

People ▶ Place ▶ Prosperity ▶



# Greater Lincolnshire Local Government Reorganisation

A proposal by City of Lincoln Council for a Lincoln City Unitary, a Rural Lincolnshire Unitary and the retention of two Northern Lincolnshire Unitaries



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# Foreword

This is our modified proposal which represents our conclusion for the best way to deliver meaningful Local Government Reorganisation in Greater Lincolnshire. Subject to MHCLG agreement to modification, this is the proposal that we would wish to take forward for consideration and consultation.

**Greater Lincolnshire is a diverse place of places, comprising coastal communities, rural heartlands, vibrant market towns, a re-energised industrial cluster on the South Humber Bank, with Lincoln being the only city within this largely rural geography.**

**Lincoln is a fast-growing and ambitious city, home to a thriving knowledge ecosystem and boasting a rich cultural and historical identity. It sits at the heart of innovative clusters in defence and security, the creative economy, and the rapidly expanding digital and technology sectors.**

**The Government's Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) agenda represents the biggest opportunity in more than fifty years to reshape and optimise local service delivery.**

**This is our chance to reimagine how we can build new unitary councils within Greater Lincolnshire; councils that are close enough to communities to be local, but large enough to have a sustainable future.**

**We have chosen to embrace the opportunity of local government reorganisation with ambition guided by evidence and shaped by the views of residents, businesses, and partners.**

**Our proposal is not just about structures; it is about transforming how we deliver for:**

- ▶ **People** – Services focused on people's needs, with decisions being made closer to communities, giving residents and businesses a stronger voice.

- ▶ **Place** – Services shaped by the distinct identities and priorities of our rural, coastal, market town and urban city communities, as well as supporting and protecting our unique countryside and environments.
- ▶ **Prosperity** – Enabling access to services that improve quality of life, reduce inequality, and create opportunities for inclusive growth.

We propose:

- ▶ **A new unitary for the City of Lincoln** and the wider economic area, reflecting its functional geography and rich history of self-governance, allowing it to act at a scale that supports growth, prevention and innovation. This will allow the city to plan effectively across a wider urban area that reflects how people live, work, and move.
- ▶ **A new unitary for rural Lincolnshire**, designed around the distinct priorities and identities of our rural, coastal, and market town communities, allowing these unique characteristics to drive service transformation.
- ▶ **North East Lincolnshire and North Lincolnshire to remain as existing unitary authorities**, with the potential to combine as one unitary authority in the future, to maximise its industrial clusters and more effectively tackle common urban deprivation challenges.

These new unitary councils will deliver transformed, locally designed services that are tailored to meet the specific needs of diverse communities across Greater Lincolnshire, rather than larger 'one size fits all' type approaches.



We are creating new unitary councils that reflect our diverse areas, where services are not just delivered but are designed for the modern world, tailored to local community needs that will improve outcomes.

This simpler, more effective model of local government will build inclusive growth and resilient local systems, which become the foundation for hard-wiring prevention and early intervention into our public services.

**Our proposal for local government reorganisation in Greater Lincolnshire will:**

- ▶ **Accelerate growth** - by establishing the right scale and geography, the city will have the capacity and powers to drive growth across the wider city region, while enabling rural, coastal, and market town communities the autonomy to unlock growth through their distinct sectoral strengths just as the industrial northern towns can.
- ▶ **Protect local identity** - through a new model of meaningful localism, empowering Greater Lincolnshire's towns and villages to speak for their residents and businesses, while the city speaks for the city. This simpler local government model, aligned to residents' sense of place and identity, is

the best way for Greater Lincolnshire's unique voices to be heard and responded to, empowering local communities through representative democracy that drives genuine resident-focused service design.

- ▶ **Improve outcomes closer to home** – by designing community-centred, preventative public services that are joined up, cost-effective and delivered alongside local partnerships. It helps avoid significant deprivation, child poverty, distinct health issues and economic opportunity/challenges from getting lost or diluted by a strategy, policy and service delivery model based on a huge Greater Lincolnshire/Lincolnshire footprint. This gives Greater Lincolnshire the best possible chance to deliver and enable access to services which will improve quality of life, reduce inequality, and create a more inclusive and prosperous Greater Lincolnshire.

Our proposal for Local Government Reorganisation is ambitious, evidence-based, and rooted in local identity. It is designed to deliver better outcomes for residents, stronger local democracy, and a sustainable future for all of Greater Lincolnshire.



**Cllr Naomi Tweddle**  
Leader of City of  
Lincoln Council

November 2025





## Executive summary

In 2028 the map of councils in Lincolnshire will change radically for the first time in more than fifty years. The boundaries that replace them will shape how services are provided, where new homes are built, where new jobs are created and how residents and communities have their hopes and aspirations responded to by their elected representatives and the councils that serve them. This is no small decision, and the people of Lincoln and Greater Lincolnshire deserve the right solution which recognises, respects and celebrates the contrasting and distinct nature of different parts of our county.

### 2.1 Our proposal for Greater Lincolnshire

**Our starting point is not to look at the boundaries that have existed since 1974 but rather to look at how, in 2025, people live and lead their lives right across Greater Lincolnshire – recognising that where people call home doesn't fit neatly with lines drawn on a map in Whitehall in the 1970s. This proposal looks at Greater Lincolnshire today and designs a fit-for-the-future approach based on two core principles of growth and prevention, which will work for generations to come.**

Today, Greater Lincolnshire is a place of contrasts. The region has a population of 1.1 million, with over 34,000 enterprises all contributing to its £29bn economy. The area's economy has grown by 23% in real terms over the last ten years, making it an essential contributor to both regional and national prosperity. However, more than 90% of Greater Lincolnshire is either rural or coastal, with the exception of market towns such as Gainsborough, Boston or Louth; Northern industrial towns of Scunthorpe and

Grimsby; and the region's only city, Lincoln. While Lincoln is constrained by its current boundaries, rural areas face challenges due to their low density, dispersed communities and poor infrastructure. Greater Lincolnshire's rural, coastal and market town communities are trailblazers in agri-tech and renewable energy; the Northern areas national leaders in logistics and manufacturing and Lincoln a rapidly growing, historic university city with strength in education and knowledge-intensive sectors.

These are fundamentally distinctive places, with different demographics and specific economic growth levers. Built upon this deep understanding, this proposal envisages a new local government structure for Greater Lincolnshire, organised around these meaningful geographies to protect the region's unique places, improve outcomes for its people and drive prosperity. Only the introduction of dedicated unitary authorities for Rural Lincolnshire and Lincoln City can achieve this.

## 2.2 Distinct Geographies

**This proposal is shaped around people and place, in order to create a more prosperous future with improved outcomes for all residents of Greater Lincolnshire.**

Greater Lincolnshire contains some of the most rural and sparsely populated areas of the country alongside its city and two major towns. Mapping population density across Greater Lincolnshire demonstrates the distinct nature of the industrial towns of North Lincolnshire and North East Lincolnshire, the historic city of Lincoln and the rural, coastal and market town communities throughout the current Lincolnshire County Council area.

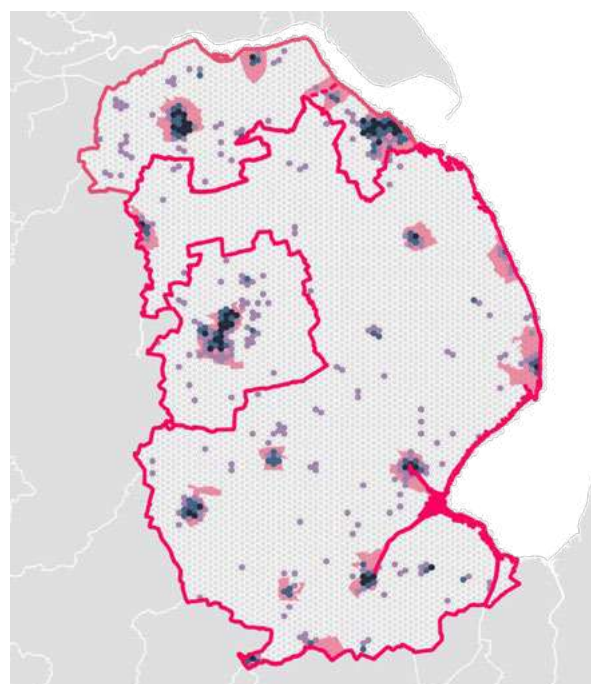
Alongside the existing Northern Lincolnshire unitary authorities, this proposal recommends creating two new councils for Lincolnshire: the new Lincoln City Council, bringing in the urban areas recognised by the current North Kesteven, West Lindsey and City of Lincoln councils as forming the *Lincoln Strategy Area* in their joint Local Plan, and a Rural Lincolnshire Council bringing together the coast, market towns and countryside of Lincolnshire.

These two areas are demographically distinct, have different economic opportunities, and different housing needs and will require different services to meet the needs of their distinct and diverse communities of interest. These communities will therefore be best served by two local councils that can best align to the opportunities, challenges and needs of these places both now and over the coming decades.

**Lincoln City** is the thriving, urban focus of the county. It has a rich cultural and historical identity, having been a seat of local and regional government for two thousand years. Lincoln and its residents are extremely proud of this history; it defines and shapes the place and must be reflected in future local governance. Lincoln City will build on its longstanding history of self-governance and rich heritage, strong tourism base, and innovative and dynamic economic foundations to deliver inclusive growth with a focus on accelerated housing delivery.

**Northern Lincolnshire: Our Greater Lincolnshire proposal sees the two unitary councils of North Lincolnshire and North East Lincolnshire continuing to exist as separate authorities. We believe that there could be benefit in them coming together, but this does not form part of this proposal. Under the current legislation, this new unitary could only be created if the proposal came from one of those authorities. Any such reorganisation in the future would require a voluntary proposal from one of the authorities or a change in the primary legislation. Given this potential, this proposal predominantly focuses on the geography of Lincolnshire currently governed by two tiers of local government.**

North East Lincolnshire and North Lincolnshire are existing unitary authorities and already have some well-established and effective services delivered in partnership including a shared Homes Options service, a Waste Disposal



### Population Analysis Population Density and Classification

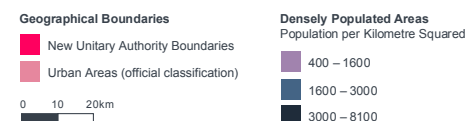


Figure 1: Population densities across Greater Lincolnshire.

**Rural Lincolnshire** brings together our beautiful coasts, Wolds and countryside filled with historic market towns like Stamford, Boston and Louth. It leads the way in demonstrating how large rural economies can thrive through sustainable growth and strong local partnerships, delivering community-based services that respond to the realities of dispersed populations and rural isolation.

Partnership jointly managing the waste disposal contract and shared financial systems and governance. Over the coming years there will be opportunities for further collaboration that could be considered to pool resources, align service standards, reduce duplication, and access economies of scale and specialist expertise that will be more beneficial than operating in isolation.

This proposal predominantly focuses on the geography of Lincolnshire currently governed by two tiers of local government. Once Lincolnshire has an agreed way forward for single-tier local government, and should the legislation allow, the opportunities to create a single Northern Lincolnshire unitary should be explored and assessed for viability allowing for further collaboration with and between the two existing northern unitary councils.





## 2.3 Distinct strategies for distinct places

**We believe that an approach rooted in Growth, Identity and Prevention will lead to more thriving and prosperous communities, and public services that enable and support people to lead their lives to their greatest potential. However, how we apply these principles varies due to the specifics of place: how services are designed and operated in a dense urban environment will be different to how we design for rural areas rather than simply looking for a one-size-fits-all approach. This will allow us to operate more efficiently, more effectively and deliver better value for money for local people and national Government.**

**Lincoln City** is the thriving, urban focus of the county, with rich heritage tourism, innovative and dynamic economic opportunity, significant growth potential with new homes, communities and businesses across AI embracing sectors with creativity and flair. It will be one of the youngest authorities in the country with a median age of 39. In the city, recent years have seen significant growth in both 18-23 year olds and working age groups, driven by people moving to the city, attracted by the vibrancy and opportunity of an energetic small city, as well as for the universities, and staying for professional careers. However, despite being home to over 20,000 students and a growing knowledge economy the city still faces a skills shortage. Even with a growing and diversified economy, 30% of children are growing up in poverty and despite being one of the country's youngest cities it has lower life expectancy than the English average.

Responding to this younger demographic and concentrated deprivation, Lincoln's model will focus on housing stability, youth engagement, and digital inclusion. Co-located service hubs will integrate support for these needs such as housing services, mental health support, and employment pathways,

while leveraging the city's innovation ecosystem to create opportunities for young people. Strong neighbourhood partnerships and community connectors will remain central, ensuring services feel local and accessible.

**Rural Lincolnshire** is older, with a median age of 47. In some areas, such as within East Lindsey, the median age of 52 is among England's oldest. Young people continue to leave coastal and rural communities within Lincolnshire in high volumes (the latest census shows that in some rural areas this can be up to 21%). Some leave for Lincoln and others for other parts of the country. There are profound health inequalities in some of our coastal communities, with significant barriers to accessing care.

Serving an ageing population across dispersed communities, Rural Lincolnshire will therefore prioritise tackling isolation, improving transport and digital connectivity, and supporting older residents to live independently. Mobile outreach teams and community hubs will deliver early help close to home, while integrated housing and social care planning will address the growing need for adapted homes and "telecare" solutions (use of technology such as remote alarms to support care). Partnerships with VCSE organisations will strengthen local networks and ensure no resident is left behind.

Our approach recognises these differences and that we need a bespoke approach to service delivery. Our model therefore does more than just reorganise structures: it reshapes services around people and place and around growth and prosperity, creating councils that are agile, responsive, and financially sustainable. By embedding prevention at the heart of service design, Lincoln City and Rural Lincolnshire will reduce inequalities, protect vulnerable residents, and deliver better outcomes for all.



## 2.4 Unlocking growth and opportunity

**Local Government Reorganisation offers Lincolnshire a once-in-a-generation opportunity to overcome entrenched economic barriers and deliver inclusive growth that works for every community. Creating two new unitary authorities within the boundaries of the current two-tier system will unlock the full potential of Lincolnshire's diverse places – enabling Lincoln City and Rural Lincolnshire to pursue strategies tailored to their distinct strengths and challenges.**

**Lincoln City** is a compact, high-productivity economic hub, driven by innovation, education, and knowledge-intensive industries. Anchored by its two universities, the Science and Innovation Park, and clusters of creative, digital, defence, construction and professional services, the city benefits from agglomeration effects that foster entrepreneurship and collaboration. New business formation grew by 26% between 2013 and 2023, yet GVA growth lagged at 6.7%, signalling the need for stronger coordination across the city's functional economic area, which goes beyond the 1974 boundary. An expanded Lincoln City authority will provide the levers to align housing, transport, and skills with its innovation-driven economy, ensuring growth translates into opportunity.

**Rural Lincolnshire**, by contrast, powers the nation's agri-food sector and is central to the UK's energy transition. Home to the country's most productive food manufacturing cluster and extensive renewable energy assets, it also hosts advanced engineering firms serving agri-tech, coastal and rural tourism alongside low-carbon markets. The potential

of these sectors was showcased by the GLCCA Mayor at her recent 'Great Exhibition of Lincolnshire' event. Yet rural GVA growth remains uneven, with South Holland (+16.6%) outperforming areas like South Kesteven, where output has declined. A dedicated rural authority will enable focused investment in connectivity, vocational skills, and infrastructure to sustain these nationally significant sectors.

**North Lincolnshire** has a strong industrial base including a British Steel plant in Scunthorpe, oil refineries at Killingholme and food processing, logistics and green energy sectors. Agriculture remains a key contributor to the local economy and the area is well connected via the M180 motorway and the Humber Bridge. The **North East Lincolnshire** economy is supported by logistics, food and drink especially seafood processing, renewable energy and chemical industries. These are all underpinned by its nationally significant infrastructure with Immingham port being one of the busiest freight port in the country.

Together, the two-unitary model across the current two-tier geography creates a platform for complementary growth strategies: one maximising urban innovation, the other driving rural resilience alongside the industry and freeport in Northern Lincolnshire. This approach will strengthen Lincolnshire's voice in national investment conversations, accelerate housing delivery, improve transport, and build inclusive skills pathways – ensuring that growth is not only faster but fairer, and that Lincolnshire's people and places thrive for decades to come.

## 2.5 Embedding prevention: A new operating model for local government

**We are proposing two new councils that deliver high-quality, resilient services without disruption. By creating Lincoln City and Rural Lincolnshire unitaries, we can move beyond the limitations of the current two-tier system and build a model rooted in early intervention and prevention, ensuring that residents receive timely, personalised support and that the most vulnerable are protected.**

The transition will be managed to guarantee service continuity from day one with particular attention paid to critical services such as SEND, Children's Social Care and Adult Social Care. Existing strengths, such as Lincolnshire's nationally recognised Children's Services, will be preserved and enhanced through new shared service arrangements built from a strong starting point. For Adults Social Care there will be new sovereign services for each of the

unitaries. Across both arrangements these will maintain critical expertise where needed, while integrated pathways will simplify access for residents. There will be no gaps in provision: instead, services will become more joined-up, reducing duplication and improving outcomes.

The new operating model prioritises early help and proactive support, tackling issues before they escalate into crises. Predictive analytics and shared data will identify risk up to 18 months in advance, enabling targeted interventions. Multidisciplinary teams will work collaboratively across housing, health, education, and social care, ensuring residents are met by the right person, at the right time, with the right support. This approach reduces long-term demand on costly statutory services and builds community resilience.

## 2.6 A voice for all our communities

**Our two new unitaries will see an overall reduction in councillor numbers as part of a more efficient and streamlined approach to local government. However, by designing these new authorities with a clear place focus, around distinct communities of interest, economic opportunity and local challenges we can ensure that council chambers are focused on addressing issues of common and collective concern, rather than trying to balance competing priorities.**

We will supplement this approach by protecting and preserving the role of local Parish Councils and respecting the crucial role they play in many communities, and by creating new Neighbourhood Area Committees aligned to NHS Primary Care Network Boundaries. These areas will have populations of c.50,000 meaning that the new councils can engage meaningfully with each area, and that they can serve as the basis for wider engagement with the rest of the public sector as part of a new prevention-first approach to local services.

We also aim to reflect Lincoln's rich cultural and historical identity. The city has a 2,000-year history as a seat of

regional governance, is one of only a handful of cities with an Office of Sheriff, and its Office of Mayor (dating back over 800 years) is one of the oldest in existence. This history of self-governance is integral to local identity and visible Civic leadership is key to supporting the aims of the council and all organisations within Lincoln.

At a strategic level, our proposed new councils will bring a set of stronger place-based voices and add balance and proportionality to the Greater Lincolnshire Combined County Authority. At the moment, the City of Lincoln is a non-constituent member of the Greater Lincolnshire County Combined Authority (GLCCA), on rotation with other districts with no permanent vote. This denies Lincoln a long-term role in shaping how the GLCCA's funding is spent or what its strategic priorities are. This results in a regional government which cannot adequately address the issues and opportunities of the wider Lincoln area in the way it can Grimsby or Scunthorpe. As such, this proposal gives a voice and vote to rural and city communities, to work alongside the GLCCA Mayor as part of a devolved authority that can truly work in partnership with every part of Greater Lincolnshire.

## 2.7 Financially sustainable councils

**Local Government Reorganisation provides Lincolnshire with a strategic opportunity to secure long-term financial sustainability by creating two streamlined, resilient councils capable of delivering high-quality services and managing future fiscal pressures. The proposed Lincoln City and Rural Lincolnshire authorities will be designed to deliver financial sustainability through two reinforcing strategies which underpin our proposal:**

**Growth:** Expanding tax bases through housing delivery and unlocking investment in priority sectors. Lincoln City will leverage its innovation ecosystem, while Rural Lincolnshire will capitalise on nationally significant agri-food and renewable energy clusters.

**Prevention:** Integrating housing, health, and social care to reduce long-term demand for high-cost services, flattening future cost trajectories.

At present, all eight councils in Lincolnshire remain financially sound — none have issued a Section 114 notice or required Exceptional Financial Support (EFS). This reflects a strong track record of prudent financial management across the county. However, this stability masks growing structural pressures: social care now accounts for 57.9% of total county council expenditure, home-to-school transport costs have doubled since before the pandemic, and inflation, demographic change, and Lincolnshire's dispersed geography continue to drive up costs. The county council also remains disadvantaged under the national funding model, receiving around £120 million less each year than comparable areas. The district councils are also facing a range of cost and demand pressures, creating a structural

imbalance between expenditure and income that challenges long-term sustainability.

Simply merging the existing councils into a "super-unitary" would not resolve these challenges and could dilute accountability. By contrast, a two-unitary model, focused on our two reinforcing strategies, offers a financially responsible route to renewal. Transition costs of around £48 million will be funded locally through reserves and the flexible use of capital receipts, requiring no central government support. In addition, recurring costs of around £6–8 million per year are expected during the transition period. However, recurring savings begin to build from 2028/29, as the new structures embed. In Year 1, early efficiencies of approximately £17 million are achieved, increasing to more than £30 million per year by 2031/32, as wider structural reforms take effect. The model achieves payback in Year 3, moving both new authorities into sustainable surplus, with annual net savings of around £23 million and a cumulative benefit of around £44 million by 2032/33.

Baseline analysis indicates Lincoln City would begin with a notional £8.5 million surplus, while Rural Lincolnshire would start with a small £2.4 million deficit, easily offset through harmonisation and efficiency savings. Both authorities fall well within the norms for successful English unitaries: Lincoln City's projected Band D tax base (63,715) and population (224,839) for Vesting Day (2028/29 – based upon mid-2022 Office of National Statistics projections) are comparable to York and Stockton-on-Tees, while Rural Lincolnshire's scale (192,058 Band D; 617,931 population – again, projected for 2028/29) aligns with Cornwall and Wiltshire.

