

Boston Borough Council

Minutes of a meeting of the **South East Lincolnshire Joint Strategic Planning Committee** held in the Committee Room - Municipal Buildings, West Street, Boston, PE21 8QR on Wednesday 27th May 2026 at 10.00 am.

Present:

Boston Borough Council
Councillor Peter Bedford (Chairman) and Barrie Pierpoint.

South Holland District Council
Councillor James Avery (Vice-Chairman), Bryan Alcock and Henry Bingham.

Lincolnshire County Council
Councillor Ingrid Sheard.

In attendance:

Councillors Alison Austin and David Scoot (Substitute Members – Boston Borough Council) and Councillor Allan Beal (Substitute Member – South Holland District Council).

Officers:

Service Director – Planning & Strategic Infrastructure, Senior Planning Lawyer, Planning Policy Officer, Local Plan Programme Manager, Heritage Manager, Conservation Officer, Democratic Services Team Leader and Democratic Services Officer.

1 Election of Chairman

Nominations were requested for the position of Chairman.

Councillor Peter Bedford was proposed by Councillor Barrie Pierpoint and seconded by Councillor Henry Bingham.

No other nominations were received.

Resolved:

That Councillor Peter Bedford be appointed Chairman for the municipal year.

2 Election of Vice-Chairman

The Chairman requested nominations for the position of Vice-Chairman, whom was required to be from a different authority from the Chairman.

Councillor James Avery was proposed by Councillor Bryan Alcock and seconded by Councillor Henry Bingham.

No other nominations were received.

Resolved:

That Councillor James Avery be appointed Vice-Chairman for the municipal year.

3 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Robert Gibson and Gary Taylor (Lincolnshire County Council), Chris Mountain (Boston Borough Council) and Andrew Woolf (Substitute Member - South Holland District Council).

4 Declarations of Interest

No interests were declared.

5 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 24th February 2025 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

6 Joint Local Plan for Boston Borough Council and South Holland District Council

The Committee considered a report and accompanying presentation delivered by the Service Director – Planning and Strategic Infrastructure, supported by the Local Plan Programme Manager, which set out the proposed approach to the preparation of a new Joint Local Plan for Boston Borough Council and South Holland District Council. The Programme Management Governance Hierarchy for Local Plan Delivery was attached as Appendix 1 and the Project Initiation Document V1 (PID) was attached as Appendix 2 within the report.

Members were advised that the Government had introduced a new streamlined system for plan-making under the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023, with regulations coming into force in March 2026. This represented a fundamental change to the plan-making process, introducing a mandatory, faster and more standardised approach.

The Committee was informed that the new system required local planning authorities to prepare, examine and adopt a Local Plan within a 30-month period, following an initial four-month “getting ready” stage and a series of formal gateway assessments by the Planning Inspectorate.

It was reported that Boston Borough Council and South Holland District Council were required to commence the new plan-making process no later than 30th April 2027 and to submit a formal Notice of Intent by 31st December 2026.

The presentation outlined the key objectives of the new system, including achieving full national coverage of up-to-date plans, accelerating plan preparation, increasing accessibility and transparency, and supporting the delivery of sustainable growth.

Members were advised that work was already underway to prepare for the new system, including the development of a programme plan, governance arrangements and an evidence base. The new Local Plan would guide development to 2044 and would play a key role in shaping the future of the area, including addressing strategic issues such as housing need, infrastructure delivery and flood risk.

The Committee was further advised that the plan-making process would adopt a “digital first” approach and would seek to engage Members and communities early in developing a shared vision for the area.

The Chairman invited questions and comments from Members.

Members discussed the financial implications of preparing the new Local Plan. It was confirmed that funding had been secured internally through the Councils’ budget-setting processes. Whilst external funding opportunities had been explored, the Councils had not met the criteria for previously available funding streams; however, officers would continue to monitor future opportunities.

The Committee considered the significant challenge of resourcing the plan-making process. Members noted that planning teams across the country were experiencing recruitment difficulties and queried how the partnership would secure the necessary expertise. In response, officers advised that a Group Manager for Planning Policy had been successfully appointed and would commence in August 2026, providing leadership for the Local Plan. Existing staffing included three policy officers across the partnership, supported by additional officers working across authorities, with further reliance on external consultants anticipated where necessary.

Members acknowledged the ambitious nature of the new statutory 30-month timetable and the pressures this would place on authorities nationally. It was recognised that competition for skilled professionals and specialist support would be significant, as all authorities would be progressing plans concurrently.

The Committee also noted the importance of progressing the Local Plan in order to retain local control over planning policy. Officers highlighted that Government had indicated a willingness to intervene where authorities failed to maintain up-to-date plans. Members therefore emphasised the importance of maintaining momentum and ensuring that local priorities and community aspirations were reflected in the emerging plan.

The role of the Committee was highlighted as being central to the success of the process, with Members encouraged to act as “place makers”, providing strategic direction and helping to shape the long-term vision for Boston and South Holland.

Overall, Members expressed support for the proposed approach, recognising both the challenges associated with delivery and the opportunity to establish a strong planning framework to guide growth and development across the area.

The recommendations were moved by Councillor Henry Bingham and seconded by Councillor Barrie Pierpoint.

