# City of Lincoln Council

# Open space and tree management policy

## 1.Purpose of the policy

The objectives of this policy are to identify a mechanism for dealing with current problems and issues relating to Open Space and Tree Management and provide a framework for future developments of the policy in a climate change and expansion of Open Space.

## 2. Background

### 2.1 The open space asset

2.1.1 Open space in its various forms is a valuable asset in an urban environment. It makes a crucial contribution to the amenities available to the community and to the quality-of-life people are able to enjoy.

2.1.2 The City of Lincoln Local Plan sets out to:

1. Safeguard open space which is of ecological, landscape or amenity value.
2. Make sure that new housing developments incorporate suitably located and designed amenity and play space.
3. Redress any identified shortfall in playing field provision (measured against the commonly used National Playing Fields Association standard) in part by seeking commuted payments from housing developers as a contribution towards the implementation of a programme of playing field improvement and creation.

2.1.3 The results of successful implementation of planning policies will be more open space of various types much of which is likely to be offered to the Council for adoption and subsequent maintenance once completed to an agreed standard.

2.1.4 The matters that this report examines relate to the following assets and procedures:

1. Open Spaces
2. Play Areas
3. Parks, including Hartsholme Country Park/Swanholme Lakes Nature Reserve (Site of Special Scientific Interest)
4. Commons
5. Cemeteries, Crematorium and Disused Burial Grounds
6. Allotments
7. Verges and Roundabouts
8. Playing Fields
9. Brayford Pool and Water Courses
10. Public Squares and Pedestrian Areas
11. Biodiversity

### 2.2 The problems arising relating to open space management are identified below

2.2.1 The challenges associated with the management of open spaces have been with the city for a number of years. City of Lincoln Council through its adoption and protection policies has attempted to maximise open space within the City. These policies have generated a number of problems which have proved difficult to resolve, either by physical measures or by policy development and implementation.

2.2.2 General disturbance/nuisance to the community associated with the use of open space within, or adjacent to, residential development; anti-social behaviour; inappropriate activities and the congregation of youths within these sites.

2.2.3 Problems associated with nuisance due to lack of play areas and open space in certain parts of the city.

2.2.4 Unauthorised use and vandalism, e.g. swimming and fishing at Swanholme Lakes; dog walking; motor cycling.

2.2.5 Inadequate capital investment and revenue provision in order to maintain and operate current facilities.

2.2.6 Failure to meet modern safety standards in respect of equipment.

2.2.7 The absence of development and management plans for all Open Spaces in areas as identified in 2.1.4.

2.2.8 The absence of a detailed guidance on the balance between and priority given to education, entertainment, activities, public use, and conservation.

2.2.9 The need to review existing guidance for the management of cemeteries and the crematorium.

2.2.10 Pest Control methods within open spaces.

2.2.11 Lack of guidance on traditional activities such as winter sledging and bonfire building for November 5th.

2.2.12 Horse management on Commons.

2.2.13 Maintenance standards for disused burial grounds.

2.2.14 Natural habitats and the associated maintenance problems related to dog fouling, litter, and the public perception of poor management.

2.2.15 Absence of a policy on access to water areas, influencing the general safety management of these areas and inappropriate use.

2.2.16 The absence of a Development Plan for strategic footways and hard landscaping within open areas to achieve adoptable standards and thus maintenance by the Highways Authority.

2.2.17 The absence of a definitive policy and procedural arrangements relating to the adoption and dedication of Open Space, including commuted sums from developers, resourcing for maintenance and management.

2.2.18 The sale of open space

### 2.3 Tree asset

2.3.1 Trees and plants in general are essential to life. Vegetation absorbs carbon dioxide, storing carbon and releasing oxygen. Increasing tree and plant cover is one of the more positive actions which can be taken to reduce the problem of the greenhouse effect.

2.3.2 Sensitively positioned trees and other planting also offer a range of local environment benefits. They can:

1. Make a more pleasant environment to live in
2. Help absorb gas emissions from vehicles
3. Reduce local pollution from airborne particles such as lead
4. Act as sound barriers
5. Contribute to micro-climatic effects which reduce energy consumption
6. Offer shade from the sun
7. Provide habitats for wildlife

2.3.3 Trees in towns and cities have a significant effect in ‘softening’ the landscape, and consequently make a considerable contribution to improving the quality of the aesthetic urban environment.

### 2.4 Tree management problems

2.4.1 Tree management is now becoming one of the most critical issues facing both City of Lincoln Council and the Highways Authority. Over many years, trees of inappropriate species have been planted in urban areas and the management programme has not been funded properly or supported by a cyclic inspection. Although no actual database exists, it is estimated that there are over ten thousand trees in City Council ownership (not including woodland or non-operational land).

2.4.2 The problem of inadequate planned cyclic inspection and maintenance is now manifesting itself in the form of a significant increase in the claims lodged for damage to private property.