Reorganisation would therefore build on Lincolnshire’s current financial strength — not to rescue failing councils, but to equip them to remain sustainable in the long term. By integrating

functions and aligning growth with prevention, the two new authorities would be able to generate efficiencies, strengthen resilience, and invest in the drivers of future prosperity.

## 2.8 A better future for all

**This proposal sets out a fairer future for Lincolnshire, one which celebrates and respects our history, which champions our local strengths, and which can unlock a better future for every community in every part of the county by unlocking growth and prosperity, embedding prevention as a model for service delivery, and providing a voice for all our communities.**

This will involve changes to existing services delivered at both district and county level. The table below provides a summary of how we anticipate both unitaries would address these key services.

Services	Lincoln City	Rural Lincolnshire	Implications
Early Intervention & Prevention	In-house	In-house	In-house
Housing	In-house	In-house	In-house
Public Health	Disaggregated	Disaggregated	Disaggregated
Adult Social Care	Run as separate, in-house services with some elements run as partnership between both unitaries (e.g. Strategic Commissioning)		Disaggregated
Children’s Services, Education & SEND	Joint service with some services being run on a unitary footprint (i.e. teams structured around unitaries - SEND Advice, Virtual Schools, Family Help, Assessments, etc.)		Very limited disaggregation
Planning & Building Control	In-house	In-house	Aggregated
Waste Collection & Disposal	Collection separate – outsourced (Lincoln City) / in-house (Rural Lincolnshire). Disposal run as jointly outsourced service		Aggregated / no change
Highways & Transport	Joint service / mix of outsourced and in-house – strategy, policy and commissioning to be disaggregated to be in house		Limited disaggregation
Libraries	Joint outsourced service		No change
Culture & Leisure	In-house / Outsourced	In-house / Outsourced	Aggregated
Regulatory Services <sup>1</sup>	In-house / mix of outsourced and LATCO	In-house / mix of outsourced and LATCO	Mainly aggregated
Registrars & Bereavement Services	In-house	In-house	Disaggregated / Aggregated
Growth Function	In-house	In-house	Aggregated
Enabling Services	In-house	In-house	Aggregated
Customer Contact	Mix of in-house and outsourced	Mix of in-house and outsourced	Aggregated
Democracy	In-house	In-house	Aggregated
Fire & Rescue	Joint service that moves to the GLCCA over time		No change

Table 1. Overview of how services will be transitioned to the unitary model in this proposal.

It should be noted that the table above provides a summary view, and that there is more nuance to how these services will be delivered that is explained in the Key Service Target Operating section and appendices. For example, the approach above for Highways and Waste Disposal are proposed interim delivery models that account for existing contractual and outsourcing arrangements, that allow both unitaries to develop a longer-term operating model for these services.

<sup>1</sup> Regulatory Services covers a very broad range of services including Licensing, Food Health & Safety, Trading Standards, Community Safety and others.



# Lincoln City

Unleashing the potential of Lincolnshire's **economic powerhouse** and continuing Lincoln's history of self-determination. Only a new Lincoln City unitary can address persistent urban inequalities through this proposal's outcomes-focused approach to transform public services to a community-based, preventative model while accelerating economic and housing growth.



**Communities:**  
City urban area and suburbs

**Population (2028/29):**  
224,839

**National Rank:**  
38th Largest (~York)

**Economic Drivers:**  
Innovation, education, knowledge-intensive, defence, construction.

**Service Focus:**  
Health and skills inequalities, young and working age pop.

## People

Lincoln has **unique and persistent challenges** with educational and health inequalities which can only be solved through a dedicated local government with tailored strategies to the specific needs of residents. Rooted within an **outcomes-focused approach**, the Lincoln City unitary authority will enable the transformation of public services to adopt a **preventative, joined-up model**, improving the lives of all residents.

## Prosperity

Lincoln City is a regional economic hub, driven by **innovation, entrepreneurship and collaboration**. This proposal will enhance existing growth, expanding the city boundary to provide the levers to align housing policy, transport and skills with its innovation-driven economy, directly translating **growth into opportunity for residents**, creating a more prosperous city for its people but also the wider region.

## Place

Lincoln has a long-standing history of self-governance which will be recognised by this proposal making it a **permanent voting member of the GLCCA**, enabling the city to shape the region's future and **supporting devolution**. The city has a rich heritage with a strong cultural tourism base. Lincoln City recognises the **true boundaries** of Lincoln, ensuring communities like North Hykeham are included and engaged in their city's future.

## Practicalities

Lincoln's restrictive boundaries are currently **constraining the city**; reducing its ability to deliver housing, holding back its economic growth sectors and denying Lincoln residents in communities just outside a say in the future of their city. This proposal expands Lincoln's **boundaries based upon the Lincoln Strategy Area**, finally including parts of North Kesteven and West Lindsey to unlock the area's true potential.

# Alignment With Government Criteria - Lincoln City

## 1 - Single Tier of Local Government

This proposal right-sizes the restrictive boundaries of the City of Lincoln to create a **local government which responds to Lincoln's needs and priorities** with the autonomy and powers to deliver meaningful change. This includes the 102,000 Lincoln residents currently excluded from decisions about their city by existing boundaries.

## 2 - Efficiencies, Capacity and Resilience

The meaningful geographies which inform this proposal unlock the potential to **radically transform public service delivery models** to improve efficiency and capacity. Expanding city limits will equip the city with the levers to **accelerate growth** and increase its council tax base to significantly enhance financial resilience.

## 3 - Transforming Public Services

County-level models have proven unable to address the significant health and educational disparities in Lincoln and the city's boundaries place the required levers beyond its control. This new unitary authority is **explicitly designed to improve outcomes** by transforming public services to a community-centred preventative model.

## 4 - Supporting Local Place Identity

A Lincoln City unitary reflects what local people recognise as Lincoln, where they live, work and access services. Meanwhile, other communities feel the city pulls funding and dialogue from the issues important to them and deserve a **dedicated unitary to support their unique needs**.

## 5 - Enhancing Devolution

Lincoln's economic importance and long history of **self-determination** are noted by other proposals and its securing of non-voting membership of the GLCCA. However, to truly support devolution, **the city needs full and permanent voting membership of the GLCCA** so it has a seat at the table, a voice in the room to shape policy and delivery and a vote on investment is spent to deliver Greater Lincolnshire's ambitious agenda.

## 6 - Empowering Communities

Only this proposal brings communities **that already identify as part of Lincoln into a dedicated Lincoln City unitary** which empowers them to shape the future of their city. This new authority will have the resources and strategic focus to undertake **deeper community engagement** through new Neighbourhood Area Committees based around PCN footprints.

# Rural Lincolnshire

Rural, coastal and market town communities in Lincolnshire deserve the voice and autonomy this new unitary authority gives them. Their shared needs and priorities will drive a strategically-focused unitary authority, uniquely positioned to address these communities' specific challenges and support their nationally important growth sectors.



**Communities:**  
Rural, coastal, market towns

**Population (2028/29):**  
617,931

**National Rank:**  
5th Largest

**Economic Drivers:**  
Agri-food, agri-tech, renewable energy, rural tourism

**Service Focus:**  
Aging population and infrastructure challenges



## People

Rural Lincolnshire is home to an **aging population** with specific pockets of deprivation amongst wealth which require a bespoke approach. The aligned needs of these communities will enable the transformation of public services to a **community-based, preventative model** which responds to the realities of **dispersed populations and rural isolation**, delivering tangible improvements in resident outcomes.

## Prosperity

Rural Lincolnshire will exemplify how large, rural economies can thrive through **sustainable growth and strong local partnerships**. It is a national leader in the agri-food sector and central to the UK's energy transition. The new Rural Lincolnshire local government will create **specific policy strategies** to unlock its growth sectors, enabling focused investment in connectivity, vocational skills and infrastructure.

## Place

Rural Lincolnshire brings together our **beautiful coasts, Wolds and countryside** filled with market towns like Stamford, Boston and Louth. These rural communities are tangibly different from Lincoln City, from the **unique infrastructural challenges** to the distinctive arts centre which thrives in traditional mediums in comparison to the city's focus on digital art. These are different places which need different governance.

## Practicalities

Rural Lincolnshire is designed to give a voice to the coastal, rural and market town communities of Lincolnshire. It will benefit from **enhanced democratic representation** through a move away from single councillor entities, savings from reduced duplication and most importantly **outcomes for residents will be radically transformed** through the new approach to public services facilitated by this new unitary structure.

# Alignment With Government Criteria - Rural Lincolnshire

## 1 - Single Tier of Local Government

Rural Lincolnshire will provide a new, single-tier of local government with **clear strategic focus** on the specific needs of rural, coastal and market town communities in Lincolnshire. By shaping the unitary authority around **functional geographies**, this proposal creates an effective new local government for these communities.

## 2 - Efficiencies, Capacity and Resilience

By **uniting areas with shared needs and priorities**, Rural Lincolnshire will benefit from **streamlined services** and improved efficiencies through its ability to adopt a targeted strategic vision. The **larger spending power** and potential to increase council tax revenue through harmonisation will **improve financial resilience**.

## 3 - Transforming Public Services

Addressing infrastructural and demographic challenges is crucial to improving public services in Rural Lincolnshire. This new unitary authority is specifically designed to facilitate a transformation of public service delivery to a new **community-centred, preventative model** to improve quality of life for all residents.

## 4 - Supporting Local Place Identity

The unique identity of Rural Lincolnshire is currently overshadowed by its grouping with Lincoln which residents fear pulls investment and dialogue away from these communities' strong identity. The new unitary authority's strategic focus will **celebrate local identity and champion and enhance Rural Lincolnshire's national importance**.

## 5 - Enhancing Devolution

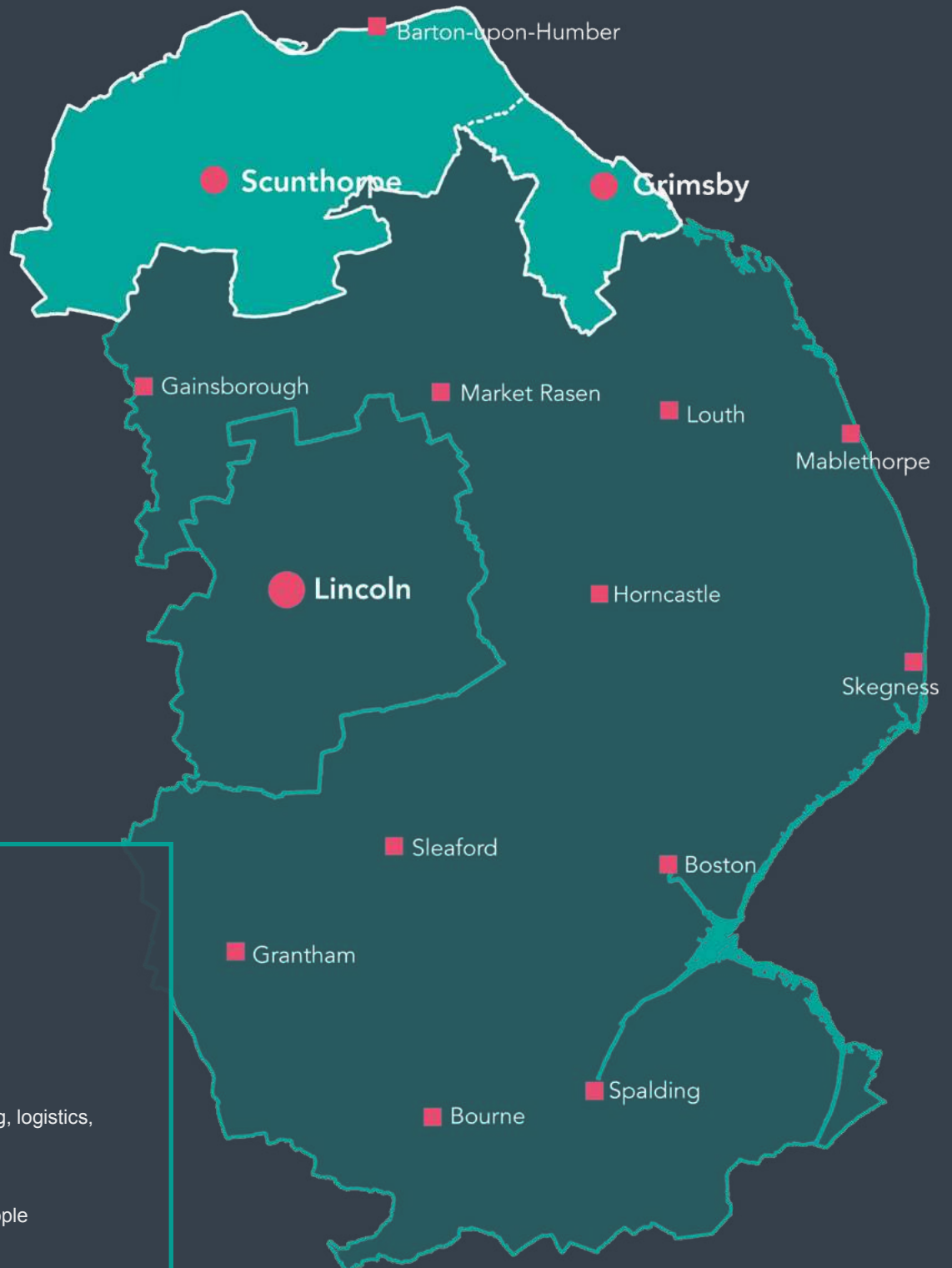
Clearly distinguished from the regional-scale, this proposal gives these communities a **stronger voice to advocate for their interests**, empowering the rural, coastal and market town communities of Lincolnshire with full and permanent voting membership of the GLCCA. This is essential to **supporting devolution** and ensuring rural, coastal and market town communities are able to shape policies in their region.

## 6 - Empowering Communities

With their shared priorities, the strategic focus of Rural Lincolnshire will empower communities. This proposal goes further, embedding new Neighbourhood Area Committees based around Primary Care Network footprints to root public service and policy design within a **deep understanding of both shared and unique community needs**.

# Northern Lincolnshire

Recognising their existing autonomy, this proposal pursues a flexible, pragmatic approach recognising the benefits of a merged North Lincolnshire and North East Lincolnshire whilst respecting their current decision to remain independent. This will provide benefits to all of Greater Lincolnshire by enhancing devolution and through potential shared service agreements.



**Communities:**  
Industrial towns and ports

**Population (2028/29):**  
357,577

**National Rank:**  
19th Largest

**Economic Drivers:**  
Offshore wind, engineering, logistics, chemicals, steel and ports

**Service Focus:**  
Outmigration of young people and aging population

## People

This proposal recognises the **proud industrial heritage** of North Lincolnshire and North East Lincolnshire. It **respects the current decision of these communities** to remain as independent unitaries but identifies the potential of a merger, embedding the flexibility to thrive in either case. People in Northern Lincolnshire will benefit from a **stronger regional voice and public service improvements** through partnership models.

## Prosperity

North Lincolnshire and North East Lincolnshire have **strong industrial bases** including the British Steel plant in Scunthorpe, oil refineries at Killingholme and specialisms in food processing, logistics and green energy sectors tied to its strong transport links and ports. By ensuring these areas have **dedicated local government arrangements**, this proposal ensures these sectors can continue to thrive.

## Place

North Lincolnshire and North East Lincolnshire have a proud industrial heritage, entwined with their geographic location at the mouth of the Humber and strategic ports. In the age of the transformative decarbonisation of the steel industry, energy transition and AI reimagining logistics, **dedicated local government structures** are essential to ensure places like Scunthorpe and Grimsby retain their national importance.

## Practicalities

This proposal prioritises reshaping a Greater Lincolnshire which works for all residents and respects the decision of communities in North Lincolnshire and North East Lincolnshire to **remain independent**. It recognises the benefits of a potential merger whilst delivering a proposal which enhances outcomes for all residents of Greater Lincolnshire, **supporting devolution** and unlocking growth in the region's interconnected economies.

# Alignment With Government Criteria - Northern Lincolnshire

## 1 - Single Tier of Local Government

This proposal addresses the **entire area** for consideration and envisages merging the existing Northern unitaries of Lincolnshire. However, recognising the legal challenges, this can only be achieved through **deep collaboration**. The flexible approach of this proposal enables the Northern Unitaries to shape their own future.

## 2 - Efficiencies, Capacity and Resilience

North Lincolnshire and North East Lincolnshire, as members of the same LEP economic area, share **significant economic interests** which their merger could unlock. Also, their demographic similarities enable a joined-up public-service approach with the new unitaries which will reduce duplication, improve capacity and deliver efficiencies.

## 3 - Transforming Public Services

The transformational potential of LGR is central to this proposal which, through an **outcomes-led approach**, will shape a new **community-centred, preventative public service model** in the Northern Unitaries to address the specific needs and priorities of their population and improve quality of life for all residents.

## 4 - Supporting Local Place Identity

North Lincolnshire and North East Lincolnshire possess a **distinct identity** from the rest of the region and this proposal preserves and enhances this whilst recognising their similarities. Through merging, they are **given greater power to continue their proud industrial heritage** and champion their unique identities.

## 5 - Enhancing Devolution

This proposal's **pragmatic approach** to the existing Northern Unitaries is rooted within King's Counsel advice. This proposal envisages that through deep collaboration, uniting these authorities will **strengthen their ability to advocate for their needs** regionally, supporting devolution by right-sizing GLCCA representation.

## 6 - Empowering Communities

Uniting North Lincolnshire and North East Lincolnshire will **give their local communities a stronger voice** to shape regional policies. This collaborative approach **embeds community engagement** within this LGR proposal, **empowering communities** to shape if and how the Northern Unitaries are merged.



# 3

## The case for change

Local Government Reorganisation provides the two tiers of Greater Lincolnshire with a clear opportunity to redesign the future of service delivery and unlock its immense growth potential. This proposal demonstrates how this opportunity can best be leveraged through a two unitary solution based on two new organisations: (1) an expanded Lincoln City authority, and (2) a Rural Lincolnshire authority that will represent the diverse interests of its rural residents with a strong, unified voice. This solution will provide the best possible platform to drive a growth and prevention agenda, with long-term benefits across *people, place and prosperity*.

**As a vast and polycentric county, Lincolnshire is uniquely characterised by a network of distinct and complementary places: from the historic city of Lincoln and major market towns like Boston, Grantham and Stamford, to its strategically significant coastal belt, areas of outstanding natural beauty, and vast expanse of agriculturally productive land. It is home to nationally significant industries including agriculture and tourism and retains a significant defence footprint. This makes it a standout region of huge importance to the UK growth story: an urban powerhouse for innovation and learning, and a key global player in food production and agri-tech innovation, clean energy generation, and transport and logistics.**

Yet Lincolnshire's full potential remains unrealised. Growth and productivity potential is held back by a lack of cross-county strategic planning for sector specialisation and underinvestment in skills. Persistent health inequalities, poor connectivity and weak rural infrastructure integration continue to limit access to opportunity and reduce life chances. Limited housing growth leaves many residents commuting long distances or excluded from labour markets entirely. This creates a geography of disadvantage defined by distance, fragmentation and disconnection rather than potential – with no single tier body accountable for how investments and interventions combine to improve people's lives or drive inclusive growth.

Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) offers the chance to change this: providing the platform to align delivery across people, place and prosperity. We will do so by aligning the relevant levers for economic development, infrastructure, and public service provision around the real geographies and needs of Lincolnshire's communities and businesses, for which we already have a strong evidence base. Crucially, our model does not seek arbitrary efficiencies or prolong local government's systemic barriers by simply reproducing current ways of working at scale. Rather, reflecting the collective ambition of our communities and valued partners, it takes LGR as a moment to innovate and transform through a deeper connection to our places and the people they serve, building on Lincoln City's long history of self-governance and civic traditions.

Our view is that the best way to embed this is through two new unitary authorities: (1) an expanded Lincoln City authority, and (2) a Rural Lincolnshire authority that can authentically represent residents from the countryside, coast and market towns with a strong and unified voice for rural interests. This is based on recognition of the distinct demographic profiles of Lincolnshire's disparate geographies which shape distinct resident needs now and in the future, and the distinct sector specialisms and barriers to opportunity that require an economic policy approach firmly rooted in place.



Notably, there is scope for this approach to be embedded further in North and North Eastern Lincolnshire through unification of the two existing unitary authorities, **if they chose to do so** (see further detail in the Options Appraisal on benefits of unification from a growth and service delivery perspective). If both existing unitaries wished to pursue this, then the detail would be worked through during government review and decision-making. However, this proposal focuses on the immediate benefits to be gained through establishing expanded Lincoln City and Rural Lincolnshire authorities.

By aligning the right levers, to the right places this reorganised model will expand Lincoln City and Rural Lincolnshire's portfolio remit and enable them to play distinct but complementary roles. Working together, they will deliver on the following guiding priorities:

► **Prosperity: Accelerating growth through the right scale and geography**

Giving Lincoln the space and powers to drive growth across the city region, while enabling rural, coastal and market town communities the autonomy to unlock growth through their distinct sectoral strengths. This builds on the city's long history of successful self-governance and gives Lincolnshire the best possible platform to drive growth for the UK economy, while also creating and retaining the most jobs and prosperity locally.

