

MEMO

**North
Lincolnshire
Council**

TO: GEORGINA HOPWOOD, DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT
FROM: RICHARD GODDARD, HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT RECORD
REF: PA/2026/165
DATE: 11/03/2026

SUBJECT: Planning permission to erect a detached domestic garage and stables outbuilding

PARISH: HAXEY

SUMMARY OF ADVICE

- The application is within the Area of Special Historic Landscape Interest of the Isle of Axholme (Local Plan Policy LC14)
- This area is designated for its unique historic landscape retaining the pattern of ancient open strip fields and enclosures surrounding the villages on the Isle
- The application site is located in a well-preserved area of the core historic landscape in the Ancient Open Strip Field character area
- The historic character and setting of the Ancient Open Strip Fields is of the highest sensitivity to adverse enclosure and encroachment of development
- The proposed development would be an unacceptable extension and intrusion of the built environment into the historic landscape, contributing to adverse character change and affecting the setting and legibility
- The Historic Environment Record recommends **REFUSAL** of planning permission as the development would adversely affect the character, appearance and setting of the historic landscape contrary to the NPPF, Core Strategy Policies CS5 and CS6 and Local Plan policies LC14, LC7, RD2, DS1.

HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT RECORD (HER) FUNCTION: To hold, maintain, interpret and manage heritage information, enhancing the understanding of the area's historical development as a distinctive and attractive place. HER information provides source material for interpretation by heritage professionals and for use by community groups and individuals. The HER database is updated as new information about the historic environment is discovered.

The HER also provides advice on development proposals that affect, or may affect, the sites and settings of all heritage assets i.e. designated and non-designated historic buildings, archaeological sites and monuments, and historic places, areas and landscapes. This advice is provided against saved local plan policies and national historic environment policies. See <https://www.northlincs.gov.uk/planning-and-environment/historic-environment-and-conservation/>

DETAILED ADVICE: Thank you for consulting the HER on this application affecting the Area of Special Historic Landscape Interest of the Isle of Axholme (ASHLI) afforded protection under saved Local Plan Policy LC14. The HER has previously commented on various applications on this site in relation to a number of applications associated with residential development (refs. PA/2022/714, PA//2021/1895, PA/2018/1441, PA/2018/667, PRE/2017/199). That advice is partially reiterated here as it remains relevant to the present application.

HERITAGE POLICY

The application site lies within the Area of Special Historic Landscape Interest of the Isle of Axholme (ASHLI). This area is locally designated for its unique historic landscape retaining the pattern of ancient open strip fields and enclosed fields surrounding the villages on the Isle, and parish turbaries (areas of historic peat cutting). This historic landscape is considered nationally important and Local Plan Policy LC14 applies which states:

‘The Isle of Axholme is designated as an area of Special Historic Landscape Interest.

Within this area, development will not be permitted which would destroy, damage or adversely affect the character, appearance or setting of the historic landscape, or any of its features.

Development required to meet the social and economic needs of rural communities and small scale tourist and outdoor sport and recreational development will be permitted provided such development is related to the historic landscape and its features.

A high standard of design and siting in new development will be required reflecting the traditional character of buildings in the area and the character of the historic landscape, and using materials sympathetic to the locality.

Schemes to improve, restore or manage the historic landscape will be sought in connection with, and commensurate with the scale of, any new development affecting the area of Special Historic Landscape Interest.’

Policy LC14 is supported by the evidence of a detailed survey of the historic landscape character of the Isle of Axholme (Miller, K. 1997 *The Isle of Axholme, Historic Landscape Characterisation Project* Countryside Commission, Leeds; see <http://www.northlincs.gov.uk/planning-and-environment/historic-environment-and-conservation/historic-environment-record/historic-landscape-character/>).

This detailed study identified significant areas of medieval open strip fields and turbaries, both of which are of considerable national importance. These attributes together with the enclosed land and the overall settlement pattern of the area make it unique in the country. The Lincolnshire Historic Landscape Characterisation Project, 2011, also recognised this landscape as nationally important.