2.4.3 The principal problems on the management of the tree stock facing City of Lincoln Council are as follows:

1. A legacy of inadequate tree management
2. The planting of unsuitable species for the urban environment
3. The absence of a dedicated arboriculturist’s advice
4. Inconclusive data and records
5. Insurance claims relating to tree damage

## 3. Strategic objectives of the policy

The strategic policy objective of City of Lincoln Council will be to:

1. Ensure that open spaces within the city are used for the purpose for which they are intended
2. Support the re-introduction of urban park rangers to improve public safety and management of parks thus minimising abuse, inappropriate and unauthorised use.
3. Safeguard open space which is of ecological, landscape or amenity value
4. Carry out planting with appropriate species of plant and trees in open spaces within the city where there is either an existing problem or it is anticipated that open space will be subjected to abuse, inappropriate or unauthorised use
5. Ensure that new housing developments incorporate suitably located and designed amenity areas a play space.
6. Redress any identified shortfall in playing field provision (measures against the commonly used National Playing Fields Associated standard), in part by seeking commuted payments from housing developers as a contribution towards the implementation of a programme of playing field improvement and creation.
7. Develop definitive policies relating to distribution, location, purpose, accessibility, and layout for all open spaces.
8. Make financial provision for any increase in open space and landscaping contained therein as a result of the dedication and/or adoption process
9. Provide the resources to explore every opportunity for funding from external agencies and developing partnership arrangements for the improvement and development of urban parks.
10. To adopt, where appropriate to Lincoln, the aims and objectives contained in the ’59 Steps’ of the UK Action Plan for Biodiversity
11. Maintain and expand the amount of Common land holding within the city boundary
12. Protect the water environs of the city from pollution and insensitively designed and located developments
13. Provide a maintenance regime with appropriate resourcing for the management of the tree stock within the city.
14. Complete and adopt the Open Space and Tree Management Policy in accordance with Section 8 – The Natural Environment of the City Council’s Local Agenda 21 strategy,
15. Develop clear and precise models for the calculation of commuted sums

## 4. Action plan

The following is an action plan by City of Lincoln Council in implementing the strategic objectives contained in Part 3.

### 4.1 Open spaces

City of Lincoln Council will:

1. Carry out planting with appropriate species of plants and trees in open spaces within the city where there is either an existing problem or it is anticipated the open space will be subject to abuse, inappropriate or unauthorised use
2. Only provide anti-ball game measure upon the specific authority of the land-owning Committee following receipt of a petition and a consultation exercise taking into account the views of the relevant Ward Councillors and the local residents who house/property/land abuts the public open space in question
3. Seek to undertake a risk assessment of all open spaces, including those containing water features, on an annual basis
4. Establish dog toilet facilities in public open space areas and where possible make separate fenced off provision for dogs
5. Establish a pest control policy based on the most humane means available
6. Prepare detailed guidance relating to location, layout, design, public access, implementation and maintenance of all types of public open space suitable for public adoption
7. Require developers or landowners who wish City of Lincoln Council to adopt land to provide a commuted sum for the establishment and management of the open space for a period of 15 years
8. Investigate any offer of open space/park land but always following consultation with interested parties, including local residents and any relevant Ward Councillors
9. Make adequate financial provision for maintenance and landscaping of existing open space and for any increase as a result of the dedication and/or adoption process
10. Not sell or dispose of public open space except in exceptional circumstances where such a transaction would bring direct benefit to the immediate community adjacent to the area
11. Seek to use developer contributions to match lottery or other funding for a comprehensive programme of open space improvement and creation
12. Seek partnership involvement for the management of certain types of open space by local community groups

### 4.2 Play areas

City of Lincoln Council will:

1. Prepare a detailed guidance on the distribution, location, layout purpose, demand, level of use, and other site criteria for play areas. This will include advice relating to accessibility, impact on the environment and relationship with residential property.
2. Bring all play areas up to and maintain them at the prevailing British Standard
3. Consider a report on the need for impact absorbing safety surfaces in all play areas
4. Establish a programme for the provision of dog proofing fencing for all play areas
5. Promote new play areas where a need is identified but always following a full and detailed consultation with all interested parties
6. Only approve and adopt new play areas which satisfy the appropriate British Standard
7. Where a developer seeks adoption of a play area require the developer to provide a commuted sum to ensure adequate maintenance for a 15-year period
8. Ensure that where developers are required to construct new play areas that this is done prior to the sale of property immediately adjacent to the play area

### 4.3 Parks

City of Lincoln Council will:

1. Prepare a management plan for each of the city’s parks to maintain and improve facilities with funding sought through the competitive funding process. Each plan will involve consultation with all interested parties. The aim will be to achieve the objectives of the local plan and to improve biodiversity where practical
2. Encourage the formation of support initiatives for open spaces and parks ranging from Friends groups to small community groups and charitable trusts
3. Encourage the development of pocket parks within the city
4. Introduce and adequately fund Park/Commons rangers to Aid in the managements of Parks and Common land