► **Place: Protecting identity through a new model of local government built on meaningful localism**

Empowering Lincolnshire's towns and villages to speak for their residents and businesses, while the city speaks for the city. This simpler local government model, aligned to residents' sense of place and local identity, is the best way for Lincolnshire's unique local voices to be heard and responded to, empowering local communities through representative democracy that prioritise and drive genuinely resident-focused service design. It seeks to balance efficiency through economies of scale, with genuine reform and renewal of councillors' roles.

► **People: Improving outcomes closer to home through community-centred, preventative public services**

Designing services around people and places so that support is joined up, cost-effective, and delivered alongside local partnerships. This gives Lincolnshire the best possible chance to deliver and enable access to services which are tailored to local needs and solutions, improving quality of life, addressing local barriers to opportunity and helping every resident to live well and feel part of their community.

This allows us to collectively focus our ambition on delivering improved outcomes for **people**, responding to real needs and solutions in **place**, and focusing on targeted growth strategies to tackle barriers to opportunity and deliver **prosperity for all**.

We cannot achieve this alone. Underpinning the proposal is a commitment to building on existing community and Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) partnerships in Lincolnshire, leveraging local knowledge to co-design earlier interventions and co-deliver preventative outcomes. By formalising place-based collaboration between these partners and future unitary councils, this model will provide the platform to plan and deliver interventions that are tailored to local need rather than one-size-fits-all, ensuring resources are targeted where they can prevent demand from escalating. This approach strengthens early intervention and prevention, reduces reliance on expensive reactive statutory services, and ensures that local insight directly shapes decision-making and service design, building more resilient, connected communities across Lincolnshire.

Paired with a focus on targeted local growth, this focus on early intervention and prevention will enable each new unitary authority to play a distinct role in shaping the future of Lincolnshire. Together, we will address challenges and seize the opportunity of LGR to build a brighter future for Lincolnshire residents.



### 3.1.1 Lincoln City Unitary

#### Driving innovation and inclusive urban growth

**An expanded Lincoln City will have the space and powers to drive growth across the city region, building on its influence as a hub of higher education, innovation, and culture.** The Lincoln City unitary will lead on creating a vibrant urban economy, unlocking housing and transport infrastructure in the existing Lincoln Strategy Area to support population growth, improved productivity and driving investment through its universities, digital industries, and the visitor economy. It will focus on tackling

urban deprivation through integrated regeneration and skills programmes supported by streamlined, redesigned housing solutions and health interventions, ensuring residents can benefit directly from growth. Building on Lincoln's long history of self-governance and its role as a regional centre of learning and innovation, this authority will act as the economic catalyst for the wider county, creating the conditions for high-value employment and new business formation that benefit the city and rural surroundings.

### 3.1.2 Rural Lincolnshire Unitary

#### Supporting national productivity and resilient communities

**The new Rural Lincolnshire unitary will lead the way in demonstrating how large rural economies can thrive through sustainable growth, digital connectivity, and strong local partnerships.** It will work with businesses, the VCSE and health partners to design preventative, community-based services that respond to the realities of dispersed populations and rural isolation. It will work with the GLCCA and key employers to empower rural, coastal and market town communities with the autonomy to unlock

growth through their distinct sectoral strengths. Rooted in a new model of meaningful localism, it will enable towns and villages to speak for their residents and businesses, ensuring decisions are shaped by those closest to their communities and that rural residents can speak with a strong, unified voice. By aligning economic strategy with social wellbeing, Rural Lincolnshire will strengthen the national food and energy systems on which the UK depends, while improving quality of life for every resident.

### 3.1.3 Shared ambition

#### Collaborating, and not competing

**Together, the two unitaries will provide Lincolnshire with a coherent platform for growth and prevention: a model that balances efficiency and representation, empowers local identity, and ensures that prosperity and opportunity are genuinely shared. By giving a designated voice to each new unitary this model will give the Greater Lincolnshire Mayor and the GLCCA two new strong, complementary partners to work with the existing northern unitaries with clear mandates: one focused on driving urban-led innovation and connectivity, the other on rural productivity and community resilience. It will ensure that urban and rural needs, challenges and opportunities are considered fully, without the risk of being subsumed or lost within a larger county geography that fails to recognise and respond to geographically determined difference.**

enable the new city and rural authorities to respond to place-specific hopes and aspirations: driving **inclusive growth** that enables Lincolnshire to fully harness its national significance and delivering **preventative services** that intervene earlier and address inequalities by “designing in” local needs and solutions.

Beyond the county itself, getting LGR right in Lincolnshire also represents an important national moment. Its dispersed population and polycentric economy offer a model for sustainable regional development that moves beyond the city-region focus of devolution policy. Successful reform would show how large, rural, polycentric areas can deliver inclusive growth, strengthen resilience, and contribute meaningfully to national priorities by giving a voice to their distinctiveness. In this sense, Lincolnshire is not just a county to be reformed; it is a test case of national significance to the UK growth story.

We recognise the distinctive nature of this proposal compared to the other Lincolnshire submissions. Its differentiator lies in its recognition of Lincoln City as a separate unitary. This will







## Options appraisal

A thorough and objective assessment of all known options for the Lincolnshire Local Government Reorganisation was undertaken against the government's LGR criteria.



## Option 1: City of Lincoln Council proposal

**The vision set out in this proposal will accelerate growth and enable the transformation of public services throughout Lincolnshire, improving outcomes through an approach rooted within meaningful localism. Our proposal comprises of two new unitary authorities over the current two-tier boundary, each shaped around functional geographies representing communities that have shared needs and priorities, allowing each authority to pursue clear, strategic visions.**

By expanding the official limits of Lincoln, the Lincoln City unitary will remove the restrictive boundaries which reinforce the city's persistent educational and health inequalities and restrict its ability to deliver housing at greater scale. Lincoln City will serve 208,496 residents as the 38th largest unitary authority by population out of the 62 in England, comparable in size to similar single-city unitary authorities such as York. It should also be noted as the country's population continues to grow, we would expect over the next 50 years the Lincoln City population will reach in excess of 350,000, so our proposal caters for the present and the future. As Lincolnshire's economic powerhouse, our proposal recognises the city's proud history of self-determinism, giving it voting rights at regional government and strengthening the devolution agenda. Only this proposal includes the 102,000 residents in communities around Lincoln, living as de facto city residents, excluded by current boundaries from shaping decisions concerning their own city.

The Rural Lincolnshire unitary will provide focused representation for Lincolnshire's rural, coastal and market town communities, uniting them around shared challenges and needs and empowering residents and businesses with a strong voice that will advocate for their interests at the level of both local and regional government. Unitary status

for Rural Lincolnshire will also enable the transformation of public services through a community-centred, preventative approach grounded in a clear understanding of local shared challenges. Council chambers will be focused on addressing place-specific issues of common concern with a clear place focus, while a shift away from single member representation will support increased democratic representation for rural communities. Neighbourhood Area Committees (NACs) will be established based on Primary Care Network boundaries, serving as the basis for engagement with health and broader partners and providing the critical forum for local representation. Local Parish Councils will be protected and preserved, recognising the crucial role they play in many communities. Overall, this will increase representation for communities in Rural Lincolnshire and provide a clearer accountability structure for common challenges to be addressed.

This proposal envisages a future where North Lincolnshire and Northeast Lincolnshire could merge to create a powerful Northern Lincolnshire unitary authority which can advocate for the shared needs and priorities of its residents, benefit from reduced duplication and improved financial resilience. However, adopting a pragmatic approach aligned with the Northern unitaries' current intent to remain separate, this proposal embeds flexibility regarding their future and will deliver benefits for everyone in Greater Lincolnshire, whether they choose to remain independent or merge over time. Communities in North Lincolnshire and North East Lincolnshire will benefit from potential service partnerships and right-sized representation at a regional level, strengthening devolution and enhancing their ability to advocate for their needs.

### Population

**Lincoln City** – 208,496

**Rural Lincolnshire** – 567,028

**N Lincs** – 171,366

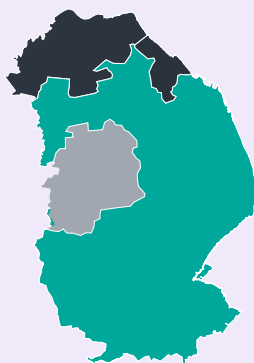
**NE Lincs** – 159,911

### Rationale

Designed around functional areas, this proposal creates a city unitary for urban priorities and a rural unitary to champion the needs of smaller rural, coastal and market town communities.

### Average Score for 6 LGR Criteria

4.5 27/30



### Greatest Strengths

Shaped by meaningful geographies, this ambitious proposal harnesses the potential of LGR to improve outcomes for residents. It recognises Lincoln's importance but also the unique needs of communities in Rural Lincolnshire to enhance representation and support devolution. It establishes blueprints to transform public service delivery, embracing a new community-centred, preventative model to secure efficiencies, enhance capacity and resilience. It adopts a pragmatic approach to North Lincolnshire and North East Lincolnshire, delivering benefits for all residents of Greater Lincolnshire whether these unitaries opt to merge or remain as separate entities.

### Greatest Weakness

Changing the boundaries of the City of Lincoln is essential to unlocking the transformational benefits offered by this proposal however this does increase short-term transition costs, and the inclusion of these wards results in wider-reaching reform than other proposals.

## Option 2: South & East Lincolnshire Councils Partnership proposal

The option proposed by East Lindsey, South Holland and Boston divides the area for consideration into two unitary authorities of similar economic and population scales. The Northern unitary would have a population of 531,000 and the Southern would have 574,000, making them the 7th and 8th largest unitaries nationally. The interim proposal outlined potential savings of £38 million over 4 years through this restructuring. However, this proposal has limitations due to the geographic boundaries spanning large areas resulting in two unitary authorities with highly heterogeneous populations, priorities and services. This creates Local Governments which will have the challenging task of simultaneously serving urban areas with rural villages, industrial towns with coastal communities. **The population distribution also risks the interests of urban areas overshadowing those of rural areas of Lincolnshire alongside maintaining the restrictive Southern boundary of the City of Lincoln.**

The boundaries of this proposal carve the growing urban area into two different unitary authorities. Parts of the same city will be governed by two local governments with different strategies and potentially even contradictory policies. This will limit Lincoln's growth and prosperity, inhibit its ability to design services to address the city's persistent inequalities and create confusion and frustration for residents and businesses alike. Urban areas such as North Hykeham, with its population of 16,844, will be severed from their city, instead grouped with wealthy rural communities, manifesting the worst outcomes for the existing two-tier local government, in direct opposition to the aims of LGR. Intent to remain separate, this proposal embeds flexibility regarding their future and will deliver benefits for everyone in Greater Lincolnshire, whether they choose to remain independent or merge over time. Communities in North Lincolnshire and North East Lincolnshire will benefit from potential service partnerships and right-sized representation at a regional level, strengthening devolution and enhancing their ability to advocate for their needs.

### Population

North – 531,000

South – 574,000



### Rationale

Delivering two new unitary authorities covering the entire GLCCA area with population and economic parity.

### Average Score for 6 LGR Criteria

2.7 16/30

### Greatest Strengths

Economic and population parity provide the fundamental rationale for this proposal which creates two, well-sized unitary authorities. These large new unitaries meet proposed targets for unitary authorities to have a population of at least 500,000. Through their greater spending power and economies of scale, these unitary authorities will be more financially resilient, and their size enables savings through reduced duplication.

### Greatest Weakness

The proposal recognises the importance of Lincoln as a city but does not respond to local calls to expand its boundaries or secure voting rights at GLCCA given its regional importance. The current boundary also results in areas such as North Hykeham which operate as part of Lincoln being separated from the city. This excludes these residents from shaping decisions over their own city's future, limit the city's ability to deliver housing and inhibit the service transformation required to address the persistent inequalities present in Lincoln. The unitary authorities also combine urban areas with rural, coastal and market town communities with distinct needs and priorities which risk being diluted by more populated areas.

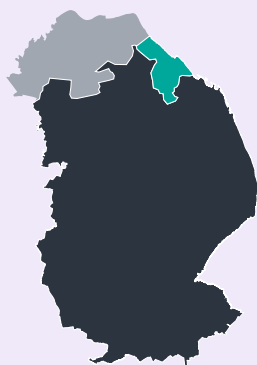
## Option 3: Proposed by Lincolnshire County Council (with support from North Lincolnshire and North East Lincolnshire)

The option proposed by Lincolnshire County Council maintains the current county boundaries to create a large new unitary with a population of 789,500 which would make it the largest unitary in the UK, over 150,000 people more than North Yorkshire, the current largest. This poses a risk as this unitary would comprise 70% of the population within the GLCCA which could limit the efficacy of devolution arrangements. Building upon the great success of the children's services model in the county, the proposal seeks to adopt the same approach with Adult Social Care. By retaining the existing boundaries, this option is guaranteed to be safe and legal on day one with limited changes to service delivery and efficiencies driven by a reduction in duplication.

However, the unitary size, which is large enough to be a regional body, poses risks for local representation which is intended to be addressed through the implementation of Neighbourhood Area Committees (NAC), the footprint of which is still to be determined. By maintaining the status quo under a new name, this proposal will reinforce or exacerbate the existing strategy disconnects from the extreme diversity of need within county boundaries. The intricacies of wealthy areas flanked by deprived areas in the City of Lincoln will be lost in datasets aggregated to the scale of the high-level lens of the county which risks entrenching the complex and persistent inequalities, particularly in Lincoln.

### Population

Lincolnshire – 789,502  
N Lincs – 171,366  
NE Lincs - 159,911



### Rationale

Prioritising a safe and legal approach to LGR, preserving existing structures and reducing duplication.

### Average Score for 6 LGR Criteria

2.2 13/30

### Greatest Strengths

By retaining existing structures, this proposal creates a new unitary which is guaranteed to be safe and legal on day one. This approach reduces transition costs and redefines the current county-level structure as a strong new local government with a powerful voice at GLCCA level.

### Greatest Weakness

The creation of the largest unitary authority in the country and preservation of the status quo significantly limits its positive impact. This results in a proposal which does not establish a clear, single-tier of local government and risks weakening devolution by operating at a similar scale to the GLCCA. On a community level, whilst the replacement of district and borough councils with NACs will ensure communities are represented, there are risks that the voices of the most vulnerable areas would be drowned out. It is unclear at this stage what the footprint of the NACs will be.



# Case Study for option 3: One unitary on the existing county footprint – what would it really mean?

**Too much strategic not enough place:** Insufficient differentiation between Greater Lincolnshire & Lincolnshire – leading to further confusion between roles, strategy and delivery. The focus would therefore be on the higher strategic level with a commissioning model of service rather than the place-based needs and requirements that often needs a service direct/bespoke delivery method.

**Marginalised Narrative:** Depiction of the north of Lincolnshire being industrial, urban, brownfield and the rest of Lincolnshire being rural would be reinforced.

**Voice:** The two towns of Grimsby and Scunthorpe would have their own voice but not the only city and largest urban area of Lincoln.

**Very Weak Representation:** City communities would go from 41 councillors (33 city councillors and 8 county councillors) to 8 councillors with new parish representatives to be established. This would not only be very weak representation but demonstrates poor understanding of the individual city councillor role and their corresponding caseload. The current caseload for city councillors in a unitary setting would be completely unmanageable with just 8 councillors further weakening representation.

**Marginalising City Challenges:** Current strategies at both Greater Lincolnshire and Lincolnshire County level, and as all the LGR proposals demonstrate, downplay and marginalise the economic, housing, services and growth role of the City, despite it being the regional centre and economic hub of Lincolnshire. This significantly hampers growth and the ability to deliver sustainable development. In addition, Lincoln's deprivation issues (25% of neighbourhoods in the most 10% deprived in England), are often overlooked or downplayed so much so that poor health outcomes and child poverty are not being effectively tackled now and when looked at in the context of Lincolnshire they will get masked further.

**Rural Policy Dominance:** Whilst other parts of Lincolnshire raise concerns that Lincoln get the priority and the money, a lot of that is a result of the ambition and success of the City of Lincoln Council in getting investment into the city over recent decades. This has meant significant projects such as the Lincoln Transport Hub and larger housing developments have been delivered the city council not

the county council. Under the proposed county unitary LGR model the retention of the existing 70 councillors on the same divisions will create significant inequity. Whilst market towns and smaller communities will be able to coalesce around common issues and service needs, the urban area of Lincoln will at most have a voice of 14 of the 70 councillors. The Lincoln City unitary would propose between 44 and 65 councillors for the equivalent area with Rural Lincolnshire being between 86-100 councillors.

**Identity:** Every survey and feedback channel has stressed that for the vast majority of stakeholders across Lincolnshire, local decision-making and delivery of appropriate services are key for both local identity and the role of local government. A single Lincolnshire unitary proposal completely ignores and fails to address that desire for locality and identity. This would be made even worse for the city of Lincoln given the lack of any current parish/town council (although one is offered by the County Council proposal this will take time to establish on top of the LGR change) and the lack of detail on Neighbourhood Area Committees adding further to the city's democratic deficit.

**Emphasis on business as usual:** Current single Lincolnshire unitary is based on creating more effective public services purely from removing perceived as well as actual duplication and simplification and not with a focus on service redesign. The costs and approach are based on business as usual which is mainly a commissioning model and limited direct delivery of services and doesn't demonstrate a true understanding of the role of districts and the city in their places.

**Lack of ambition:** Lincoln and other Lincolnshire districts have a track record of having and delivering ambition, whether this is climate change net-zero targets by 2030 as opposed to the County's 2050 target, or improved community health outcomes by tackling the wider determinants of health. The lower-tier councils have consistently demonstrated quality direct delivery services and projects through initiatives such as Town Fund, UKSPF and LUF funding programmes. There is a real risk that this sort of focused ambition and delivery for people and places would be lost.

## Option 4: North Kesteven District Council and South Kesteven District Council proposal

The option proposed by North Kesteven and South Kesteven creates two evenly sized unitaries with Unitary Authority 1 (UA1 - southern - potential to include Rutland in the future) of 368,917 and Unitary Authority 2 (UA2) with a population of 420,585 which would be the 10th and 11th largest nationally. The proposal retains existing local authority boundaries and population which meets Government thresholds with the aim to include Rutland, however this was identified as it was not deemed legally compliant nor coterminous with MHCLG Indication Area. Option 4 does have risks regarding the boundaries of the two new unitary authorities which result in the disproportionate inclusion of deprived areas in the UA2 with the UA1 containing wealthier, rural areas. The boundaries established cut through the true area of Lincoln, dividing the functional area into two distinct unitaries

and limiting the city's ability to grow and severing residents from the city that provides them services. This new local government therefore excludes the voices of communities who identify as Lincoln residents, whose needs are not met by the rural communities this proposal groups them with, but the city separated from them by an outdated and restrictive boundary. This proposal will restrict Lincoln's growth and disadvantage its residents whilst also weakening the voices of rural communities by grouping them in new unitary authorities with large urban populations. This will result in a tier of local government which cannot adopt a clear strategic vision due to the diverse needs and priorities of its residents, limiting growth, reducing efficiencies and failing to deliver the potential benefits of LGR.

### Population

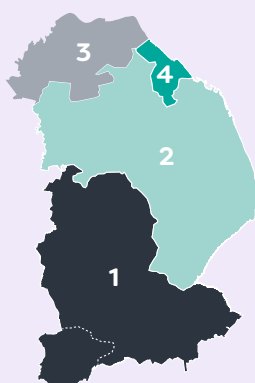
**Unitary 1** – 368,917  
**Unitary 2** – 420,585  
N Lincs (3) – 171,336  
NE Lincs (4) - 159,911

### Rationale

Laterally dividing the existing county council and creating two new unitary authorities with population parity whilst preserving electoral boundaries.

### Average Score for 6 LGR Criteria

**3.2** 19/30



### Greatest Strengths

This proposal creates two new well-sized unitary authorities in the footprint of Lincolnshire County Council. This supports devolution by ensuring just representation at a regional level and creates opportunities to secure efficiencies and enhance financial resilience through economies of scale and reduced duplication of services. The decision to preserve the separation of the Northern unitaries also avoids any potential legal complications through their merger.

### Greatest Weakness

The lateral boundaries proposed through this option bisect meaningful geographies and create two unitary authorities which contain communities with incredibly diverse needs and priorities. The boundary also results in areas such as Hykeham, which operate as part of Lincoln, are separated from the city. By disaggregating already exemplary social care services, this proposal risks harming Lincolnshire's most vulnerable residents by disrupting service delivery and decreasing quality. This option also groups areas of deprivation within the central unitary authority which will place pressure upon public services in comparison to the wealthier unitary authority in the South.

# Demographic distinctiveness

Lincolnshire’s vast geography spans diverse demographics and resident needs profiles: while both Lincoln and the wider county experience deprivation, the nature and drivers of that deprivation differ. This demographic distinctiveness warrants place-specific responses in the form of the proposed Lincoln City and Rural Lincolnshire unitary authorities to address the barriers it creates to equal opportunity and quality of life: providing the platform to work with VCSE and health partners and residents in ways that make sense to, and are rooted in, place.

This section illustrates this with reference to key demographic characteristics of relevance in Lincolnshire: namely, age; skills, employment and income; and health and disability.

## 4.1 Age and related resident needs

**Lincoln itself is younger than the rest of Lincolnshire and remains one of the youngest local authorities in England.** Census data suggests an average (median) age of 33 years for the city - lower than both the national and Lincolnshire figures (40 years and 46 years respectively). The city’s younger population is also growing. While Lincoln’s population over the last decade grew slower than in England and the rest of the East Midlands, its 18–23-year-old bracket grew by 5.3%, largely supported by the university presence. The city is also continuing to attract and retain residents as they progress in their careers, with the growth in 35–64-year-olds (+8.6%) again above the national and regional average. This demonstrates a continued strength in attracting both students and young professionals learning and working in the city, and later-career residents – clearly, Lincoln is a city worth staying in.