Resolved:

- 1. That the commencement of work on the preparation of a new Joint Local Plan for Boston Borough Council and South Holland District Council under the new plan-making system be endorsed;**
- 2. That the Government's principal changes to the local plan-making system and the progress made to date in preparing to commence work on the new Joint Local Plan be noted;**
- 3. That the Project Initiation Document (PID) Version 1, as set out within Appendix 1, as the general framework for the Councils' work programme through to plan adoption be noted;**
- 4. That the proposed governance structure required to oversee delivery of the Joint Local Plan, including the management of resources and mitigation of associated risks, be noted; and**
- 5. That the a target submission date of no later than December 2026 for the submission of the Notice of Intention to commence preparation of the Joint Local Plan be endorsed.**

[Councillor Alison Austin entered the meeting at 10.10am, during consideration of the above item.]

7 Update on progress of Heritage documents - Boston, Holbeach and Spalding Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plans, Spalding Heritage Strategy and the SELCP Design Guide

The Committee received a report and presentation from the Heritage Manager on the progress of a suite of heritage documents relating to Boston Borough and South Holland District.

Members noted that the documents, as set out within the appendices to the report, formed part of a comprehensive programme of work to preserve and enhance the historic environment across the partnership area.

The Committee considered the Boston Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan (Appendix 1), together with the proposed Conservation Area boundary map (Appendix 2), which provided an updated assessment of character and identified proposed amendments to ensure the continued protection of the area's special interest.

Members also considered the Holbeach Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan (Appendix 3) and its associated proposed boundary map (Appendix 4), which similarly sought to review and refine the designation to better reflect the character of the area.

The Committee further considered the Spalding Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan, including the Spalding Shop Front Design Guide (Appendix 5), alongside the proposed boundary map (Appendix 6). These documents provided a detailed assessment of Spalding's historic environment and included guidance aimed at improving the quality and appearance of shop fronts within the town centre.

In addition, Members considered the South East Lincolnshire Councils Partnership (SELCP) Traditional Building Design Guide (Appendix 7), which had been developed as a practical tool to support property owners, developers and officers in understanding and applying appropriate design principles for traditional buildings across both designated and non-designated heritage assets.

The Committee also had regard to the Spalding Heritage Strategy (Appendix 8) and its accompanying Action Plan for Transformative Change (Appendix 9), which set out a framework for heritage-led regeneration, including priorities for improving engagement with local heritage, enhancing the public realm, and supporting economic growth.

Members were advised that the appendices represented the finalised outputs of an extensive programme of work, informed by consultation, and that the documents would be presented to the respective Cabinets of the partner authorities for formal consideration and adoption.

Members welcomed the detailed work undertaken and recognised the importance of protecting and enhancing the area's historic environment and local heritage.

Discussion was first held in relation to the Boston Conservation Area, specifically the consideration of the Rosegarth (PE21) development. Officers confirmed that this area had been assessed as part of the appraisal process; however, it had not been included within the conservation area boundary at this stage, as it was not considered to contribute sufficiently to the historic character. It was noted that the boundary could be reviewed in future should circumstances change.

The Committee considered the issue of funding in detail. Members sought clarification on the criteria for future funding opportunities and how decisions would be made regarding which projects or properties would be prioritised. Officers advised that funding was typically secured through competitive processes and was generally directed towards schemes delivering wider public benefit, such as publicly accessible buildings. It was acknowledged that this limited the availability of funding for private residential properties.

Further discussion took place regarding the priority mechanism for allocating funding, with Members seeking assurance on how properties would be selected. It was explained that prioritisation was influenced by factors such as public benefit, impact on the wider area and alignment with funding criteria, rather than a fixed localised ranking system.

Members raised concerns regarding the practical benefit of the documents in terms of delivering improvements to properties, particularly those requiring significant investment. It was noted that, whilst the documents set out clear aspirations, the additional cost associated with heritage works, particularly for private owners, could act as a barrier to renovation. There was concern that, in some cases, designation or guidance could

discourage rather than encourage improvement. In response, Officers explained that the approach taken was intended to be pragmatic. The Design Guide, in particular, encouraged appropriate maintenance and incremental improvements over time, recognising that early intervention could reduce long-term costs. It was stressed that the aim was to support and guide, rather than impose unreasonable financial burdens.

The role and value of the Design Guide was discussed positively by Members. It was acknowledged that the document would provide a consistent and accessible source of guidance, helping property owners better understand expectations and enabling officers to provide more consistent advice. Members supported its use as an educational and practical tool to improve standards across the area.

The Committee also reflected on the importance of promoting local heritage and encouraging greater appreciation among residents and property owners. Members noted that engagement and awareness would be key to achieving the objectives set out within the documents, particularly where property owners were not locally based.

A further discussion took place regarding the differences between modern and traditional buildings. Officers explained that traditional buildings were generally designed to “breathe”, allowing moisture to enter and evaporate naturally, whereas modern buildings were typically designed to be sealed and waterproof. Members acknowledged that inappropriate alterations, particularly the introduction of modern materials to older buildings, could lead to deterioration and damage. The Design Guide was therefore welcomed as a means of improving understanding and avoiding such issues.

Members also highlighted the challenges associated with enforcement and the limitations in influencing absentee landlords or less engaged property owners. Whilst recognising these limitations, the Committee accepted that the documents provided a strong framework to support improved outcomes over time.

Overall, the Committee supported the principles and objectives of the heritage documents, whilst acknowledging the financial and practical challenges associated with their delivery.

The recommendations were moved by Councillor James Avery and seconded by Councillor Barrie Pierpoint.

Resolved:

That the documents and comments provided by the Committee, recognising the need to assess the area’s historic environments and, where appropriate, make changes to ensure that their special interest is preserved and enhanced, be noted.

8 Any other items which the Chairman decides are urgent

There was no other business.

The Meeting ended at 11.03 am.