### 4.4 Commons

City of Lincoln Council will:

1. Establish a Management Plan for the maintenance of the city’s Commons
2. Oppose development on Common land which would lead to a reduction in total Commons land holding within the city boundary
3. Carry out a full comprehensive review of the South Common golf course
4. At the earliest opportunity seek changes of the necessary legislation to prevent entries grazing on the Commons

### 4.5 Cemeteries, crematorium, and disused burial grounds

City of Lincoln Council will:

1. Review the maintenance programme for its cemeteries
2. Ensure an adequate supply of suitable burial space for the people of Lincoln ensuring that the allocation of burial plots takes into account the interests of all acknowledged religious and secular groups and that there is an equitable distribution of spaces
3. Only permit garden areas for specific groups with the express permission of City of Lincoln Council on condition such gardens are properly maintained
4. Intervene where individual privately owned plots within the kerb sets are not being maintained and carry out the minimum of necessary work to ensure the tidy appearance of the cemetery is maintained
5. Ratify guidelines regarding the size and design of headstones and adornments, giving due consideration to the views of the bereaved
6. Review maintenance standards for disused burial grounds

### 4.6 Allotments

City of Lincoln Council will:

1. Prepare a management plan for its allotment sites
2. Allocate sufficient resources to maintain allotment sites
3. Provide sufficient allotment sites to meet demand, whilst making specific reference to Policy 48 of the Local Plan
4. Encourage the use of organic fertilisers and composting on allotment sites
5. Encourage the use of natural barriers (such as berberis, bramble, hawthorn, etc.) to improve security on allotments

### 4.7 Verges and roundabouts

City of Lincoln Council will:

1. Review current maintenance regimes for verges on main roads
2. Seek sponsorship from private companies and organisations for floral displays on roundabouts and verges
3. Review the existing sponsorship agreements for floral displays
4. Through its Transportation and Planning Committees the Council shall set policies relating to the design, size, ownership and siting of signs

### 4.8 Playing fields

City of Lincoln Council will:

1. Work towards achieving the National Playing Fields Association recommended standard of between 1.6 and 1.8 hectares of land per 1,000 population dedicated to sports pitches, greens, courts, and other areas such as athletics tracks, putting greens and training areas
2. Seek commuted payments from housing developers as a contribution towards the implementation of a programme of playing field improvement and creation
3. Campaign for and support the protection of existing playing fields and sports areas, both privately and publicly owned, from development
4. Seek to identify policies on sports development which recognised the appropriate age profile

### 4.9 Brayford Pool and water courses

City of Lincoln Council will:

1. Review options for increasing the Council’s involvement in the management of the Brayford Pool when the current management lease with the Brayford Trust expires
2. Investigate the possibility of establishing a swan sanctuary
3. Establish policies to protect the water environs of the City from pollution and insensitively designed and located developments

### 4.10 Public squares and pedestrian areas

City of Lincoln Council will:

1. Develop the public squares and pedestrian areas of the City Centre with particular emphasis on the introduction of fountains and sculptures
2. Encourage suitably managed outside areas for eating and drinking within the City Centre and historic core areas
3. Actively pursue the creation of byelaws to discourage the drinking of alcohol in specified areas

### 4.11 Biodiversity

City of Lincoln Council will:

1. Adopt where appropriate in Lincoln, the aims and objectives contained in the ’59 Steps’ of the UK Action Plan for Biodiversity. These aims and objectives will be incorporated in the action plan for Open Space and Tree Management and into future specifications for the Grounds Maintenance service
2. Work where possible in partnership with voluntary groups and non-governmental organisations for the benefit of natural resources within Lincoln
3. Seek to raise public awareness of the issues surrounding biodiversity in Open Space and Tree Management

### 4.12 Trees

City of Lincoln Council will:

1. Commission a full tree survey throughout the city to ascertain accurately the quantity of the city’s tree stocks
2. Establish a rolling programme of inspections to assess tree condition
3. Establish an overall tree management programme to ensure a healthy future for Lincoln’s tree stocks
4. Review all Tree Preservation Orders
5. Appoint a qualified arboriculturist to provide a full-time expertise on tree management within the city
6. Develop a guidance list of approved trees for specific locations, giving a priority to the planting of native species where appropriate
7. Provide a suitable replacement tree where a tree has been removed
8. Provide sufficient resources to maintain trees in Council ownership
9. Encourage landowners to plant trees, particularly where new developments are planned
10. Provide guidance to developers on the requirement to protect established trees in developments, and take appropriate enforcement action if required
11. Inform members of the public of the importance of trees to the environment
12. Seek sponsorship by individuals and groups for tree planting