**By contrast, Lincolnshire’s rural areas are characterised by older-age populations, with clear implications for future service provision.** In East Lindsey, for example, the median age of 52 is one of the highest in England, with 31.5% of the population aged 65+ and a growing 80+ age bracket (+25% growth 2014 to 2024). Elsewhere, Boston, South Holland and South Kesteven all have a higher proportion of 65+ residents than respective regional and national averages, and all bar Boston saw this demographic grow faster than the rest of England. In parallel, there is a clear decline in the rural 18–23-year-old population reflecting a perceived lack of local opportunity – the outmigration rate of 18–23-year-olds is faster than the regional and national averages across Boston (-21.1%), East Lindsey (-11.7%), South Holland (-14.0%), and South Kesteven (-18.8%).

**Taken together, these patterns suggest that a future Lincoln City and Rural Lincolnshire will be required to balance two distinct sets of service priorities.** In Lincoln City, with a projected median age of 39, a younger, university-driven population calls for services that support affordable housing, skills development, and vibrant cultural life, while growth among 35–64-year-olds highlights demand for good transport, health and wellbeing support, and quality housing. In contrast, Rural Lincolnshire’s ageing population – and a median age for the new unitary of 47 - will require a strong focus on health and social care integration, accessible transport, housing adaptations,

Area	Median age
<b>Proposed new authorities</b>	
Lincoln City	39
Rural Lincolnshire	47
<b>Current district level data</b>	
East Lindsey	52
Boston	42
North Kesteven	46
South Holland	46
South Kesteven	46
West Lindsey	48
City of Lincoln	33

Table 2: Median ages of all current councils and estimated ages for proposed unitaries. For comparison median ages for East Midlands and England are 41 and 40 respectively

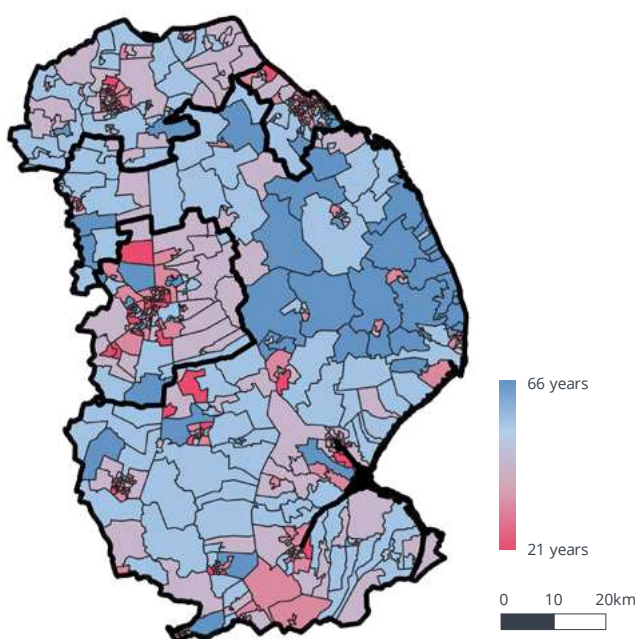


Figure 2. Median age in future unitary authorities at LSOA level (Census 2021)

Change in age demographics (2014 to 2024)	4-14 years	15-18 years	19-23 years	23-34 years	35-64 years	65-80 years	80+ years
<b>Current district level data</b>							
City of Lincoln	15.90%	13.90%	5.30%	-0.50%	8.60%	13.80%	7.70%
North Kesteven	12.20%	1.30%	0.10%	18.50%	9.30%	15.40%	32.20%
West Lindsey	12.20%	-7.50%	-14.50%	21.00%	4.80%	16.70%	33.90%
Boston	22.40%	18.40%	-21.10%	-8.90%	9.10%	10.20%	9.50%
East Lindsey	3.20%	-4.70%	-11.70%	7.90%	3.20%	13.90%	25.80%
South Holland	7.20%	4.60%	-18.80%	8.80%	3.70%	18.50%	28.70%
South Kesteven	21.50%	0.00%	-14.00%	11.20%	11.90%	10.00%	17.90%
<b>Supporting data for comparison</b>							
England	10.40%	10.00%	-2.40%	7.00%	7.70%	14.80%	17.50%
East Midlands	12.70%	8.70%	-1.60%	10.70%	7.70%	16.00%	20.80%

Table 3: Changes in age demographics 2014 – 2024.

and local service accessibility to support independent living and enable older populations to age well in place.

The changes in population ages across Lincolnshire over the past 10 years provides further evidence of the scale of the increasing median age of Rural Lincolnshire and the reducing median age of Lincoln City. This reinforces the distinctiveness and difference of the service issues and needs of the proposed areas.

## 4.2 Skills, employment and income

**Lincolnshire’s skills picture demonstrates significant inter- and intra-area disparities.** As a whole, Lincolnshire has a lower proportion of residents with higher-level qualifications (31% compared to the 43% national average) and a higher proportion with low or no qualifications (7.4% of the Lincolnshire 16-64 population have no qualifications, compared to 6.2% nationally).

**Skills deprivation is concentrated in clear rural hotspots,** with Boston, South Holland and South Kesteven all in the bottom 10% of UK local authorities for working age residents with a Level 4+ qualification. This reflects an overall pattern of lower skill levels in Lincolnshire’s rural areas, where a sparsely populated geography of market towns, rural and coastal communities, with limited digital connectivity and infrastructure presents significant challenges for provision of, and access to, learning and training. This is exacerbated county-wide by ongoing challenges with graduate and school leaver retention and outwards migration of lower-skilled workers: it is estimated that on an average workday, Lincolnshire experiences a net loss of c.13,000 workers with qualifications, over 6,000 of whom are qualified at L4+.

**Some skills deprivation patterns are observed hyper locally, including within Lincoln City.** Home to a thriving knowledge ecosystem and a significant student

and postgraduate population (totalling 20,345 in 2023/24), Lincoln does have pockets of high skills. However, the percentage of residents 16-64 qualified at L4+ was 36.6% in 2024, lower than the national average of 47.0%.

**Low skills levels go hand in hand with low income and insecure employment in Lincolnshire.** Overall, Lincolnshire experiences lower-than-average household incomes, with Gross Disposable Household Income around 87% of the UK average. Around 15% of Lincolnshire residents live in areas among the 20% most deprived communities nationally. Spatial variation is strong, with the deepest income deprivation concentrated in the coastal and rural east (notably Boston, East Lindsey, and parts of South Holland, where seasonal, low-wage employment and poor connectivity constrain opportunity). Within Lincoln city, there are also clear pockets of deprivation with 19 of 57 neighbourhoods in the 20% most income-deprived in England and 30% of children living in poverty.

**This proposal provides Lincolnshire with unitary authorities that can represent place-specific strengths and opportunities and work with the GLCCA and key employers to design place-specific skills pipelines.** Lincolnshire has a clear opportunity to build a future-fit labour supply through an intentional approach to skills development. A two unitary proposal offers the most effective approach to doing so, allowing each to design skills strategies that reflect distinct sectoral strengths and high-growth areas, while coordinated collaboration and infrastructure provision ensures rural residents can also access opportunities in the city. By aligning skills provision with local economies and removing the constraints of a one-size-fits-all approach, this structure supports a resilient, more regionally balanced workforce and maximises employment and growth opportunities across Lincolnshire. It provides a set of clear strategic voices which can work with the GLCCA to maximise the potential of devolved skills responsibility and funding, shaping future labour demand and driving good-wage, secure jobs.



Working age (16-64) residents by highest level of qualification held, 2024	No qualifications	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
<b>Current district level data</b>					
City of Lincoln	7.40%	5.80%	23.40%	21.40%	36.60%
North Kesteven	4.80%	2.90%	20.00%	24.50%	47.80%
West Lindsey	7.10%	3.30%	36.60%	16.20%	35.80%
Boston	24.30%	3.40%	24.20%	23.00%	25.10%
East Lindsey	5.40%	2.60%	33.20%	20.50%	35.90%
South Holland	5.40%	4.60%	25.80%	29.50%	30.60%
South Kesteven	6.00%	8.50%	20.70%	32.60%	26.60%
<b>Supporting data for comparison</b>					
England	6.60%	2.60%	19.20%	20.50%	46.80%
East Midlands	6.90%	3.50%	20.40%	22.70%	41.70%

Table 4: Working age residents by highest level of qualification, 2024

## 4.3 Health inequalities

**Lincolnshire also experiences particularly acute health inequality**, with long-term sickness and economic inactivity further shrinking the pool of potentially skilled workers.

**In the city, levels of poor health and disability are high and outcomes are consistently poor.** The city ranks among the worst in the county and nationally for the health deprivation domain of IMD data, with Census 2021 figures showing 6.5% of people in Lincoln reported “bad or very bad” health (more than 1 in 20 people). Life expectancy remains below the England average for men and women, and Lincoln continues to perform relatively worse against a range of child and adult health indicators. The under-75 cancer mortality rate, rate of deaths arising from circulatory related disease, rate of intentional self-harm, suicide rate, and child obesity are significantly above the national average. Disability levels in the city are also high, with roughly 1 in 5 (21.9%) of people reporting a disability under 2021 census definitions and more recent data suggesting 18.5% of the population have a limiting long-term health condition or disability. This remains a barrier to wellbeing and economic activity in the region, limiting school attendance (Lincoln had the worst Health Index Score for pupil absences at 77.7 when compared to CIPFA nearest neighbours in 2023) and access to work.

**Rurally, health outcomes are varied but equally discouraging.** As highlighted by the England Chief Medical Officer (CMO)’s 2021 annual report, Lincolnshire’s coastal towns experience some of the poorest health outcomes in the country.

Coastal communities have the highest rates of many unhealthy behaviours (e.g., smoking and, physical inactivity) and admissions for many long-term conditions and intentional self-harm are significantly higher compared to Lincolnshire as a whole. Demographic pressures owing to ageing populations and seasonal pressures linked to homelessness and substance misuse compound the challenge for local services, and residents face poor access to specialised health services, with long travel times to major hospitals such as in Lincoln (a 77-mile round trip from Mablethorpe or Skegness). Service provision remains limited and dispersed, contributing to social isolation particularly amongst an older age bracket, and meaning that those with the highest needs can struggle to engage with the health system until crisis point.

This trend is echoed in Rural Lincolnshire’s rural and market towns and the surrounding countryside where, despite lower levels of deprivation and better core health outcomes, transport and digital connectivity remains poor, service provision is limited, and admissions for cancer and mental health remains higher – potentially indicating a lower awareness of certain types of support (e.g. cancer screening and mental health services) and/or that such services are more difficult to access.

This calls for a more targeted approach, based on addressing the root causes of health deprivation that differ, behaviourally and structurally, between coast, countryside, and the expanded city. This can be best delivered through a two unitary proposal that aligns the right levers, to the right places, to take this place-based approach.

## Key health challenges by city and rural area

Source: Lincolnshire County Council Director of Public Health Annual Report (2022)

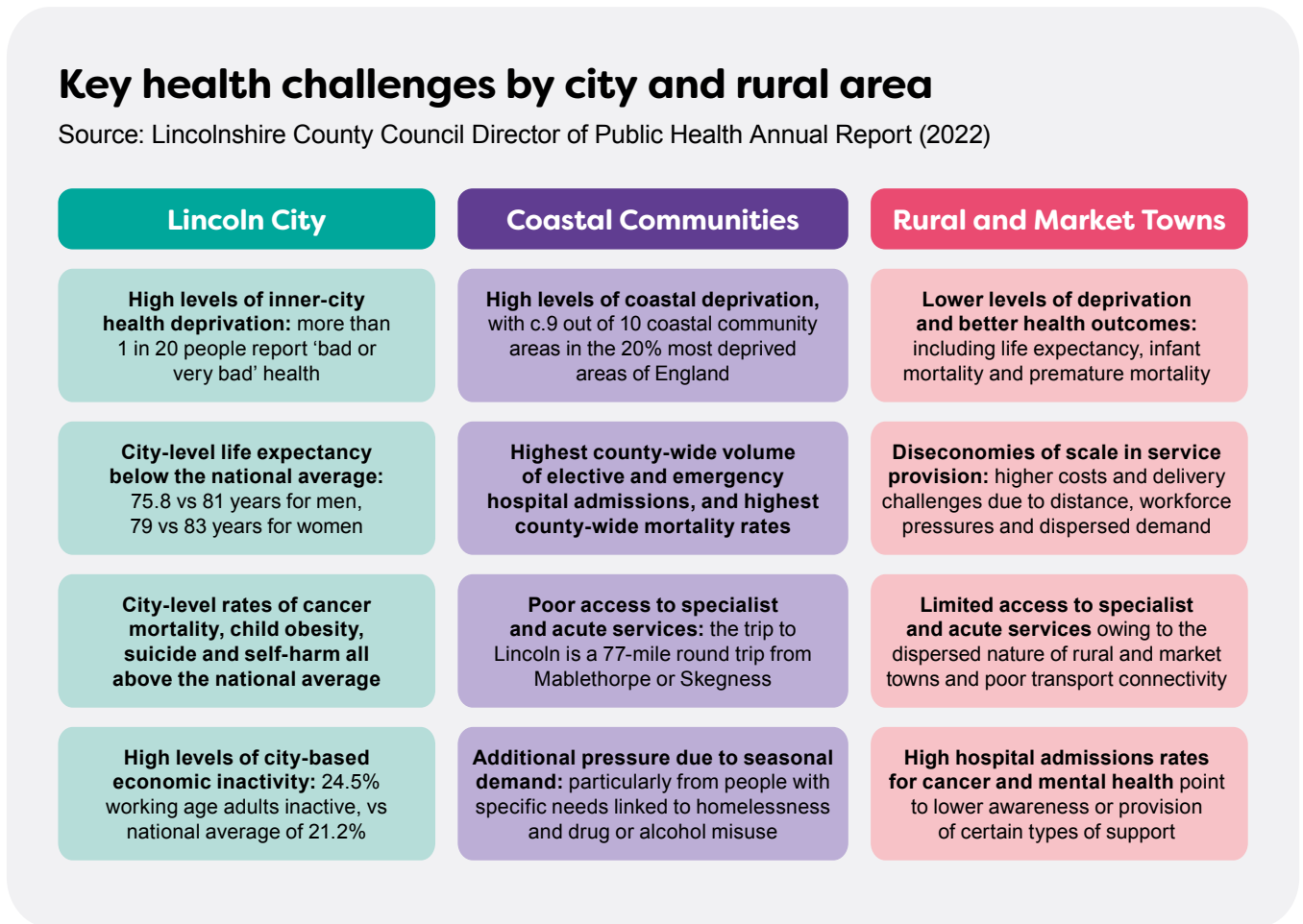


Figure 3. Key health challenges for the two unitary areas.

2025 Health Deprivation & Disability Domain	Percentage of LSOAs in decile 1 (most deprived 10% nationally)	Percentage of LSOAs in decile 2 (most deprived 11-20% nationally)	Percentage of LSOAs in decile 3 (most deprived 21-30% nationally)
City of Lincoln	25%	17%	18%
North Kesteven	0%	0%	6%
West Lindsey	8%	8%	9%
Boston	0%	15%	13%
East Lindsey	21%	16%	20%
South Holland	0%	2%	4%
South Kesteven	1%	2%	7%

Table 5: 2025 IMD Health & disability domain.

## 4.4 Conclusion: addressing deprivation through a place-based approach

Lincolnshire's expanded city, coastal communities and rural and market towns are demographically distinct, shaped by longstanding trends across age, skills, income and health. This shapes a specific deprivation profile for each district area. For example, while newly released IMD deprivation data (2025) shows that while Lincoln and East Lindsey are the most deprived districts across Greater Lincolnshire (more deprived than 84 and 91% of local authority districts nationally, according to overall IMD scores) the relative deprivation scores across categories differs by place: Lincoln sees relatively high deprivation scores for Education and Skills, Crime and Health and Disability, while East Lindsey's deprivation score is driven by poor Employment levels and Housing Barriers (Education and Skills remains a key theme). At a more granular level, pockets of deprivation can also be found at intra-district level.

This points to a clear opportunity to redesign councils to address entrenched poverty and deprivation, through an integrated and place-based approach to service delivery which centres the resident and solves problems through a rigorous understanding of place-based challenges. An expanded city and rural unitary, supported by PCN-aligned Neighbourhood Area Committees, provides the best foundation to do so. This will help to build a place-specific evidence base on health deprivation and its behavioural and structural drivers in place – a key gap noted by the CMO in 2021 which currently prevents Lincolnshire from planning local strategies to improve outcomes.

2025 Indices of Multiple Deprivation Total Score	Percentage of LSOAs in most 10% deprived
<b>Proposed new authorities</b>	
Lincoln City	10%
Rural Lincolnshire	9%
<b>Current district level data</b>	
City of Lincoln	20%
North Kesteven	0%
West Lindsey	11%
Boston	13%
East Lindsey	15%
South Holland	2%
South Kesteven	4%

Table 6: Percentage of LSOAs in 10% most deprived..







## Economic opportunity

LGR provides Lincolnshire with the opportunity to address longstanding economic barriers to people, place and prosperity by unlocking inclusive growth that works for all. This demands place-specific responses to be delivered through a two unitary authority model which enables each organisation to address the opportunities and barriers which look and feel fundamentally different between Lincolnshire's coast, countryside, and the city itself. This section demonstrates this with reference to four key areas: priority growth sectors, employment and skills, housing delivery, and transport and connectivity.

### 5.1. Driving targeted growth in priority sectors

**Clustering and GVA output analysis illustrates that Lincoln City and Rural Lincolnshire each have clear and distinct sectoral strengths, and a significant role to play in the regional and national growth story. With the right levers under a two-unitary proposal, these strengths can be more effectively pursued through targeted interventions in priority and majority employer sectors, working in partnership as required.**

The city functions as a compact, high-productivity functional economic area whose growth is driven by innovation, education and knowledge-intensive employment. Home to the University of Lincoln, Lincoln Bishop, the Science and Innovation Park and a cluster of creative, digital, defence, construction, cyber security and professional service firms that anchor the sub-region's innovation ecosystem, it is characterised by a dense concentration of businesses, institutions and infrastructure that directly enables agglomeration and collaboration benefits - conditions that are rare across the rest of Lincolnshire.

By contrast, Rural Lincolnshire's growth priorities are predominantly land- and asset-based, and heavily shaped by rural geography. Home to the country's most productive agri-food and food manufacturing cluster, Rural Lincolnshire's farms and food manufacturers supply a disproportionate share of the nation's fresh produce and processed goods, supported by a dense distribution infrastructure linked to the Humber ports. It also forms a critical part of the national energy transition, with the area's coastline and offshore environment supporting extensive renewable energy generation, offshore wind servicing and hydrogen development.

#### Building on the potential of Gainsborough & Grantham

##### Gainsborough & Grantham Growth Potential

Gainsborough and Grantham are key market towns on the A1 corridor with employment and market housing areas that extend beyond Greater Lincolnshire boundaries. There is huge untapped potential for both places across the economy, housing, community and services growth space. The existing local understanding, drive and passion needs the prioritisation and combined levers to unlock that potential that only a Rural Lincolnshire unitary could provide. Grantham has huge potential to maximise its road and rail links (with direct frequent trains including to London, Edinburgh, Nottingham, Liverpool, Norwich and Hull) and proximity to Peterborough and Cambridge.

##### Benefits of a New Rural Lincolnshire Unitary Authority

The creation of a new Rural Lincolnshire unitary would enable partnership collaboration outside of Greater Lincolnshire, creating huge opportunities for Gainsborough as a key gateway into Rural Lincolnshire to maximise the benefits of the Trent Supercluster to capitalise on the new clean low-carbon energy technology. It will also drive sustainable growth by enhancing the delivery efficacy of the sustainable urban extensions essential for delivering more housing stock to address the housing crisis.



These are complemented by a clear cluster of advanced engineering and manufacturing firms, many serving the agri-tech and low-carbon sectors and benefitting from proximity to major transport corridors and research capability at the University of Lincoln's Holbeach and Riseholme campuses. Other industries of note include the coastal and rural tourism alongside the creative industries which occupy a key space in the cultural identity and "sense of place" across city, coast and countryside. Nurturing these local industries and the creative communities they foster must also be a priority through LGR.

Analysis suggests that there is significant cross-regional variation in how these sector specialisms are planned for and used to drive improvements in productivity and growth. For example, analysis of new businesses and the resulting Gross Value Added (GVA) by district shows that Lincoln has clear strengths in entrepreneurship and fostering new businesses, which increased by 26% 2013-2023. However, this is not translating into the increase in economic growth (GVA) we would expect – Lincoln's GVA grew by 6.7% 2013-2023, almost three times slower than the England average. Instead, there are pockets of high-growth activity in the city's immediate surroundings - with parts of North Kesteven increasing its employees by 16.7% and driving economic growth of 17%, and parts of West Lindsey also growing its economy by more than a quarter from 2013-2023. This suggests that the city is already expanding in terms of economic footprint – and calls for a stronger coordination within expanded city's boundaries that match the Lincoln Strategy Area, to ensure businesses that are growing can better access city services and benefits. Rurally, there are pockets of high GVA growth: South Holland, for example, saw significant economic growth from 2013-2023 (+16.6%). However, the overarching rural picture is one of persistently low GVA growth compared to the region and national averages, with South Kesteven's output now lower than a decade ago.

This creates a clear opportunity for reorganisation to boost local growth by establishing two distinct but complementary organisations, each focused on maximising local opportunities for investment.