Core Strategy CS6 specifically refers to the importance of the Isle’s historic landscape and that the council will conserve its significance through **‘Safeguarding the nationally significant medieval landscapes of the Isle of Axholme (notably the open strip fields and turbaries)...’** also **‘All new development must respect and enhance the local character and distinctiveness of the area in which it would be situated, particularly in areas with high heritage value.’**

Local plan policies LC7 and RD2 will also apply as the development is within the open countryside; policy LC7 Landscape Protection states **‘Development which does not respect the character of the local landscape will not be permitted’**. Policy RD2 Development in the Open Countryside requires that such development is strictly controlled stating that only certain essential development that meets very specific criteria will be permitted.

The design objectives of Core Strategy CS5 and Local Plan policy DS1 are also relevant. Core Strategy CS5 Delivering Quality Design requires new development in North Lincolnshire to **‘Ensure it takes account of the existing built heritage from the earliest stages in the design process, in particular terms of scale, density, layout and access.’** With regard to design, local plan policy DS1 General

Requirements, Quality of Design criteria sets out that **‘The design and external appearance of the proposal should reflect or enhance the character, appearance and setting of the immediate area’**.

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, Dec 2024) provides guidance to local authorities for conserving heritage assets and their settings, which includes historic areas and landscapes (Annex 2: Glossary; Heritage asset). Paragraph 8 refers to the role of the planning system to contribute to achieving sustainable development under three overarching objectives; the environmental objective encompasses protecting and enhancing the historic environment. Paragraph 202 describes heritage assets as **‘an irreplaceable resource’** to be **‘conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance, so that they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the quality of life of existing and future generations’**.

Paragraphs 207 and 208 require an applicant and local planning authorities to identify and assess the particular significance of any heritage asset that may be affected by a proposal (including by development affecting the setting of a heritage asset). This assessment should be taken into account when considering the impact of a proposal on a heritage asset, and used to avoid or minimise conflict between the heritage asset’s conservation and any aspect of the proposal.

The desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness should be taken into account by local planning authorities when determining planning applications (NPPF, 210). Local planning authorities should also look for opportunities for new development within the setting of heritage assets to enhance or better reveal their significance (NPPF, 219).

Section 12 of the NPPF, **Achieving well-designed places**, is also highly relevant within the LC14 policy area.

A heritage asset is defined in the NPPF (Annex 2, Glossary) as **‘A building, monument, site, place, area or landscape identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, because of its heritage interest. It includes designated heritage assets and assets identified by the local planning authority (including local listing)’**.

Significance (for heritage policy) as: **‘The value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. The interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic. Significance derives not only from a heritage asset’s physical presence, but also from its setting...’**.

The definition of the setting of a heritage asset as **‘The surroundings in which a heritage asset is experienced. Its extent is not fixed and may change as the asset and its surroundings evolve. Elements of a setting may make a positive or negative contribution to the significance of an asset, may affect the ability to appreciate that significance or may be neutral.’**

HISTORIC LANDSCAPE SIGNIFICANCE

The historic landscape of the Isle is a heritage asset of historic interest as defined in the NPPF and is clearly identified as such in the Local Plan (Landscape and Conservation section), as well as on the relevant area inset and proposals maps (Local Plan, 2003).

The ASHLI and LC14 policy area incorporates various historic landscape character types that were researched, described and mapped in the 1997 Countryside Commission report into the historic landscape of the Isle of Axholme. This detailed survey forms the evidence base of the LC14 policy in the 2003 Local Plan. The historic landscape character type areas established by Miller (fig 5, 1997) are mapped on the North Lincolnshire HER GIS maps and this data is made available to applicants on request.

Within the LC14 policy area the Ancient Open Strip Fields (Miller, AOSF) form the historic character core of the Isle of Axholme historic landscape persisting since medieval times. The Early Enclosed Land (Miller, EEL), created by piece-meal enclosure of blocks of former strips into small irregular fields, buffers the AOSF together with the surrounding Recent Enclosed Land (Miller, REL) on the low-lying former wetlands. These three historic landscape character zones encompass the majority of the LC14 policy area, together with other discrete character areas, such as the important Turbaries and Moorland Allotments (Miller, RM&T), Designed Landscape (Parkland), and the Settlement and Building Types.

