies from the rationalisation of council structures and assets and improve systems and processes. Direct efficiencies and savings of Local Government Reform in Greater Lincolnshire will be delivered through:

- Reduced senior management teams
- Staff reductions through middle management streamlining
- Back-office rationalisation
- Reduction in democratic costs
- Consolidation of IT and accommodation
- Procurement and contract management
- The merging of a number of professionals across the councils

The council's proposal to create a larger Lincoln unitary, with two other unitary councils in the Greater Lincolnshire area involves both the aggregation and disaggregation of individual councils and services.

Disaggregating county council services, cross-boundary aggregation of districts and disaggregating elements of the two unitaries, is particularly challenging, adds to the complexity of Local Government Reform and will require a more detailed appraisal in order to establish the full financial implications. However, the aggregation of services set out in the Council's proposals will outweigh the current duplication and will bring about overall net savings and efficiencies.

Previous modelling across Lincolnshire suggests the viability of a three unitary model, with estimated direct benefits (net of disaggregation costs) between an upper range of £26m p.a. and a lower range of £4m p.a. One-off set up costs are estimated to be in the range of £15m. Although the previous model is not directly comparable to this

proposal it does indicate that overall savings and efficiency can be delivered from a three unitary model can be achieved. This is early work and further, more, detailed financial analysis is needed to determine these against revised boundaries and options for service delivery. These figures cannot be relied upon at this stage as accurate estimates.

The potential efficiencies stated above are based on the direct costs and benefits (the potential organisational savings from reorganisation for the options), in addition to this will be further indirect benefits to be achieved. These indirect benefits relate to the costs to the system from service provision reform and will be delivered through a number of transformation and collaboration models, as set out in section 4b. These options and models require detailed analysis to understand the current state and potential future states of service provision, and areas for potential benefit. Further work on developing alternative models of service delivery e.g. collaboration through shared service opportunities is key to supporting the financial sustainability of the proposed option.

It is recognised that a three unitary model produces fewer initial efficiencies and savings than the option of a two unitary model, however, previous work demonstrated broadly comparable total benefits from a two or three unitary solution when assessing the relative overall cost of local government and to the scale of benefits to be released from the system as indirect benefits. Underpinning assumptions to the modelling undertaken imply that greater consolidation leads to greater benefits, but also that there are limits to consolidation. It will be important to model and test the scale of all proposed operating geographies to make sure that new unitary proposals do not have the unintended consequence of diseconomies of scale within some services.

It is also recognised that disaggregating county services will require the duplication of some elements of service delivery, in staffing teams, management structures and in statutory roles. The disaggregation of Adult Social Care, Children's Social Care and Education would carry significant cost, risk and complexity. The Council recognises that these and other strategic services i.e. Highways may be more suited to being delivered at scale on the Mayoral Combined County Authority footprint, thus removing any disaggregation risk. The optimum delivery model could be delivered via, a shared service approach, the formation of a Trust, the principal authorities or the Mayoral Combined County Authority. These options will help drive efficiencies within the system and avoid duplication - although consideration around democratic oversight, control and the need to avoid complexity will be key.

Further detailed work is required to update the previous modelling of direct benefits, disaggregation costs and one-off implementation costs and to develop the potential indirect benefits possible through collaboration and transformation and to assess the options for delivery of strategic services at scale.

This work will be undertaken alongside proposals for Council Tax options and equalisation, to ensure parity of a sustainable tax base to address local challenges

(this is complicated by the aggregation and disaggregation of authorities) and other key funding streams.

It should be noted that the implementation of Local Government Reform is set after the planned reforms to local authority funding, which are due to be implemented in 2026/27. This will make modelling of the financial sustainability of the new authorities more complex with future resource levels currently unclear. The outcome of the reforms to local authority funding will be critical to understanding the financial impact of the proposals.

While there is significant further work required on assessing the financial implications, with more specific work on the Council's proposed model of a larger Lincoln authority and the resourcing impacts, work to date demonstrates that the financial sustainability of this model is greater than the current two-tier model within Lincolnshire.

6b) Implementation

Implementation Costs Across the System

These costs would include:

- Programme change and design team for the new councils
- Audit and finance costs
- HR support
- Legal costs
- Consultation & Engagement
- Digital/IT
- Estates consolidation
- Contingency
- Redundancy

There are key workstreams to consider which will have associated one-off costs or recurrent costs or benefits:

1) Leadership & Management Integration

Recurrent benefit – based on integration of senior leadership roles

One-off cost – recruitment costs

2) Shared Enabling Services

Recurrent benefit - % savings from finance, legal, IT, HR as a % of total council expenditure across

Recurrent benefit & one-off cost – implementation of new integrated system, upfront costs including one-off hardware/networking, systems procurement, implementation team, ongoing costs for post contract implementation, licensing, system development – where not aligned already. Potential to align back-office systems across the new authorities driving further efficiencies

Recurrent cost – investment in new capability

3) Joined Up Commissioning & Procurement

Recurrent benefit – through scale efficiencies and volume discounts. Potential to align back-office systems across the new authorities driving further efficiencies

4) Governance Change

Recurrent benefits – based on member cost assumptions across the new authorities and election costs

Initial Development and Implementation Costs for City of Lincoln Council

Government have invited local councils to;

- 1) Include indicative costs of arrangements in relation to any options including planning for future service transformation opportunities – these will be determined based on further exploration with neighbouring authorities.
- 2) Set out indicative costs of preparing proposals and standing up an implementation team as well as any arrangements to co-ordinate potential capacity funding across the area – early indications suggest a cost of £250,000 is needed to support robust proposal development and implementation planning by the City Council. There will be additional costs incurred by each individual authority that is developing an alternative option. Costs of standing up an implementation team, based on the final agreed option for Greater Lincolnshire are included in the c£15m one-off implementation costs. Capacity funding across the Greater Lincolnshire area is likely to be limited but can be further explored with partners.

7. Other Options Explored

Lincolnshire is a sparsely populated geography of diverse local activities, economies and identities. There is limited evidence to suggest that for unitary councils bigger is better and evidence does suggest that it is not the size that makes the difference but the ambition, strength of leadership and adopting an innovative, collaborative mindset.

Whilst recognising that the largest initial and direct savings come from a lower number of unitary councils, a two unitary proposal is a largely traditional approach which does not focus on system-wide reform, particularly with health and care which needs to shift towards prevention. A dramatic reduction in the number of councillors reduces the ability to hear the local voice, which is compounded by the current low electorate turnout and community engagement, currently seen across Greater Lincolnshire.

These proposals are in an exploratory phase and options for unitary boundaries and service delivery methods will continue to be assessed in partnership with neighbouring authorities.

8. Summary

A larger Lincoln unitary authority, the Greater Lincolnshire Combined County Authority, two additional proposed unitary councils and local parish councils in the area allows for the delivery of long-term investment, development and economic growth alongside retaining an identity connected to local place and priorities. A larger Lincoln unitary authority based on its economic functional area allows for a focus on growth areas for both the economy and housing, maximises opportunities for investment and will deliver local services well, based on the needs of its residents and community and is best placed to be a strong and effective partner across Lincolnshire.