At present, Lincolnshire's polycentric and vast geography currently risks diluting economic focus and fragmenting economic leadership, with wide-ranging portfolios and limited coordination between the county and district levels creating the risk that opportunities are "lost" in the inter-organisational gaps. Compared to city-centric devolved regions, where the case for investment is more concentrated and strategic, Lincolnshire's rural and city voices currently lack a unified platform to make their case for targeted growth.

This two-unitary proposal will accelerate the potential of our polycentric region by creating the levers for an expanded Lincoln City to build on its strengths and for Rural Lincolnshire to drive rural-specific economy planning. It will ensure that careers and sectors can be future-fit and resilient, providing strong development for those that want to work rurally, while avoiding the rural gap in growth growing even further. **This will support a more balanced growth system of complementary, but distinct growth strategies that support local and national resilience.**

The two unitary Lincolnshire proposal will also enable much more effective and focused strategic conversations, partnerships, strategy development and comprehensive efficient delivery of action plans with a much broader investment and inclusive, community benefit. The Lincoln Science and Innovation Park, for example, would significantly benefit from a proactive pro-growth unitary authority to support its continued expansion.





## Lincoln Science and Innovation Park Using LGR to Maximise Investment

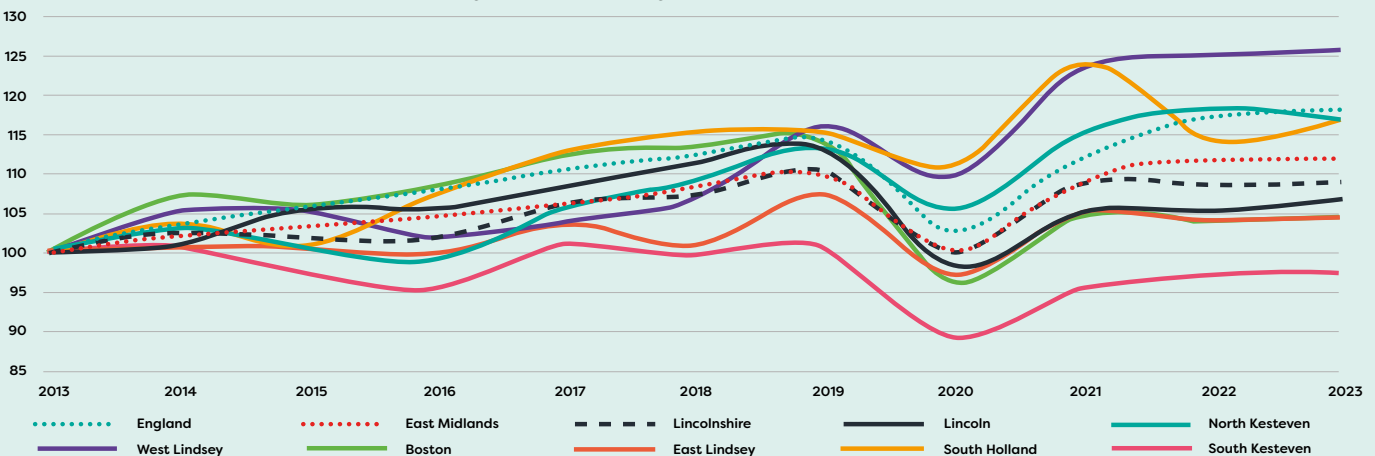
In 2012, joint venture partners, the University of Lincoln, and the Lincolnshire Co-Op founded the Lincoln Science and Innovation Park (LSIP) to create a world-class environment for science, research and innovation in the city and tackle the city's historic under-performance in innovation and skills. Backed by £32.5m of investment, including £9 million in public funding, the Park now provides 13,500 square metres of flexible, specialist space for science, technology and health businesses. It supports around 850 high-value jobs and contributes an estimated £17 million in GVA annually within a wider £100 million innovation cluster.

Beyond facilities, LSIP has built a thriving ecosystem of academic collaboration, business support and investment access that has helped firms scale rapidly and established Lincoln as a centre of applied innovation in defence, agri-tech and emerging pharmaceutical and health technologies. Work is now underway to expand the Park through Phase

II (with planning granted for further 12,000m<sup>2</sup> expected to be completed by 2030) and Phase III (expected to accommodate a further 15,000m<sup>2</sup>). This requires significant private investment to drive continued GVA and impact.

**The Lincoln City unitary would enable strategic prioritisation of this project: functioning as a strong, empowered city authority to champion LSIP as a strategic growth asset within regional and national forums. Working with local partners, the Lincoln City unitary would bring together planning, infrastructure, resources and local knowledge and enable delivery of collaborative solutions to maximise investment and opportunities – for LSIP's and the broader region's benefit.**

Figure 4: Indexed GVA growth (2013-2023, real terms)





## Rural Proofing

Government have set out a commitment to rural proof policy decision-making, and aims to ensure that the intended outcomes in its 5 missions for the country are deliverable in rural areas and that rural areas are not overlooked. Engagement responses also highlighted concerns locally that the needs of rural communities and places would be overlooked in a unitary authority that also includes the City. Our proposals recognise the significant differences between the urban footprint of the proposed new Lincoln City unitary authority and the rurality of Rural Lincolnshire, meaning that the right services and solutions can be delivered in each geography.

The Rural Services Network, in 'A Roadmap for Rural Prosperity' sets out key priorities of; Rural Fair Funding, Rural Economies, Rural Access to Health & Care Services, Rural Affordable Housing, Rural Transport, Rural Net Zero, Rural Digital Connectivity and Rural Planning. A new unitary authority which focuses on the needs of rural communities is best placed to address these as well as engaging with DEFRA and meaningfully actioning learnings from the Rural Taskforce to unlock growth in the countryside.

Rural Lincolnshire districts have developed a strong track record in delivering ambitious projects in their places for local people, this could go on to be maximised if not transformative if the benefit of all the levers available as a result of being part of a Rural Lincolnshire unitary were unlocked. Examples include:

**Horncastle Public Sector Hub:** East Lindsey District Council's move into a new Public Sector Hub in Horncastle co-locating with Boston College and other partner organisations includes an excellent campus for much needed adult skills development supporting the economic viability and growth of this market town.

**Connected Coast Town Deal Programme:** East Lindsey District Council have delivered an excellent programme of regeneration including the Campus for Future Living in Mablethorpe, listed park refurbishment in Skegness, Seaview Colonnade in Sutton-on-Sea and the Station Leisure & Learning Centre in Mablethorpe.

**Boston Town Deal:** Delivering a range of regeneration projects including restoration of heritage buildings and the Centre for Food & Fresh Produce Logistics with the University of Lincoln and Boston College which included a much needed business grant scheme supporting the whole sector and supply chain.



## 5.2 Building local skills and opportunity

**Driving targeted growth that is inclusive and sustainable in the long-term relies on developing the right local skills and opportunities: using growth to raise ambition. The two unitary authorities will build on existing pockets of best practice at county and city level and create new paths into employment, focusing on groups that too often get left behind.**

As highlighted above, both Lincoln City and Rural Lincolnshire have substantial growth potential. Lincoln is home to a significant knowledge hub, anchored by the University of Lincoln, Lincoln Bishop University, innovation centres, and a clustering of high-growth businesses. It benefits from a strong further and higher-education base, relatively high job density, student-heavy demographic, and a vibrant entrepreneurial landscape. Rural Lincolnshire's strengths, by contrast, lie in its nationally significant industry clusters which create opportunity for clear vocational training pathways at the forefront of UK tech and innovation.

However, for too many in the region, these opportunities remain out of reach. A legacy of employment and skills responsibilities has largely neglected the supply side of the labour market in favour of employer-led strategies, leaving many communities not at the apex of the skills spectrum excluded from new job opportunities. Poor health, limited transport and digital connectivity, seasonal labour demand, and limited childcare support also limit equal access to opportunity.

This is evidenced across the region in low productivity, low wages and high levels of economic inactivity. ONS data points to a clear productivity gap (2023 regional productivity data suggests the East Midlands' GVA per hour worked is 15.0% below the UK average, and Lincolnshire's itself 16.5% below UK average). Earnings (gross weekly pay) are lower than both regional and national averages (2.8% and 8.9% respectively) and economic inactivity levels are higher, particularly due to higher-than-average levels of long-term sickness and retirement. There are significant intra-regional variations, with lower productivity gaps in parts of North Kesteven and parts of West Lindsey but particularly stark productivity gaps in the rural areas (with South Holland a clear exception).

### South Lincolnshire Agri-Food | Maximising rural skills and opportunity

South Holland is a key rural district in Lincolnshire: covering 74,238 hectares and fuelling a GVA of £1.709 billion. Following a historical reclaiming of land from the sea in the 17th century which resulted in highly fertile land in the area, it remains internationally recognised for agriculture, food manufacturing, horticulture and logistics, with estimates suggesting that almost 35% of the UK's food has a link to the area at some point – grown, processed or distributed.

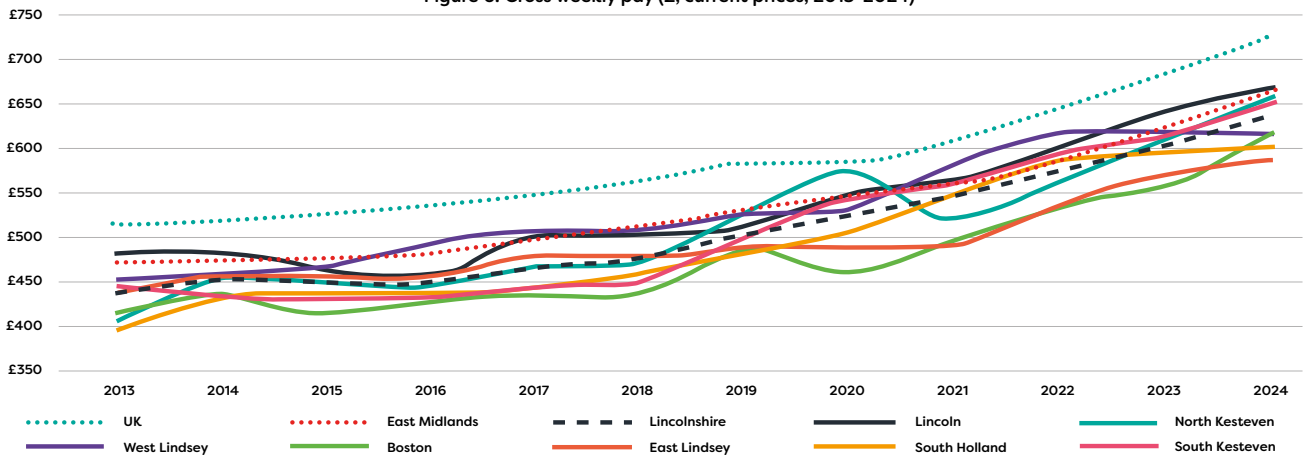
This drives significant local opportunity for growth and skills development. As well as being a key base for big names in the industry, South Holland has a robust and flexible supply chain of local companies, made up of over 99% of the total business count which underpins it. 50% of jobs in South Holland are linked directly to the Agri-Food chain. Food related and general manufacturing employs more than 11,000 people, and 3,000 people are employed directly in agriculture and horticulture, which can reach up to 10,000 when including seasonal labour. Transport and storage jobs are twice the national average for employment and food manufacturing is 13 times more significant as an employer in the area than the national average.

**The Rural Lincolnshire unitary** will provide a strong voice at regional and national scales for continued investment in skills development and local infrastructure, building on strong investment precedent already set by projects such as the Food Enterprise Zone (FEZ) in Holbeach. This will be supported by effective partnership to drive innovation and specialist skills pathways, such as the University of Lincoln's National Centre for Food Manufacturing which provides benefits to organisations working in food manufacturing by supporting the development of local skills and facilitating the adoption of cutting-edge technology.

Figure 5: Gap between UK earnings (workplace-based, 2024) and productivity (per hour, 2023)



Figure 6: Gross weekly pay (£, current prices, 2013-2024)



This productivity gap signals a lack of highly trained, high-productivity professions and broader lack of opportunity and access to high-pay, high-skill “good” jobs. There are, however, pockets of best practice with county-led initiatives such as Skills Bootcamps and the Careers Hub, alongside city-based projects like the Lincoln City Foundation, demonstrating the potential for locally led inclusive skills development.

A two unitary proposal will build on these successes, driving ambition and unlocking new skills and sustainable employment for local people. It will respond to opportunities across the region to drive specialist skills pathways, including in defence and innovation which builds on unique strengths of each unitary area. It will be essential to create

clear, accessible skills pathways aligned to each area’s key industries, ensuring residents can find secure, long-term employment and achieve their career aspirations locally. This includes encouraging the highest level of vocational and academic qualifications and those pursuing middle-level qualifications as part of their learning journeys, including Level 3 qualifications – setting them up for further qualifications to elevate their offerings and earnings potential. Critically, this approach must be place-based and tailored, recognising that Lincoln’s urban, innovation-driven economy with a predominantly younger workforce requires a different skills strategy from that of Rural Lincolnshire.

## Defence and Innovation Cluster | Building a Coordinated Skills Pipeline

Lincolnshire is home to one of the UK's most significant networks of defence and security businesses, anchored by ISTAR (Intelligence, Surveillance, Target Acquisition, and Reconnaissance) operations and supported by major RAF and MOD facilities. With secure large-scale sites, extensive permitted airspace, and low population density, the region offers an ideal environment for innovation, R&D, testing, and advanced engineering and is extremely well-positioned to benefit from national increases in defence investment.

To harness this potential, the former Greater Lincolnshire LEP, University of Lincoln, and industry partners have launched the Greater Lincolnshire Defence and Security Network and Britain's first Air & Defence College, alongside an R&D institute at the Lincoln Science and Innovation Park. This coordinated approach is rapidly positioning Greater Lincolnshire as a nationally recognised defence and innovation cluster.

**The two proposed unitary authorities can work together to leverage and drive this** by aligning urban innovation assets with rural operational capabilities and defence assets, and by pursuing an intentional skills strategy which helps to attract continued investment and maintain strategic defence capabilities, while providing a clear route for service leavers and local talent to enter high-value technical roles in both the city and rural areas of Lincolnshire.

By pursuing an intentional skills strategy which helps to attract continued investment and maintain strategic defence capabilities, it will provide a clear route for service leavers and local talent to enter high-value technical roles in both the city and rural areas of Lincolnshire. This demonstrates the value of collaboration across urban and rural strengths in building a sustainable, innovative defence sector.

## 5.3 Delivering homes and places that enable growth

**Without the right levers to sustain growth – not least, through the provision of the right volume and type of housing - there will inevitably be constraints to economic success. The Lincoln City and Rural Lincolnshire unitaries are best placed to drive growth through an integrated approach to planning and housing delivery.**

Based on the demographic characteristics highlighted, we know that the nature of housing demand is fundamentally different between the city and its rural and coastal surroundings. For example, Lincoln's housing market is currently characterised by a high volume of private and social renters and low levels of homeownership, driven in part by the city's significant population of students and young professionals and a high number of HMOs. Rurally, people are far more likely to own their homes – but many homes are in poor condition and cannot easily be adapted for older or disabled residents (with, for example, those rural residents living on caravan sites). While housing in Lincoln and Rural Lincolnshire is more affordable compared to the national average<sup>1</sup>, localised affordability challenges persist. Private rental costs continue to increase at region-leading rates, and demand for social and specialist housing and housing at the more affordable end of the spectrum remains high. This reflects a cross-county trend, with the stock of affordable housing falling drastically below demand: for example, between 2001 and 2021, there were fewer than 5,000 additional Affordable Homes added to housing stock in Lincolnshire.

We also know that housing delivery of the right volume, type and quality is key to economic development. A safe

and affordable home that enables people to access jobs and opportunity and live a good life is a primary driver for economic productivity, standards of living, and community wellbeing – and remains a key priority for Lincolnshire residents according to our recent consultation. Moving forward, to contribute to on the 1.5 million national homes target and support the new unitary authorities' efforts to drive growth and prevention, there is therefore a clear requirement for housing delivery to grow at pace – delivering not just in volume but in the *right types* of housing to support distinct needs across urban and rural. A two unitary model based on an expanded City authority and Rural Lincolnshire authority is the best way to achieve this.

Currently the City of Lincoln Council is an influential player in the city for housing as landlord to c.17% of households (and would have even greater influence as Lincoln City unitary Council if it inherited a portion of North Kesteven's current council housing portfolio). It maintains a strong track record in housing delivery, particularly high-quality social and affordable housing, and has demonstrated capacity to drive strategic sites such as the Charterholme Development. However, the City's ability to deliver additional housing is constrained by its boundaries which date back to the 1970s and prevent the city from acting across a functional urban geography. A shared planning policy area (the Central Lincolnshire Local Plan) covers the Lincoln City area. However, delivery is currently shaped and implemented in district-based silos which for example means that 3 of the urban extensions to the city are not led by the city but significantly impact it. At county level, competing priorities and a lack of prioritisation continue to stunt housing delivery with no clear accountability structure or means to respond to local demand. Subsequently, housing



delivery consistently fails to meet local demand, following profit instead: analysis shows that not enough homes are being built to meet the needs of traditional homeowners (3-bed and 2-bed semi-detached properties), and lower income families (affordable housing); rather, private rented accommodation, and homes for more affluent residents continue to be built despite lower local demand. Lincoln remains unable to meet its own housing demand, with unmet need delivered by neighbouring authorities - for example, most employment growth in recent decades has been absorbed by areas like North Hykeham, functionally part of Lincoln's economy but outside its authority to coordinate infrastructure, service impacts or long-term planning.

A two unitary model will address this by enhancing the city's access to a wider planning area and aligning housebuilding policy and delivery levers with local economic growth priorities and community-centred service delivery models. A single strategic housing function in each unitary will enable joint planning and policy around health, housing, and social care, with each unitary empowered to take a more

strategic housing view and use it to drive inclusive economic growth which responds to different housing needs driven by demographic needs between city and rural<sup>3</sup>. It means a coherent spatial and economic plan can be delivered by each unitary, with Lincoln City able to meet local demands for housing and the supporting infrastructure – delivering faster on the national 1.5 million new homes target and passing no unmet need to the wider area. This leaves Lincolnshire's rural towns and villages untouched (an important element of the future viability of the tourism industry) and prevents any additional pressure on vulnerable rural infrastructure, linking into the wider strategic place partnership with GLCCA and Homes England. Finally, it helps to create a more investable set of housing propositions across Lincolnshire – rural and urban - that offers higher quality housing, raising private rental standards and quality of life for the long-term.

## Driving Housing Growth | Sustainable Urban Extensions

The new **Lincoln City Unitary** has the potential to deliver 17,000 new homes by 2038, rising to 30,000 by 2050. This is a significant percentage of the overall growth for Greater Lincolnshire, and at the core of delivery is the need to build new homes in new communities through delivery of four sustainable urban extensions around Lincoln. At present, only one of the four is within the current City Council boundary – another straddles the boundary and the final two are wholly outside of the boundary, on the edge of the existing urban area, but all are within the proposed new Lincoln City Unitary. Strategic delivery therefore remains complex, piecemeal, slow and inconsistent.

### The Lincoln City Unitary would enable:

- ▶ **Better developments** with the right range of housing, built in the right areas, to meet the needs of the existing place, and the new future community – avoiding the sprawling housing estates of the past, with limited services and connectivity.
- ▶ **Accelerated growth** with quicker, simpler and streamlined planning and technical approval processes designed to enable and not frustrate development. The right levers will sit within a single council who understand place and how to deliver a development of this scale.
- ▶ **Better places** which positively concentrate employment, housing and other development in sustainable neighbourhoods, creating a sense of community and promoting active travel options to reduce traffic, improve air quality and promote healthy lifestyles and wellbeing.

- ▶ **Appropriate development** with a focus on place-based principles for growth. This will ensure that sustainable urban extensions remain sensitive to the character and needs of surrounding villages and encourage them to retain their identity as part of a wider-ranging housing market.
- ▶ **Growth of the Construction Sector and skills development** across all aspects of the development sector and its supply chain. A focused pipeline of delivery will support much needed focus on addressing existing skill shortages, workforce supply and the new emerging skills particularly around zero carbon technologies.

### The Rural Lincolnshire Unitary would enable:

- ▶ **Focused delivery** on proportionate and appropriate growth in smaller towns and villages, responding to localised housing need.
- ▶ **Unified and collaborative approach** to realising potential of the larger market towns, particularly Grantham with its renowned transport connections, and Gainsborough, with its positioning in relation to Northern Lincolnshire and the Sheffield/ Doncaster region.

## 5.4 Connecting people to health and opportunity

**Transport and connectivity, especially in rural and coastal areas, remains a major barrier to inclusive growth in Lincolnshire, preventing many from accessing opportunity and actively hindering quality of life for some. A two unitary model will enable each organisation to address distinct place-based transport challenges, working together and with the GLCCA to maximise impact.**

As the fourth most sparsely populated county in England, any prospective Lincolnshire authority faces considerable challenge providing viable transport links across the entire region that are both frequent and affordable. Commercial transport routes have historically declined in many parts of rural Lincolnshire (by up to 30% since 2010/11 in some places) leaving residents reliant on driving themselves or seeking support from others. Despite efforts by LCC to develop private- and community-led alternatives, rural car ownership still far exceeds the national average: 69% of people commute by car or van, higher than the East Midlands (53.2%) and national ownership rates (49%). By contrast, City of Lincoln has the highest proportion of non-car owning households in the county at 29.6%, substantially higher than the average of 18.0%.