The historic landscape character of the Isle of Axholme is the sum of these historic landscape character types. The LC14 policy area includes all the character types within the designated area and seeks to protect the character, appearance and setting of the historic landscape **as a whole**.

The essential character and appearance of the AOSF historic landscape type is of open unenclosed agricultural land lacking physical boundary features such as hedgerows and fences. Other key defining characteristics of this landscape include the roads, common ways and access tracks known locally as meres; a general absence of farms in the open fields, these being located in the built up settlement areas; and the presence of visual reference points and landmarks such as church, mill and water towers that afford legibility to the core historic landscape and form part of its setting.

Also characteristic of the ancient open field landscape are areas of piece-meal enclosure, frequently found around the fringes of the open strip fields and the settlements where they form the immediate setting of the AOSF. This 'Early Enclosed Land' (EEL) comprising amalgamated blocks of strips within the former open fields served as 'home closes' for stock-keeping and mixed farming, and date from the late-medieval period onwards. Early, in this context, does not necessarily refer to the period at which the enclosure happened, but to the character of an individual strip, or group of strips, enclosed directly from the open field. These early enclosed fields are typified by their narrow long or irregular shape, with sinuous boundaries that retain the reverse S-shaped ploughing curve of the former cultivated strips. Frequently bounded with hedgerows, hedgerow trees and small copses in field corners, the character of the EEL is in marked contrast to the unenclosed AOSF that they frequently buffer.

Elsewhere enclosures with regular straight boundaries, commonly formed by ditches, were laid out when the marshlands surrounding the Isle were drained to create farmland from the 17th century onwards and at Parliamentary Enclosure of these areas in the early 19th century. The enclosures of this 'Recent Enclosed Land' (REL) are largely devoid of upstanding boundary features, and maintain the characteristic open aspect of this historic landscape, even where such enclosures are combined into blocks of large modern fields.

The enclosed landscape character types are important in their own right and in terms of their spatial associations with each other, and with the remaining areas of the open strip fields at the core of the historic landscape surrounding the villages of the Isle, as well as with the Turbaries. The individual historic landscape character areas share their settings with the other character type areas, and together they form the overall setting of the historic landscape character. The evolution over time of these distinctive historic character types with their differing and contrasting physical features and appearance that add to their legibility are what make the Isle of Axholme a 'Special Landscape'.

Historically, the enclosure of the open strip fields, whether by individuals or parliamentary act, was strongly resisted in the Isle and the communal arrangements for farming the strips continued through to modern times. The persistence of the elements of the former landscape and the resultant openness of the core area remains the dominant characteristic of the contemporary landscape of historical importance. This remnant landscape is acknowledged as the best example of very few surviving landscapes of this type in the country, with the Isle of Axholme being by far the largest of the three best-known survivors.

For these reasons the Isle of Axholme historic landscape is of national importance, however, is not capable of formal designation as a heritage asset under current legislation which relates specifically to Listed Buildings, Conservation Areas and Scheduled Monuments.

In 2022, North Lincolnshire Council aspired to seek further recognition of the ecological and cultural heritage importance of the Isle of Axholme <https://www.northlincs.gov.uk/news/bid-to-be-submitted-to-officially-recognise-isle-of-axholme-for-its-outstanding-natural-beauty/>.

HISTORIC LANDSCAPE ASSESSMENT

The application site lies within the ASHLI as defined by the LC14 policy area (Inset , Local Plan, 2003) and is outside the current Development Boundary for Westwoodside in the open countryside (inset 42, HELA DPD, 2016). The applicant has not submitted a heritage statement as required by the NPPF (207), nor provided any justification of how their proposals (the siting, scale and design of the proposal) would accord, if at all, with the requirements of Local Plan policy LC14.