This reliance on car ownership and limited transport alternatives creates serious challenges for health across the county. It leads to disproportionately high emissions levels: transport remains the largest contributor to Lincolnshire's GHG emissions, accounting for 39% of total CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, notably higher than the national average of 26%. Particularly in the rural areas, it actively hinders access to health, support, leisure services and employment and training opportunities - driving up transport costs and contributing to social isolation and poor healthcare access. We know from engagement by and shared learning from VCSE and health partners that this is a priority issue for rural residents, particularly on the east coast - with many lived experience examples of people declining cancer treatment due to a lack of network to support daily travel for treatment, and a lack of viable public transport alternatives. Limited rural transport infrastructure also threatens the future viability of key industries, including agriculture and food production, manufacturing and logistics, and renewable energy, which all depend on proximity to key distribution hubs and efficient transport networks. Quality transport therefore becomes critical to minimising real cost and lost opportunity.

Limited rural transport infrastructure also threatens the future viability of key industries, including agriculture and food production, manufacturing and logistics, and renewable energy, which all depend on proximity to key distribution hubs and efficient transport networks. Quality transport therefore becomes critical to minimising real cost and lost opportunity.

The city has its own distinct transport challenges, shaped by its historic layout, role as a regional employment hub, and commuter patterns. Its role as a major retail and employment centre for the county attracts significant daily journeys, with the Travel to Work Area serving an estimated 300,000 people across the city but also nearby settlements such as Welton, Saxilby, Skellingthorpe, and Washingborough, which rely on Lincoln for employment and services. The city maintains good local rail connections between the urban core and city suburbs and has benefitted from key developments such as the Lincoln Transport Hub in recent years, but there is further to go when it comes to strategic planning. While car ownership is comparatively lower, many residents and commuters still rely on private vehicles, contributing to congestion on narrow city streets and high demand for parking. Public transport options, though relatively well-developed within the city, are less frequent or convenient for those travelling from outlying towns and villages, while fragmented cycling and walking infrastructure limits active travel.

Improving transport infrastructure across Lincolnshire is the only way to deliver growth that is accessible to all - the current transport infrastructure is insufficient to support the scale of proposed growth. Improving the overall transport infrastructure to address transport poverty in the rural and coastal areas will be a county-wide priority. Working at a local level, each of the proposed unitary authorities can be more responsive to local transport demand and build stronger relationships with communities to codesign future changes to the transport network. The new unitary structure provides the remit to plan and deliver holistically, aligning transport, housing, and economic environmental planning to ensure growth directly benefits local communities. Through this model, each organisation can function as a more effective "single voice" linking to the wider strategic transport work of the GLCCA.



## Improving Connectivity | Delivering the Lincolnshire Transport Plan

The current Lincolnshire Transport Plan was published in 2022 and captures the changes in the previous 10 years including the impact of Covid and sets out a strong narrative for an integrated transport strategy that delivers better places by supporting:

- ▶ Economic growth
- ▶ Green transport
- ▶ Thriving environments
- ▶ Safety, security & healthy lifestyles
- ▶ Promoting high aspirations for improving connectivity/ access to education/health/leisure/public transport
- ▶ Improving quality of life through implementing an integrated strategy that looks at improving public transport/cycling/rail/walking to reduce carbon emissions/pollution/traffic accidents and congestion

The two unitary approach for Lincolnshire will enable a far more effective and efficient delivery of these objectives as set out in a largely undelivered implementation plan. Through stronger more inclusive local partnerships, a consolidation of the levers that can influence and deliver the changes needed with strong democratic leadership – this includes bringing together management of highways networks, commissioning of bus services, and planning and spatial development powers. It will also require close working with the GLCCA on strategic transport across Greater Lincolnshire for a truly joined up approach.

For Rural Lincolnshire this could mean a redesigned inclusive public transport service that supports and enables improved access to employment, education, health and other services that also combats isolation and promotes well-being.

For Lincoln City this could mean that at the completion of Lincoln's southern bypass to complete the ring road around the city, carbon emissions, pollution and congestion could be more effectively tackled using prioritised commuter bus routes, improved cycle/walking routes, reprioritisation of parts of the highway network, greening the city centre and further sustainable transport and environmental measures.





# Democratic representation and engagement

## 6.1 A new democratic vision for Lincolnshire

**Success of the proposed model will depend not just on scale of the new authorities but on their capacity for effective governance and community representation.**

Creating new unitary authorities without directly planning for how residents are represented and engaged risks creating a democratic deficit, with councillors stretched across larger areas, weakened neighbourhood voices, and communities feeling removed from decision-making. This moment of LGR therefore presents an opportunity to review and reflect on the role of councils, and councillors, as effective stewards of place: responding to a national devolution agenda by unlocking Lincolnshire's local leadership capacity within a wider governance ecosystem and building renewed local trust in Lincolnshire's institutions.

This section outlines how the structure, size and community engagement function of local government will be delivered in a two unitary future for Lincolnshire.

## 6.2 What sets this proposal apart – a radical blueprint for service delivery

**Other Lincolnshire LGR proposals are based on a simple consolidation of services - in many ways, a mere rearranging of what already exists, with projected financial economies of scale.** This proposal takes a more radical approach, recognising the opportunity LGR gives us to shape new organisations around the distinct needs of residents, businesses and communities.

To do so effectively, the role of councillors and councils themselves are key. The design considerations here are grounded in our overarching vision for the future – based on improving outcomes for people, delivering services in place, and accelerating local prosperity. They show how the two proposed unitary councils and their respective councillors will provide more effective strategic leadership, clearer democratic accountability and enhanced community engagement.



## 6.3 Delivering this in practice: council size and structure

### 6.3.1 Portfolios and responsibilities

The current two-tier system is confusing for many, often leaving residents unsure who is responsible for services and businesses unsure who to reach out to for support (e.g. community safety issues, parking enquiries, traffic enforcement and licenses are some examples where there is ambiguity). Fragmented place portfolios and responsibilities between council organisations can also leave councillors with limited power over the full system, risking disjointed decision-making and policy incoherence as no single body can take a whole-place view of growth and prevention.

Under the proposed two unitary model, reorganisation will be aligned with a sensible geography based around coherent rural and urban divisions and resident needs. The acquisition of new powers and responsibilities for each authority in line with these geographies therefore creates the potential for impactful strategic decisions which are aligned with resident needs and shape each area in line with local, regional and national priorities.

The blueprint for the new unitary authorities will be based on the government's preferred Leader and Cabinet (Executive) model. This is already proven effective within Lincolnshire County Council and 6 of the 7 District and Borough councils, including City of Lincoln Council (West Lindsey still operates on a committee structure). Under this model, executive authority will be concentrated in a Council Leader supported by up to nine Executive Members, each responsible for a portfolio of functions which reflects the full spectrum of unitary authority responsibilities.

The combination of visible leadership, clear delegation, and proportionate local empowerment will deliver decision-making that is faster, more coherent, and more transparent - giving residents a clear understanding of who is responsible for what and enabling scrutiny to focus on outcomes that matter.

The table in section 6.3.3 outlines the proposed council structure for Lincoln City and Rural Lincolnshire according to core governance committees.<sup>2</sup>

### 6.3.2 Scrutiny and accountability

A robust system of scrutiny and accountability will support each organisation's refreshed core portfolio commitments by "designing in" effective check and challenge. This plays an important assurance and developmental role: holding the executive to account and ensuring transparency in decision-making, while also helping to drive integrated service delivery and continuous improvement in service outcomes. Further, the deeper embedding of each new authority in respective local area contexts and needs will ensure that scrutiny can be more targeted and focused, with a clearer place-based remit.

Scrutiny will be organised through thematic committees aligned to each organisation's core service and strategic portfolios. Alongside this, the new authorities will collectively retain the core statutory regulatory committees required for planning, appointments, licensing, audit, and the county-level pension fund.

Committees will be empowered to support policy development, and carry out pre-decision scrutiny, engaging proactively with emerging policy and service redesign at an early stage, and drawing on evidence from residents, partners, and service users to test how effectively services are working together around shared outcomes. Committees will work in close alignment with the Neighbourhood Area Committees (NACs) and Lincolnshire's strong VCSE and neighbourhood partnerships, parish and town councils and businesses. This will ensure that the local voice is embedded at the heart of strategic decision-making and that community insight shapes service priorities. Where services are delivered jointly across unitary boundaries, joint scrutiny committees will help to identify opportunities for closer integration, reduce duplication, and reinforce shared accountability for resident outcomes.

Supporting details on scrutiny and regulatory committees are also outlined in the table in section 6.3.3.

<sup>2</sup> Please note, Table 1 provides an overview of the core committees and is not intended to be a full and comprehensive list. There will be other committees which sit outside the formal committee structure (e.g., Housing Appeals Panel, Personal Appeals Panel, Ethics and Engagement Committee and associated Hearings Sub-Committee). Committee review will form a key activity during the next phase of implementation.

### 6.3.3 Decision-making and delegation

**Despite evident pockets of best practice and partnership working between Lincolnshire’s city, borough, district and county councils, fragmented responsibilities and inefficient decision pathways continue to slow progress and increase the cost of coordination. LGR provides the opportunity to redesign decision-making so that it is clear, agile and accountable.**

Decision-making will be allocated between full Council, the Executive and supporting portfolio committees. In addition, Neighbourhood Area Committees (NACs) will provide a critical local forum for addressing community challenges and concerns. To fulfil this role and avoid becoming simply an extra layer of bureaucracy, it is important that NACs have a substantive role and some degree of delegated decision-making. Detail will be worked through during transition. Full Council, comprising all elected councillors, will remain the key sovereign decision-making body responsible for key strategic policy and financial decisions. The Executive will maintain responsibility for Council delivery within this strategic framework, with meetings reserved for strategic and/or cross-cutting decisions or those with significant financial, legal, or reputational risk. It will meet each month, supported by a forward plan of business, and attended by Leader and Portfolio Holders, supported by senior officers.

Alongside the Executive, service specific scrutiny committees, made up of non-Executive councillors, will review and examine Executive decisions, providing assurance and helping to shape policy and review service performance

on relevant operational and place-based matters. There will be regulatory committees focused on specific functions such as audit, licensing and planning. NACs will play a key complementary role by making locally focused operational decisions on service delivery, planning, or community initiatives within their proposed delegated remit. This will bring decisions closer to residents and strengthen the democratic relationship between councillors and the communities they serve, as well as improving the quality of future policy and decision-making through the provision of early intelligence and resident input to inform Executive decisions.

This system of decision-making will be supported by a robust and publicly accessible scheme of delegation that clearly sets out where, and with whom, the decision-making remit lies. This ensures appropriate decisions can be taken swiftly and proportionately between Executive meetings and will include both downwards delegation (from the Executive) and upwards recommendations (from scrutiny committees and NACs) to ensure appropriate consideration of issues that require strategic attention. This ensures that the Executive remains cognisant of local operational issues, while communities retain influence and responsiveness through neighbourhood-level decision-making.

The combination of visible leadership, clear delegation, and proportionate local empowerment will deliver decision-making that is faster, more coherent, and more transparent - giving residents a clear understanding of who is responsible for what and enabling scrutiny to focus on outcomes that matter.

Committee name	Committee purpose	Committee type	Lincoln City structure	Rural Lincolnshire structure
<b>Full Council</b>	Sovereign decision-making body responsible for key strategic policy and financial decisions. Comprises all elected members.	N/A	Full Council for each unitary authority	
<b>Executive</b>	Makes key policy and budget decisions and provides overall political leadership for the council.	N/A	Independent Executive function for each unitary authority	
<b>Adult Care and Health Scrutiny Committee</b>	Reviews and holds the council and health partners accountable for adult social care and public health services.	Scrutiny	Independent committee	
<b>Children’s Services Scrutiny Committee</b>	Oversees the performance and delivery of children’s services, including education, safeguarding, and youth provision.	Scrutiny	Shared portfolio area to be managed through joint arrangement and committee/ scrutiny structure	
<b>Corporate and Resources Scrutiny Committee</b>	Examines corporate governance, finance, HR, and organisational performance issues.	Scrutiny	Independent committee	
<b>Economy, Community and Culture Scrutiny Committee</b>	Monitors economic development, alongside community safety, cultural and leisure services as well as the tourism economy.	Scrutiny	Independent committee	



Committee name	Committee purpose	Committee type	Lincoln City structure	Rural Lincolnshire structure
<b>Environment Scrutiny Committee</b>	Scrutinises environmental services (including Waste, Street Scene, Parks & Green Spaces), and sustainability initiatives.	Scrutiny	Independent committee	
<b>Highways and Transportation Scrutiny Committee</b>	Oversees transport policy, highway maintenance, and public transport provision.	Scrutiny	Independent committee	
<b>Housing Scrutiny Committee</b>	Reviews housing strategy, and council housing services.	Scrutiny	Independent committee	
<b>Audit Committee</b>	Ensures effective risk management, internal controls, and financial reporting.	Regulatory	Independent committee	
<b>Appointments Committee</b>	Oversees the recruitment and appointment of senior officers and makes recommendations on key councillor and external appointments to ensure transparency and good governance.	Regulatory	Independent committee	
<b>Pension Fund Committee</b>	Manages the council's pension fund investments and governance.	Regulatory	Seats on Rural Lincolnshire led committee as part of joint arrangement / outside body structure	Maintains primary responsibility, leads committee
<b>Health and Wellbeing Board</b>	Oversight of integration of health and adult social care and oversees joint strategic needs assessment and the joint local health and wellbeing strategy.	Partnership board	Independent committee	
<b>Planning and Regulation Committee</b>	Considers major planning applications and strategic land use decisions.	Regulatory	Independent committee	
<b>Area Planning Committees</b>	Make localised planning decisions within specific geographic boundaries.	Regulatory	N/A	Propose 6 Planning Committees to manage workload, established based on district boundaries
<b>Licensing Committee</b> (and any associated sub-committees, including Hackney Carriage and Private Hire)	Grants and monitors licences for regulated activities such as alcohol, taxis, and entertainment.	Regulatory	Independent committee	
<b>Standards Committee</b>	Promotes and upholds high standards of conduct among elected members, ensuring transparency, integrity, and public confidence in council decision-making.	Regulatory	Independent committee	

Table 7: Core Committees for Lincoln City and Rural Lincolnshire – a proposal for what committee structures could look like for both unitaries, subject to detailed design and engagement as part of the transition.

### 6.3.4 Other committees and outside appointments of note

**The role of councillors outside the chamber will remain vital in driving coherent place-based services and ensuring that the council's views, priorities, and residents' interests are actively represented in decisions outside the council chamber. Councillors will continue to serve on outside bodies including statutory partnerships and non-statutory bodies such as advisory or oversight boards, community organisations and local trusts and charities.** Appointments will be guided by clear principles: they must support statutory functions, preserve important community relationships or historic ties, or allow the authority to influence regional policy by ensuring local voices are heard. Appointments should be guided by clear purpose, relevance to councillors' expertise, transparency, fairness, and manageable workload, with regular review to maintain effectiveness and accountability.

In Lincoln City and Rural Lincolnshire, specific outside appointments will include Internal Drainage Boards<sup>3</sup>, fire authority and NHS boards, Police and Crime Panel (subject to any changes), relevant GLCCA boards. Other internal appointments will include NACs. Such roles allow councillors to influence decisions on water management, public safety, health outcomes, regional infrastructure, and local priorities, while also providing a channel for intelligence and resident perspectives to inform council decision-making. In addition, to safeguard Lincoln's unique civic identity and longstanding tradition of self-governance, the new Lincoln City authority will look to establish Charter Trustees. This body will seek to preserve Lincoln's historic rights and civic traditions following reorganisation: ensuring that the heritage and distinct character of the city remains visible and valued within the wider governance of Lincolnshire by protecting the city's insignia, the role of the civic mayor and ceremonial assets and continuing its civic events and functions.

### 6.3.5 Councillor numbers and boundaries

**The proposed two-unitary model will require administrative boundaries to be redrawn and councillor numbers to be revised in line with Local Government Boundary Commission criteria (electoral equality, community identity and effective governance).** A single-tier structure will inevitably mean councillors represent larger electorates than under the current system.

We anticipate that for Lincoln City, one councillor will represent approximately 3,100 electors and for Rural Lincolnshire, roughly 4,800 electors. This is based on analysis of key characteristics (for example higher anticipated caseloads for urban councillors compared to those in rural areas) and projected electorate figures for the two new authorities against relevant comparators (York, Slough, Swindon and Milton Keynes for Lincoln City; North Yorkshire, Cornwall, Cumberland and East Norfolk for Rural Lincolnshire<sup>3</sup>). As an initial baseline based on

relevant comparators, applied to projected electorate figures for each new authority this suggests Lincoln City and Rural Lincolnshire elect a benchmark of 47 and 89 councillors respectively. This comparator figure provides a helpful baseline only at this point: further detailed design work will be required to confirm final warding patterns and electoral arrangements. Ward and division level analysis conducted in this phase of work suggests an appropriate range for future councillor numbers, based on electorate growth projections and a proposed shift away from single-member representation, is 44 - 65 for Lincoln City and 86 - 100 for Rural Lincolnshire. The precise figure will be determined through the Commission's review.

We propose that in Lincoln City, these councillors are elected based on existing ward boundaries (including for the new wards being brought into the new unitary geography from West Lindsey and North Kesteven). This is in line with relevant Boundary Commission guidance which recommends that each unitary councillor represent approximately the same number of electors (+/- 10% from the average electors per councillor across relevant authorities) to maintain electoral equality. The current councillor: electorate ratios for City of Lincoln, North Kesteven and West Lindsey respectively are 1:1879, 1: 2198, 1: 2160 with an average of 1: 2072 across the new Lincoln City unitary.

For Rural Lincolnshire we propose councillors are elected based on adjusted division boundaries. This is based on analysis of current ward-level representation in the rural areas which suggests that a ward-based electoral system applied in Rural Lincolnshire (assuming at least one councillor per ward) would generate over 200 councillors – not including the relevant parish or county councillors. Using existing division boundaries instead provides a more appropriate unit of geography and population density for rural elections to occur.

This proposed electoral model will require further detailed design work to review and confirm warding patterns. For example, comparator benchmark figures of 89 and 47 for Rural Lincolnshire and Lincoln City councillors do not easily map to the target 54 divisions for Rural Lincolnshire and 30 wards for Lincoln City. A shift away from single-member wards will also require further detailed design work to explore the viability of this proposed benchmark figure. This means that while it is possible to use existing boundaries for early elections, boundary review will inevitably be required in the first electoral term. Overall, however, electing to existing boundaries will minimise disruption to electoral cycles and reduce the administrative burden on the Boundary Commission.

To ensure that this reduced cadre of councillors does not result in a democratic deficit, and to allow for some flexibility in representation and casework management, a key principle will be a shift away from single member electoral structures. This will increase democratic representation and the accessibility of councillors particularly in Rural Lincolnshire and recognises and addresses the likelihood of increased caseloads in line with new unitaries' diversified portfolios.

<sup>3</sup> The new authorities would need to appoint councillors to the 14 Internal Drainage Boards (IDBs) in Lincolnshire (or covering parts of Lincolnshire), which currently seek 102 representatives from across the seven district councils and issue a supporting levy to district councils. These seats enable important democratic accountability in the context of a key environmental priority for Lincolnshire. A priority during implementation will be to establish how representation is split across Lincoln City and Rural Lincolnshire.

Current Authority	Current No. Councillors
Lincolnshire County Council	70
City of Lincoln	33
Boston Borough Council	30
East Lindsey District Council	55
West Lindsey District Council	36
North Kesteven District Council	43
South Kesteven District Council	56
South Holland District Council	37
<b>Total</b>	<b>360</b>

Table 8: Current councillor numbers by authority

Emerging authority	Current councillor no. equivalent	Proposed councillor no. (baseline)	Proposed councillor: electorate ratio
Lincoln City	88	47†	1: 3,100
Rural Lincolnshire	272 *	89†	1: 4,800
<b>Total</b>	<b>360</b>		<b>136</b>

Table 9: Proposed councillor numbers

\* NB: Two divisions for Rural Lincolnshire are bisected by the new unitary authority boundaries. Analysis here has assumed the allocation of the 2 relevant county councillors for Metheringham Rural and Gainsborough Rural South to Rural Lincolnshire. This is based on division-level analysis of population density which suggests both county councillors are more appropriately allocated to Rural Lincolnshire (73% total population in division Gainsborough Rural South lies in Rural Lincolnshire, 54% for Metheringham Rural). This will also require further analysis in the implementation phase.

† An initial baseline based on relevant comparators, applied to projected electorate figures for each new authority this suggests Lincoln City and Rural Lincolnshire elect a benchmark of 47 and 89 councillors respectively. Ward and division level analysis conducted in this phase of work suggests an appropriate range for future councillor numbers, based on electorate growth projections and a proposed shift away from single-member representation, is 44 - 65 for Lincoln City and 86 - 100 for Rural Lincolnshire. The precise figure will be determined through the Commission's review.

### 6.3.6 Electoral cycles

**Councillors will be elected through a clear and stable electoral cycle that supports effective representation and accountability.** At present, Lincolnshire's eight councils currently operate on mixed electoral cycles, with the County Council and most districts holding whole-council elections every four years, while the City of Lincoln holds elections by thirds. This inconsistency creates overlapping timetables that lead to duplication of effort, voter confusion, and resource inefficiency through the need for multiple election events, registers, and counts.

In the context of LGR, the government and the Local Government Boundary Commission for England have indicated a preference for whole-council or "all out"

elections every four years. This will be embedded in Rural Lincolnshire and Lincoln City to align democratic cycles, maximise savings and simplify administration. This mirrors practice in other large unitaries (e.g. Dorset, Buckinghamshire, North Yorkshire). This approach will provide the basis for clearer democratic accountability, higher voter turnout, reduced election costs, and greater stability during and after structural change. Whole-council election cycles will enable more long-term planning and partnership working rather than constant campaigning.





### 6.3.7 Delivering this in practice: community representation and neighbourhood engagement

**A simpler and more effective council size and structure is not the full story. Delivering the maximum potential of LGR and delivering on our ambition requires going beyond just the role of elected councillors and reconsidering, more holistically, the approach to local engagement and community empowerment.**

The two proposed authorities are of a greater scale and geography than those to date. This is intentional: enabling Lincoln City and Rural Lincolnshire to make more effective strategic decisions for the city and surrounding towns and villages, and for the countryside, market towns and coastal areas. However, the balance between strategic- and local-scale governance is a delicate one: to succeed, each unitary will require a strategic platform

which supports engagement with stakeholders across a wider geography, enables consideration of challenge and opportunity at the local scale, and which maintains connections with the existing parish and district councils, as well as the strong network of VCSE organisations already active across Lincolnshire's service delivery context.

We propose to deliver this through the government's preferred vehicle of Neighbourhood Area Committees. We anticipate that these will play a dual role, both as an enabler of local community activity for preventative ends, and as a body with some formal democratic role and power that gives voice to the interests of distinct communities within each unitary area. Our working hypothesis is that there is a risk of a "missing middle" in the new structure, between unitary authorities with an expanded remit, and the neighbourhood scale that is all-so important to improved outcomes for residents. NACs are required to bridge the gap, convening key partners for shared purpose at a neighbourhood level.

Principle	Rationale (tailored to Lincolnshire context)
<b>NACs should act as a link between communities and the new authority</b>	Building and deepening relationships between local communities and the new unitary authorities will be critical to the success of the proposed model. NACs can provide the dedicated “missing middle” structure through which these relationships are coordinated, ensuring that local insight and resident voice are consistently fed into the new council’s decision-making. A common framework for engagement across city and rural will help avoid fragmentation, strengthen trust, and ensure that the system is responsive to the diversity of local contexts across Lincolnshire.
<b>NACs should build on and support what already happens in places</b>	Community life in Lincolnshire is already rich and varied, from volunteer-led services in rural villages to active town partnerships in market centres. NACs should not seek to impose new structures from the top down but instead recognise and amplify what already works. By aligning with existing local partnerships, parish council networks, and VCSE organisations, NACs can bring coherence to community activity, share information, and support capacity-building. This approach is based in the understanding that effective place-based working in Lincolnshire depends on nurturing existing strengths rather than reinventing them.
<b>NACs’ enabling function should be paired with a formal governance role</b>	To give communities a genuine stake in shaping local priorities, NACs should have a defined role within the new council’s governance arrangements. This could include delegated decision-making over a limited budget for local priorities, ensuring residents see tangible outcomes from engagement. Embedding NACs within formal governance provides both accountability and credibility - key in a large, polycentric unitary authority such as Rural Lincolnshire, where distance from decision-making is a concern.
<b>NACs’ formal governance role should support participation in local decision-making and service delivery</b>	NACs should not take on direct service delivery, but they should provide a structured space for communities to co-produce solutions with the council and its partners. Acting as the interface between residents, service providers, and local councillors, NACs can help shape how services are delivered at a neighbourhood level — for example through input on local transport priorities, planning and placemaking, or the design of prevention-focused services. In Lincolnshire, this would ensure that both the Lincoln City urban area and rural communities can influence the services that affect them most directly. A link with scrutiny and into other decision-making bodies will enable community voice to be brought into council processes.

Table 10: Principles for NACs

### 6.3.8 NAC design considerations

We recognise that we aren’t starting from scratch: NACs will build on already existing local organisations, ways of working, and social connections that underpin civic and community life across Lincolnshire. NACs will seek to strengthen relationships where they already exist and build them where they don’t.

However, these new entities will require attention to some specific challenges, not least:

- ▶ How can we balance consistency (in representation, size, function) with place-specificity, recognising area-specific nuances, strengths and challenges?

- ▶ How can NACs best integrate with existing work at the neighbourhood level, including proactively working with Lincolnshire’s parish councils?
- ▶ How can NACs avoid becoming another layer of bureaucracy – balancing relational practices with the representative democratic structures of the council and the legal and bureaucratic processes that underpin decision-making?

A set of design principles provides a useful starting point to consider future NAC design.

### 6.3.9 Scale and geography

**NACs will be geographically and demographically defined according to the most sensible design option, subject to detailed stakeholder input.** They will need to be close enough to the ground to have deep insight into granular community issues, while not becoming over administratively burdensome for the new authorities. There will need to be a coherent relationship with existing VCSE networks, preserving key relationships and providing the strategic forum to advance Lincolnshire's growth and prevention agenda, with a clear purpose and focus on local issues.

At present, we anticipate that the NAC structure will follow Primary Care Network (PCN) boundaries. Recognising the current scale, depth, and place-specific drivers of health inequalities across Lincolnshire, using PCNs as the basis for NACs allows us to consider the full spectrum of place-specific barriers to opportunity, and the wider determinants of health. Further, as an existing network seeking to deliver more coordinated and proactive care for local populations, PCN boundaries provide a sensible way to bring our VCSE, public health and community partners together – reinforcing, rather than adding to, existing relationships and ways of working.

This is rooted in the national localisation agenda (e.g., “Total Place 2.0 and the NHS 10-year plan’s focus on neighbourhood working) that the City Council, County, districts and boroughs have already been working to embed (e.g., through the Joint Councils’ Health and Wellbeing Strategy drafted in the wake of COVID-19) and recognises the opportunity LGR provides to deliver genuine place based public service reform. Using Lincolnshire’s current PCN footprint, we anticipate a total of 14 NACs across the county area, with a varied population of c. 40k – c.70k. This structure and scale will be reviewed and designed as new governance arrangements are put in place. Where appropriate, combining PCN footprints to form NACs would be considered based on further local collaboration and codesign.

### 6.3.10 Role and remit

**Ideally, NACs should serve as the primary mechanism for localising the two unitary model, grounding policy and service decisions in the distinct local needs of Lincolnshire residents.** They should help to proactively address the differences that exist in both need and solutions between city and rural, acting as multifunctional bodies and bridging relationships between the unitary authority, PCNs, and the voluntary and community sector.

To deliver this role effectively, NACs will require some formal power to avoid them becoming merely another layer of bureaucracy – with delegated decision-making authority where appropriate, and the ability to influence local priorities. With this comes a requirement for formal governance arrangements ensure the appropriate democratic safeguards are in place. Further, to maximise NAC’s representative function, they must retain some level of informal engagement channels to ensure authentic resident representation.

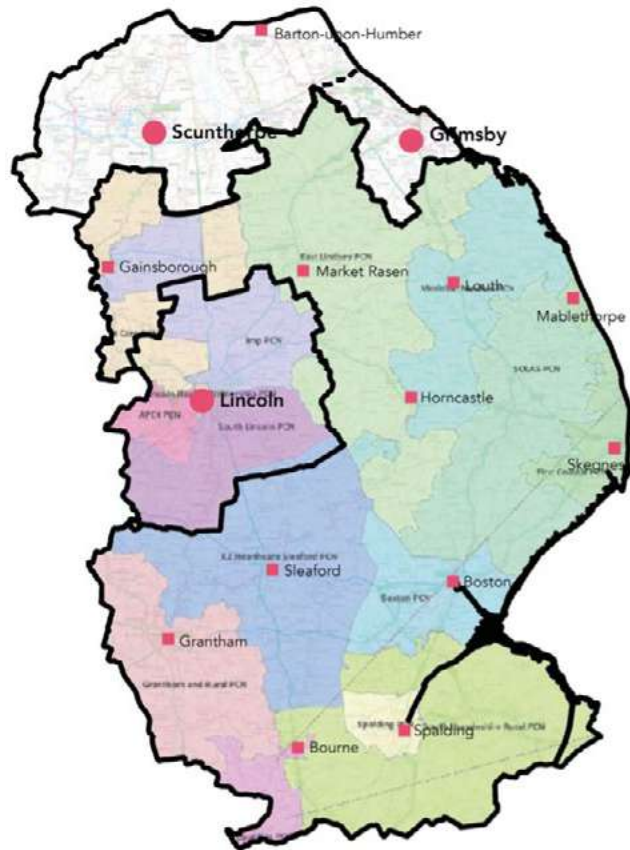


Figure 7: Lincolnshire Primary Care Networks (PCNs) overlaid with proposed unitary authority boundaries for Lincoln City and Rural Lincolnshire. Source: <https://ipcna.nhs.uk/primary-care-networks>

They must be accessible, and relevant – providing genuine opportunity for participation. In this way, NACs will form a key mechanism to “design in” local voice to the new authorities, ensuring communities across city and rural can be heard effectively in decision-making and service delivery.

We will supplement this approach by both protecting and preserving the role of local Parish Councils and respecting the crucial role they play in many communities. We anticipate that relevant Parish Councillors will maintain a NAC presence.

### 6.3.11 Resourcing

Resourcing for NACs will be carefully planned to ensure effectiveness and sustainability, recognising the challenges of adding an additional governance layer. By building on existing PCNs, NACs can leverage an established platform for engagement, minimising resource pressures. They will be provided with sufficient support for both capacity building and direct investment in local priorities, with early identification of funding sources and transparent budgeting processes to enable communities to act confidently. NACs will also have the flexibility to collaborate across areas on multi-community issues, ensuring coordination and consistency where needed.









# Devolution

The Greater Lincolnshire Combined County Authority was established in 2025 to cover the areas of the current Lincolnshire County Council alongside North Lincolnshire and North East Lincolnshire Unitary Authorities. At the time the Government said that the CCA was part of an agenda “*rebalancing the power between Westminster and our communities*”. This proposal creates the conditions to deliver on that promise by providing greater strategic alignment between different parts of our geography, creating a stronger and more balanced/ representative combined authority which will be a better partner both to the constituent parts of Greater Lincolnshire and to National Government.

## 7.1 Strengthening and balancing the Greater Lincolnshire CCA

**Currently the GLCCA is governed by the elected Mayor, Andrea Jenkyns, alongside a board on which the combined county authority’s constituent councils have a vote together with 4 of the districts as rotating, non-constituent members.** Currently this means that the only permanent members of the board with voting rights are the Mayor, alongside nominated representatives from the two northern unitary councils and the county council. This means that Lincoln, as the region’s economic engine, is not reliably included in decision-making given its current role as a rotating, non-constituent member. Under competing proposals, whether for a single county unitary or for large mixed urban-rural unitary councils, this will continue.

Our proposal will see the area covered by the current Lincolnshire County Council replaced by two councils. Lincoln City, covering the City of Lincoln and its immediate surrounds with a clear focus on urban innovation in housing

delivery and economic growth, and Rural Lincolnshire, covering the countryside and coastal parts of Lincolnshire with an ability to focus on rural resilience and the distinct local needs of these communities. Alongside the unitary councils in the north, which could potentially merge in time into a single Northern Unitary, this will create a balanced and more representative CCA in which each part of Greater Lincolnshire will have a seat at the table, a voice in the room and a vote in how hundreds of millions of pounds of public money are invested in delivering an ambitious agenda on new homes, better transport and a fairer, more prosperous, economy for every community in Greater Lincolnshire.



## 7.2 Unlocking the full potential of Greater Lincolnshire

**As set out in section 7 there are distinct and distinctive economic opportunities across Greater Lincolnshire.**

**In Northern Lincolnshire the Humber Freeport provides a global gateway, Rural Lincolnshire is a powerhouse for agri-tech, agriculture and clean energy as a route to sustainable rural resilience.**

Lincoln City showcases the dynamism and growth potential of England's historic smaller cities whose focus on urban innovation and inclusive growth will act as an engine for the whole Combined County Authority.

In our proposal the Combined County Authority will be able to work directly with each area on the distinct opportunities created in each, the particular challenges that devolution can

address in each, and ensure that there is sufficient capacity within the constituent councils to unlock the breadth and diversity of opportunity that exists in Greater Lincolnshire.

This is not just about the democratic voice for distinct communities of interest that the proposed new authorities in this proposal represent but is about creating the building blocks for a strong and functioning ecosystem. Combined Authorities deliver through their constituent councils and partners. Without a council focused on the specific opportunities, with the resources, capacity, establishment and experience working with local key partners, the GLCCA will be weakened and lose its ability to deliver on the promise that was held out to residents at its inception.

## 7.3 A coherent system from neighbourhood to Strategic Authority

**Devolution doesn't exist in a vacuum. It is part of a complex system of governance and power that has the ability to help local people meet their aspirations and ambitions. However, if the strategic authority has no connection to local people, then it risks feeling as remote and absent from the way that people here lead their lives as national government has felt in the past.**

This proposal creates an integrated system with clear connections and lines of accountability from the neighbourhood level through Neighbourhood Area

Committees and Parish Councils, through new unitary councils that are place-specific and designed around real-world geographies of economy, demography and community, through to the board of the Combined Authority where every part of Greater Lincolnshire will be included, involved and invested in the decisions that will shape how our area develops and thrives in the coming decades. This proposal for Greater Lincolnshire will ensure that every community has a permanent right to shape the GLCCA plan for their region, including the Growth Plan, Spatial Development Strategy, Transport Plan and Skills Plan.



# Financial sustainability and resilience

Delivering sustainable local government is reliant on a financial framework that manages existing pressures and unlocks future opportunities.

This financial case explains how reorganisation supports this by consolidating resources, enabling efficiencies, and creating councils with the scale and stability to plan for the long term. It sets out the current financial landscape, the opportunity presented through growth and prevention, and the approach that underpins the creation of two robust and financially resilient unitary authorities.

## 8.1 Introduction and strategic rationale

**Across England, local authorities are facing acute and compounding financial pressures. Real-term reductions in central government funding, rising inflation, and surging demand for statutory services have created a structural imbalance between expenditure and income.** Councils are increasingly forced to make difficult decisions about income generation, efficiency savings, and service prioritisation to protect essential statutory functions.

Lincolnshire is no exception. Population growth, ageing demographics, and escalating demand in high-cost service areas — particularly adult and children's social care — are driving costs to levels that challenge long-term sustainability. At the same time, the complexity of the two-tier system across large geographies and dispersed communities creates duplication and limits the ability to act strategically across key growth and prevention agendas.

**Our proposal directly addresses these pressures while remaining fiscally self-sufficient.** It does not seek Exceptional Financial Support (EFS) or central government assistance in order to reorganise. Instead, the costs of transition will be met locally through existing reserves and the **Flexible Use of Capital Receipts (FUCR)**, as permitted by government guidance to support local government reorganisation. This ensures that the proposal is **affordable, deliverable, and financially responsible**, placing no additional burden on the Exchequer.

## 8.2 Current financial position in Lincolnshire

**All eight councils in Lincolnshire have demonstrated prudent financial management and remain in a stable financial position. None have issued a Section 114 notice or required Exceptional Financial Support (EFS), reflecting strong local discipline and effective stewardship in a challenging environment.**

Lincolnshire County Council (LCC) continues to show financial control, reporting an underspend of £9 million in 2024/25 despite mounting pressures. The seven district councils are also balancing their budgets, though most have done so through reserve drawdowns and reduced discretionary spending.



This stability, however, masks growing structural and demand-led pressures across all tiers.

At a county level, Social Care now accounts for 57.9% of total LCC expenditure in 2024/25, highlighting the scale of cost pressures on the system. Rising pay, National Insurance (NI), and contract costs (impacted by the same inflation, National Living Wage and NI increases), coupled with sustained demographic growth, are adding to the strain. Service demand continues to increase, particularly across Adults and Children's social care, with specific pressures as follows:

- ▶ Increasing demand for services across Adult Care and Community Wellbeing, including older persons services, working age adults and mental health care costs.
- ▶ Rising demand in the area of Children in Care (CiC) with increasing complexity and demands of children with a higher composition in more specialist placements.
- ▶ Higher costs reflecting activity increases in Home to School Transport, particularly an increase in SEND transport requirements reflecting the doubling number of children with education, Health and Care Plans (EHCP's) in place.

LCC projects that service demand in 2025/26 and beyond will exceed forecasts, posing risks to its Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP). The county's rural geography compounds these challenges: service delivery across 5,500 miles of road and dispersed settlements makes Lincolnshire structurally underfunded within the national formula, costing it an estimated £120 million annually compared with urban areas.

District councils face their own financial headwinds. Their smaller scale, narrower tax bases, and dependence on locally raised income make them more vulnerable to economic volatility. Council tax collection rates have not yet recovered to pre-pandemic levels, while income from locally raised fees & charges continues to be impacted by economic factors and the sustained cost of living challenges e.g. planning and development income remains at subdued levels, and income from crematoriums continues to fall as families seek lower cost alternatives. Inflation, pay pressures, and borrowing costs have all increased, while demand for services and the complexity of support required also continues to grow. In addition, new statutory requirements i.e. weekly food waste collections, social housing regulations etc add further cost pressures. These pressures are forcing districts to absorb shortfalls from their general funds, through earmarked reserves, in the short term, while making difficult decisions about curtailing discretionary services such as culture, leisure, and other community services.

Taken together, Lincolnshire's councils remain solvent and well-managed, but under intensifying pressure. With little prospect of additional funding in the national pot, the ability to sustain essential services and invest for the long term will increasingly depend on structural reform and local efficiency.



## 8.3 The opportunity: financial sustainability through growth and prevention

**Reorganisation offers a once-in-a-generation chance to move beyond managing decline — transforming local government from a system forced to absorb pressures into one that actively builds prosperity and prevents crisis.**

The case for reform is not administrative convenience; it is structural renewal — creating councils capable of fostering growth and preventing problems before they become unaffordable. Our proposal is grounded in two mutually reinforcing principles: **growth** and **prevention**.

- ▶ **Growth** expands the local tax base, strengthens business rates income, and stimulates private investment. A reorganised authority centred on Lincoln City would unlock development opportunities currently constrained by city boundaries, aligning planning, infrastructure, and investment strategies at the scale required to deliver inclusive growth. In Rural Lincolnshire this will enable rural, coastal, and market-town communities the autonomy to unlock growth through their distinct sectoral strengths and capitalise on nationally significant agri-food and renewable energy clusters.
- ▶ **Prevention** reduces long-term demand and cost pressures by addressing issues earlier. A unified council structure integrating housing, health, and social care enables earlier intervention, helping residents live independently for longer and reducing reliance on high-cost crisis services. By consolidating functions, data, and insight, new authorities can reduce duplication and target resources where they have the greatest long-term impact.

**Growth** and **prevention** are not independent parallel ambitions but two sides of the same coin. Together, these dynamics create a more sustainable fiscal model. Growth increases revenue capacity, while prevention flattens future cost trajectories. The combined effect is an improved medium-term budget position and a stronger balance sheet for future authorities — through reduced debt pressures, higher reserves, and more efficient asset utilisation. A reorganised Lincolnshire offers the scale, coherence, and fiscal autonomy to join these agendas — to align economic development with social outcomes, and financial sustainability with inclusive growth.

Our proposal delivers leaner, financially sustainable organisations with the capacity to invest in place. It represents a reset - not a tweak - of the current system: one designed to strengthen resilience, align financial sustainability with economic opportunity, and deliver long-term value for taxpayers. More than efficiency, this is a reset of purpose — enabling councils to become catalysts of renewal: institutions that generate growth, prevent harm, and rebuild public trust.

## 8.4 Our financial approach

**The proposal establishes two balanced, financially sustainable, safe, and legal authorities from day one, each underpinned by robust tax bases and positioned to pursue sustainable, inclusive growth. The analysis underpinning this proposal has been evidence-led and data-driven, drawing from:**

- ▶ **National datasets**, including Revenue Account (RA) and Revenue Outturn (RO) forms and ONS data, ensuring consistency and comparability;
- ▶ **Locally sourced financial information** from Lincolnshire's councils, including revenue budgets, balance sheets, and reserves, ensuring accuracy and relevance.

The financial assessment considers:

- ▶ **Council tax harmonisation**, testing five legally compliant scenarios that balance affordability with revenue stability;
- ▶ **Expenditure and funding positions**, identifying the structural income and cost base of each proposed authority; and
- ▶ **Transition and transformation costs and savings**, quantifying both one-off investments and recurrent efficiencies arising from consolidation and reform.

Together, this provides a rigorous and transparent foundation for the financial case that follows.



Year	Financial Year	One-Off Costs	Recurring Costs	Recurring Savings	Net Impact	Cumulative Net Impact
0	2025/26-2027/28	(14.7)	(1.7)	-	(16.3)	(16.3)
1	2028/29	(22.8)	(6.1)	16.9	(12.0)	(28.4)
2	2029/30	(5.0)	(6.7)	23.4	11.7	(16.7)
3	2030/31	(3.5)	(7.2)	27.7	17.1	0.4
4	2031/32	(1.6)	(7.7)	30.1	20.8	21.2
5	2032/33	(0.1)	(8.3)	31.0	22.7	43.9

Table 11: Summary of transition costs and savings (2025/26–2032/33)

Note: Bracketed figures denote costs. Net impact is annual balance; cumulative is across the period.

## 8.5 Transition costs and savings

**The transition to two new unitary councils for Lincolnshire will involve both aggregation and disaggregation of existing services, supported by a managed transition process.** Aggregation will merge the seven district councils' services and functions, while disaggregation will divide the County Council's operations—and, in some cases, those of districts crossing new boundaries—between the new authorities. This restructuring will incur one-off transition and disaggregation costs, including programme delivery, staffing, and system integration, but these will be outweighed by the ongoing efficiencies and savings achieved through streamlined governance, shared systems, and rationalised assets.