The application site is located within the core historic landscape character type of the ancient open strip fields (AOSF), in one of the best preserved areas of the Historic Landscape in the Isle lying in a block

between Haxey and Westwoodside where the open fields display all the characteristics described above.

The site is occupied by an outbuilding of breeze-block construction which is understood to have been granted prior approval for conversion to a dwellinghouse in 2022. A public right of way runs parallel to the western boundary of the application site which is a clear demarcation of the boundary between the open fields and settlement at Westwoodside. A second public right of way loops round the open field from the southern extent of the application site to emerge at St Nicholas' Church at Haxey. There would also appear to be clear views towards the proposed garage/stable across the historic landscape from other tracks and meres in the historic landscape.

The effect of the introduction of further domestic buildings in this location would be to extend the residential environment further into the historic landscape. This would represent an unacceptable visual intrusion that alters the appearance of and damages the legibility of the historic landscape. The garage would be highly visible and intrusive within the open landscape of the core historic landscape type and any proposals to screen such a development would be unacceptable as this would introduce a sense of enclosure that is at odds with the open landscape. Further structures of a domestic residential character would result in the erosion of key characteristics of the open landscape in a highly visible location.

Furthermore, the change of use would introduce inappropriate elements associated with domestic and recreational activities into the unenclosed AOSF zone, features that are not related to the traditional use of agricultural land as part of the historic landscape. These may include permitted developments and structures such as boundary walls and high fencing that have an urbanising effect, as well as hard paving and ground surfaces for access and driveways, garden structures and other domestic paraphernalia. The agricultural context that maintains the historic character of the landscape would be inevitably diluted and overwritten. It is understood that the applicant or their predecessor in title has previously been advised by the HER regarding permitted development on this site.

The proposed development introduces further domestic elements to the area that are not related to the traditional historic landscape character type of the open strip fields and because it would introduce inappropriate development into this historic landscape in a highly sensitive visible location, it would damage the existing character and setting of the open strip field landscape at Westwoodside and Haxey. As such it would be an unacceptable encroachment into the Area of Special Historic Landscape, and specifically into the most sensitive AOSF historic landscape character area.

Any such an incursion into the LC14 zone in this location could make similar applications more difficult to resist and result in further degradation of this nationally significant historic landscape character type.

RECOMMENDATION

The Historic Environment Record recommends this application is **REFUSED**. This is because it would adversely affect the historic landscape of the Isle of Axholme, a heritage asset of national significance. The proposed dwelling would adversely affect the character, appearance and setting of the historic landscape of the Isle of Axholme, specifically the character and setting of the core historic landscape of Ancient Open Strip Fields between Westwoodside and Haxey, as well as the historic settlement form that contribute to the character, setting and legibility of the historic landscape.

This is contrary to local plan policies LC14, LC7 and RD2, DS1 and Core Strategy policies CS5 and CS6. The proposal would not be in accord with paragraphs 210 or 219 of the National Planning Policy Framework as the proposed development would not make a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness and would detract from the significance of the historic landscape at this location. The application fails the key objective of the NPPF to conserve the historic environment for this and future generations.

I would be concerned that granting permission for such an incursion in the LC14 zone will make other applications in this location more difficult to resist and result in further degradation of this nationally significant historic landscape character type.

I trust this recommendation is accepted.

Should the planning authority be minded for any reason to give consent to the current proposals contrary to this advice, it is requested that a condition be attached to remove permitted development rights to

avoid residential sprawl and the further extension of the built environment in the protected historic landscape beyond the Development Limit, as follows:

Condition

Notwithstanding the provisions of Classes A, B, C, D, E and G of Part 1 of Schedule 2 of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order (2015), or any order re-enacting that order with or without modification, no extensions, buildings or enclosures shall be erected on the site or installed on the building other than those expressly authorised by this permission.

Reason

To protect the historic landscape in accordance with policy LC14 of the North Lincolnshire Local Plan and CS6 of the North Lincolnshire Core Strategy.

Richard Goddard
Historic Environment Officer