The table above summarises the indicative financial profile of our above reorganisation proposal, showing one-off transition and disaggregation costs alongside the recurring efficiencies achieved over time. While upfront expenditure is concentrated in the early years, sustained annual savings begin to outweigh costs from 2029/30 onwards, delivering a cumulative positive impact by 2030/31.

We expect that the efficiencies that are possible through reorganisation will ultimately outweigh transition costs over time. The unitaries would fund LGR from existing budgets (including from the flexible use of capital receipts – by all existing councils) to allow them to invest in transformation projects.

Our modelling indicates that reorganisation in Lincolnshire would require **one-off transition and disaggregation costs of around £48 million**, primarily incurred during the two years prior to vesting and the first two operational years. These costs reflect the establishment of shadow authorities (including programme managements, staffing, estate rationalisation, financial disaggregation, communication and rebranding), ICT and systems integration, redundancy and early retirement programmes, workforce harmonisation, and targeted investment in organisational redesign to integrate district and county functions into fit-for-purpose unitary structures.

In addition, **recurring costs of around £6–8 million per year** are expected during the transition period, associated with maintaining limited system duplication and managing service disaggregation. However, **recurring savings begin to build from 2028/29**, as the new structures embed. In Year 1, early efficiencies of approximately **£17 million** are achieved through management delayering, consolidation of back-office functions, and the removal of duplication across districts. These savings increase to more than **£30 million per year by 2031/32**, as wider structural reforms take effect.

The model reaches **payback in Year 3 (2030/31)**, when cumulative savings outweigh the upfront investment, and by **2032/33 delivers sustained annual net savings of around £23 million and a cumulative financial benefit of approximately £44 million.**

In summary, while the early years of transition involve unavoidable costs, the two-unitary model for Lincolnshire moves into surplus within three years of vesting, creating a more efficient, resilient, and financially sustainable system of local government.

Local authorities developing three of the Greater Lincolnshire bids jointly commissioned a shared report to establish a set of baseline assumptions for Greater Lincolnshire, which has been included in **Appendix G**. Our analysis builds on this work but introduces **greater granularity, local specificities, and a bottom-up approach** to the development of costs and savings. Our figures have been developed through detailed analysis of **establishment lists, RA and RO returns, previous project work, and case studies from prior LGRs**, rather than by applying top-down percentage assumptions. This approach is intended to more accurately reflect the **true costs of transition and the realistic scale of prospective benefits**, which explains why our results differ from those produced in the baseline assumptions and other bids.

## 8.6 Baseline financial position

To establish a clear starting point for assessing the financial implications of reorganisation, we have constructed a baseline income and expenditure position for the two proposed new authorities — **Lincoln City and Rural Lincolnshire** — using the 2025/26 Revenue Account (RA) forms. This baseline provides a picture of the existing funding and expenditure profile across Lincolnshire's eight councils before the effects of transformation, harmonisation, or service reform are considered.

All major funding and cost lines have been analysed in detail across the existing councils, with the County Council's budget subject to particular scrutiny given its size and materiality. Funding and expenditure streams were apportioned according to the most relevant and robust data available, including indicators such as demand levels, demographic characteristics, unit costs, and council tax base data. In cases where no suitable disaggregated data existed, apportionment was conducted on a population basis to maintain consistency and transparency.

This includes the apportionment of the debt servicing costs for all existing borrowing across the authorities using population. This is on the basis that, primarily, Lincolnshire councils do not borrow against specific assets and as such debt cannot be attributed to individual assets. Additionally, as assets are funded from a variety of sources it would not be a fair method of apportionment to allocate debt to specific assets as historic funding

decisions i.e. use of borrowing v capital receipts, may financially disadvantage one authority over the other.

The resulting notional income and expenditure positions are summarised below:

These figures are not a forecast of the financial position of the new authorities following reorganisation, but rather a **baseline snapshot** of what would occur if current-year budgets were divided into two unitary authorities based on existing expenditure patterns. They exclude any assumptions about efficiency savings, council tax harmonisation, or service reform — all of which would form key elements of the transition phase.

Under this scenario, **Lincoln City** begins in a relatively strong position, with a notional surplus of approximately **£8.5 million**, while **Rural Lincolnshire** shows a small notional deficit of around **£2.4 million**. This minor imbalance is neither structural nor concerning and would be mitigated by the transformation savings and harmonisation effects modelled later in this proposal.

Importantly, the baseline excludes the use of reserves or other one-off funding sources. If reserves usage were included, both authorities would begin in surplus. The difference in the scale of budgets naturally reflects the relative size of the two proposed authorities — Lincoln City being smaller and more urban, Rural Lincolnshire being larger and predominantly rural.

	Lincoln City (£000)	Rural Lincolnshire (£000)
Total Expenditure	(344,980.75)	(1,035,214.25)
Total Income	353,501.70	1,032,852.30
(Under)/Over Funded	<b>+8,520.95</b>	<b>(2,361.95)</b>

Table 12: National income and expenditure by proposed new unitary

## 8.7 Funding outlook and Fair Funding considerations

**The funding outlook under the current system is uncertain and structurally imbalanced. Rural counties such as Lincolnshire remain disadvantaged under existing grant distribution mechanisms, which fail to reflect the additional costs of delivering services across dispersed and sparsely populated areas.** LCC has estimated that the county loses approximately £120 million per year under the current national funding formula. Furthermore, Lincoln has been disadvantaged under the current system as a result of its low council tax base combined with high deprivation levels and demands on services.

The forthcoming Fair Funding Review (FFR) 2.0 offers an opportunity to address these long-standing inequities — but also to rethink how fiscal frameworks align

with local structures. Government has signalled that future funding allocations will place greater weight on deprivation and demand, rebalancing resources towards areas facing higher levels of social and economic need. The consultation also acknowledges the importance of enabling local authorities to shift from reactive to more early-intervention approaches, noting that “recent years... made it harder to take long-term decisions and deliver preventative and *early-intervention services*.”

Within Lincolnshire, this shift highlights the importance of recognising the county's dual character: a core urban area experiencing acute deprivation, alongside rural districts facing geographic cost pressures and containing pockets of entrenched deprivation that are often obscured within otherwise affluent local authority

areas. FFR 2.0 provides a chance to ensure that these hidden rural inequalities are properly reflected in funding allocations, supporting preventative investment across both urban and rural communities.

The 2025 IMD data underscores that deprivation is not confined to a single part of the county. **Lincoln** and **East Lindsey** are among the most deprived districts nationally, but **Boston**, **West Lindsey**, and **South Holland** also contain significant pockets of deprivation. Even the relatively less deprived **Kesteven** districts face challenges of access, rural isolation, and low pay.

Our proposal reflects this reality. While the boundaries of the proposed Lincoln City and Rural Lincolnshire unitaries will inevitably be relevant to future funding discussions, they have not been drawn with the intent of creating “winners” or “losers” under FFR 2.0. **Deprivation in Lincolnshire is widespread rather than concentrated**, with 17.7% of LSOAs in both Lincoln City and Rural Lincolnshire falling within the most deprived two deciles nationally. This

demonstrates that both unitaries stand to benefit from a fairer system that recognises deprivation wherever it occurs — whether in dense urban wards or remote rural settlements.

This approach reinforces why structural reform and funding reform must proceed hand in hand. As independent, external, analysis on the impact of FFR 2.0 for Lincoln shows, the current fragmented system masks significant variation in both need and fiscal capacity. A reorganised Lincolnshire would enable funding to be directed and managed at the right scale — aligning economic growth areas with the communities experiencing the greatest deprivation, and ensuring that local revenue, service demand, and investment decisions are considered together.

In this context, reorganisation is not simply an administrative adjustment to accompany the national review; it is a means of realising the intent of Fair Funding — creating councils with the scale, coherence, and accountability to use resources fairly, invest strategically, and build financial resilience across the county.

## 8.8 Financial sustainability and “right-sized” organisations

### 8.8.1 Meeting Criterion 2: Scale and Resilience

**Criterion 2 requires that a unitary authority be of sufficient scale to deliver efficiencies, build capacity, and remain resilient to financial shocks. We believe our proposed unitaries are optimally sized for success — large enough to achieve economies of scale, but not so large as to dilute local identity or weaken financial control.**

Based on a projected **1% annual growth** in tax bases from 2025/26, the estimated Band D tax bases and populations for 2028/29 are set out below:

Proposed Authority	Band D Tax Base (2028/29)	Population (2028/29)
Lincoln City	63,715	224,839
Rural Lincolnshire	192,058	617,931

Table 13: Estimated Band D Tax bases

To test the “right size” of the proposed unitaries, we benchmarked their projected tax bases and populations against existing unitary authorities of similar scale. The results show that both Lincoln City and Rural Lincolnshire fall squarely within the established range for successful unitaries operating across England.

This benchmarking shows that both **Lincoln City** and **Rural Lincolnshire** fall comfortably within the typical range for English unitary authorities. They are **far from outliers** in either tax base or population served, and each demonstrates a scale consistent with fiscal viability and capacity. Both authorities will be able to demonstrate **strong core spending power**, supported by their tax base size and composition.

#### Comparable authorities to Lincoln City (similar size or smaller):

Authority	Band D Tax Base	Population
Bracknell Forest	50,488	130,806
Halton	36,936	131,543
Stockton-on-Tees	69,133	206,800
York	69,426	209,301
Darlington	35,905	112,489

Table 14: Band D tax bases for comparable authorities (Lincoln City)

#### Comparable authorities to Rural Lincolnshire (similar or larger size):

Authority	Band D Tax Base	Population
Durham	177,118	522,100
Sheffield	174,273	556,500
Cornwall	229,530	590,000
Wiltshire	210,408	530,000
Leeds	274,847	812,000

Table 15: Band D tax bases for comparable authorities (Rural Lincolnshire)

The proposed configuration creates **two “right-sized” authorities** — each capable of delivering efficient, responsive services, with sufficient capacity to invest in prevention and growth.



## 8.9 Council tax harmonisation

In two-tier areas such as Lincolnshire, a household's council tax bill is currently made up of several different precepts set by distinct bodies with specific responsibilities:

- ▶ Lincolnshire County Council
- ▶ The district or borough council
- ▶ Parish or town councils
- ▶ The Police and Crime Commissioner

The total payable reflects the combined charges of these precepting authorities, which vary by geography. In the event of local government reorganisation, the district and county precepts are consolidated into a single unitary authority precept. This requires council tax harmonisation: ensuring that all households in the new authority pay the same Band D charge for the same set of services. Without harmonisation, residents in different areas of the new authority would continue to pay different rates for identical services, which is legally and politically unsustainable.

The Local Government Act 1992 requires local authorities to set a single basic amount of council tax (Band D) across their area. To facilitate transitions, statutory instruments — including the Local Government (Structural Changes) (Finance) Regulations 2008 and subsequent amendments in 2012 and 2018 — provide a legal framework for harmonisation following reorganisation. These regulations allow new unitary authorities to maintain differential Band D levels across their predecessor areas for up to seven years, with full uniformity required by year eight. The gap between the highest and lowest charging areas must narrow each year, although the rate of convergence is at the authority's discretion.

Increases in council tax remain subject to referendum principles set annually by the Secretary of State, which define thresholds of "excessiveness" for different types of authority. These principles may be applied either to the overall weighted average Band D or to the predecessor area amounts.

The table below shows the 2025/26 Band D council tax charges and tax bases for Lincolnshire's billing authorities, alongside the county council precept. It provides the baseline position from which harmonisation

### 8.9.1 Scenario modelling

To understand the potential financial implications of reorganisation, we have modelled five council tax harmonisation scenarios. Each represents a different pathway for aligning Band D charges within the proposed unitary authorities, beginning on vesting day (assumed to be 1 April 2028) and concluding with full convergence by 1 April 2035. For comparison, outcomes are assessed against a baseline in which no reorganisation occurs.

must be considered, capturing both the rates currently levied by each district and the number of Band D equivalent properties contributing to their revenue.

There is marked variation in district-level precepts across Lincolnshire, reflecting the different priorities and circumstances of each council. In 2025/26, the gap between the lowest district precept (East Lindsey, £171.54) and the highest (City of Lincoln, £316.98) is £145 for a Band D household – meaning residents in Lincoln pay around 85% more for the district element than those in East Lindsey. These differences stem from historic policy choices, variations in service demand, the level of local government funding and the demographic and economic context of each area.

It should be noted that parish precepts come into play for some areas within Lincolnshire, and that some of these are at a similar level to district Band D rates placing an additional burden on residents within these parishes e.g. the parish precept for Welton, in West Lindsey, is £133.57 for 2025/26 and for Washingborough, in North Kesteven, it is £164.66. Lincoln does not have any parishes and therefore residents within current city boundaries do not pay these precepts.

The ability of districts to raise revenue also depends heavily on the size of their tax base. South Kesteven (50,140.5) and East Lindsey (48,166) have the largest tax bases, generating significant revenue despite relatively low Band D rates. By contrast, Boston and the City of Lincoln have the smallest bases (20–26k), which makes them more reliant on higher Band D charges to sustain their income.

Local Authority	Band D (£)	Tax Base
City of Lincoln	316.98	25,764.25
West Lindsey	248.76	32,756.75
East Lindsey	171.54	48,166.00
North Kesteven	194.40	40,000.00
South Kesteven	177.30	50,140.50
Boston	223.65	20,291.00
South Holland	208.53	30,890.00
Lincolnshire County Council	1,625.85	248,008.50

Table 16: 2025/26 Band D council tax charges and tax bases

The scenarios are not intended to prescribe a single course of action. Instead, they illustrate the range of legally compliant options available under the statutory framework and highlight the trade-offs associated with each. The choice of approach will ultimately rest with the shadow authorities once established, considering local circumstances, fiscal sustainability, and political considerations.

The five scenarios are summarised to the right:

#	Name	Description
1	Low to Max	All Band D charges are raised to the highest 2027/28 district rate within each new unitary, subject to the statutory 5% cap. After harmonisation, increases follow the maximum permitted level.
2	High to Min	All Band D charges are immediately aligned to the lowest 2027/28 district rate. This achieves instant uniformity but requires steep reductions in higher-charging areas. From this base, Band D rises by 5% annually.
3	Weighted Average on Day 1	A single Band D charge is introduced at the weighted average of predecessor district rates (2027/28), adjusted for tax base sizes. This avoids first-year breaches of the 5% cap. Band D then increases annually at 5%.
4	Weighted Average plus 5% on Day 1	The weighted average is uplifted by the full 5% in the first year, maximising revenue headroom while remaining within referendum principles.
5	Harmonisation Within the 5% Predecessor Authority Cap	Charges are initially set at the lowest predecessor rate plus 5%, ensuring no household faces an increase above the 5% cap. Convergence occurs gradually thereafter.

Table 17: Council tax harmonisation scenarios  
All scenarios assume annual tax base growth of 1%

## 8.9.2 Results of the modelling

The table below summarises the projected revenue impacts of the five harmonisation scenarios for Lincoln City and Rural Lincolnshire, compared against the baseline.

The modelling shows that:

- ▶ **Low to Max** produces moderate revenue losses for both authorities, as lower-charging areas are uplifted to the highest predecessor rate within the statutory 5% cap.
- ▶ **High to Min** results in very substantial losses.
- ▶ **Weighted Average on Day 1** also creates significant deficits, reflecting the impact of aligning all areas to a single mid-point Band D rate.
- ▶ **Weighted Average plus 5% on Day 1** is the only scenario that generates additional revenue for

both Lincoln City (+£15.8m) and Rural Lincolnshire (+£36.2m). This represents the maximum permissible increase under the referendum principles.

- ▶ **Harmonisation Within 5%** reduces the scale of losses compared to the baseline weighted average but still leaves both authorities in deficit.

Overall, the results underline that council tax harmonisation is both technically feasible and highly sensitive to policy choices. Each approach involves different fiscal and political trade-offs: some prioritise affordability for residents, others stability of revenue for the new authority. There is no universally optimal pathway — it will be for each shadow authority to weigh financial resilience against local priorities and political considerations in determining its preferred approach.

Scenario	Lincoln City	Rural Lincolnshire
Low to Max	(8.67)	(46.43)
High to Min	(90.82)	(202.43)
Weighted Average on Day 1	(49.44)	(154.17)
Weighted Average + 5% on Day 1	15.76	36.25
5% Predecessor Authority	(27.69)	(14.43)

Table 18: Council tax harmonisation summary

## 8.10 Housing Revenue Accounts

Across Lincolnshire, four district councils currently operate Housing Revenue Accounts (HRA) to council housing — these are City of Lincoln, North Kesteven, South Kesteven and South Holland, whilst the others no longer hold housing stock, having transferred their homes to registered providers.

Each of the existing councils' housing portfolios are of different size and natures (i.e. the mix of social rent, leasehold, etc.) and the HRA accounts are in varying financial positions. However, all four stock-owning councils maintain long-term business plans underpinning their housing investment strategies and compliance with statutory standards.

This social housing will be an important function for the two new unitaries as it will make important contributions to placemaking and supply of affordable homes.

The new unitaries will inherit these functions, and we can apply the learning of those authorities that have recently undergone LGR to our own circumstances (such as North Northamptonshire and Somerset). We anticipate that for the

HRAs of the City of Lincoln, South Kesteven and South Holland, there will be a 'straightforward' transfer across to the successor unitaries (i.e. City of Lincoln HRA to Lincoln City, and both South Kesteven and South Holland HRAs to Rural Lincolnshire). North Kesteven will be more complicated given that the area is divided between the two new unitaries. We have assumed that the 'location principle' will be used to apportion housing stock, land and related assets between the two new unitaries.

However, there will need to be a clear and legally compliant approach to the treatment of HRAs, and it will require the approval of Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG). We will also need to manage key risks including the apportionment of complex debt, data and systems migration, and inflationary pressures.

Our proposed approach will position the new authorities to deliver safe, sustainable, and high-quality social housing across the county.









# New Councils Target Operating Model

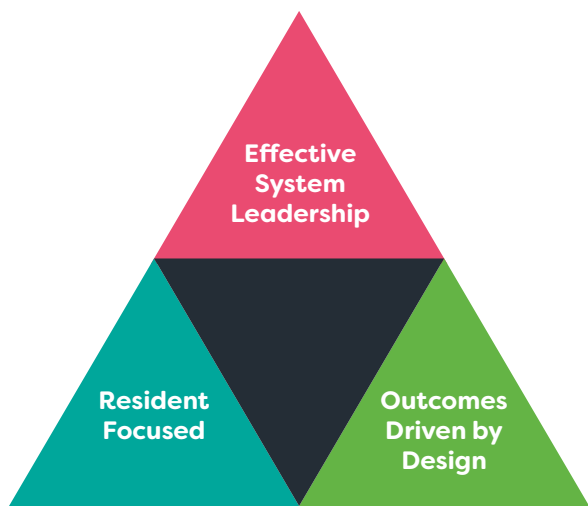
Local government reorganisation presents a once-in-a-generation opportunity to design new unitaries around the distinct challenges and opportunities of place. By adopting a place-based and person-centred approach, services can be reshaped to make the most of the unitarisation and devolution opportunities that LGR brings.

**This approach will enable residents, businesses, education providers and community partners across Lincoln City and Rural Lincolnshire to benefit from services tailored to their needs and ambitions, laying the foundations for lasting public service reform and transforming lives across Lincolnshire.**

Growth is core to the overarching ambition of the two unitary authority proposal, however as economic prosperity is realised at a place and individual level – simultaneously embedding the defining principle of prevention across public service delivery will be critical to developing organisations that are fit for the future and structured to enable residents to experience positive life outcomes and avoid crises.

## Vision for the Target Operating Model

The two new unitaries have been developed within a shared framework that defines how each council will meet the needs of residents across Lincolnshire. Three core vision statements underpin this framework, ensuring that both Lincoln City and Rural Lincolnshire deliver effective, responsive, and sustainable public services:



- ▶ **Effective system leadership:** Strong partnerships with businesses, education providers, and community organisations enable whole-system collaboration - aligning resources, sharing intelligence, and jointly delivering growth, wellbeing, and prevention outcomes.
- ▶ **Resident focused:** Services are designed around the unique characteristics, assets, and needs of each community, ensuring residents receive support that is local, accessible, and responsive to their circumstances.
- ▶ **Outcomes driven by design:** The model prioritises proactive support that prevents issues from escalating, reduces long-term demand on services, and empowers individuals and communities to build resilience and independence.

Figure 8: Overarching vision

## Design principles

Our design principles provide the foundation for how we will shape future services across both unitaries. They ensure that the Target Operating Model and individual service operating models are built around what matters most — delivering better outcomes for residents, using resources sustainably, and fostering a culture of collaboration and continuous improvement.

These principles guide how the unitaries will better organise people, processes and technology to create a system that is resident-centred, prevention-focused, data-informed, and partnership-driven. Together, they establish a clear framework for redesigning services that are efficient, equitable, and resilient, supporting both immediate transformation and long-term sustainability.



Figure 9: Design Principles

## Overview of the proposed Target Operating Model

Each component of the Target Operating Model (TOM) has been designed from first principles to enable both unitaries to transform their public services in a way that more effectively meets the needs of residents, businesses, and communities.

The TOM takes each component through a structured journey of understanding, reimagining, and futureproofing, ensuring that services are designed and delivered in the most efficient and sustainable way possible.

Effective public sector reform is rooted in Early Intervention and Prevention (EI&P). All structures, services, working practices, and performance management systems should be designed to prioritise prevention, with every directorate adopting relational, asset-based approaches that place residents at the centre.

This will break down siloed ways of working, creating organisations that are shaped around the needs of residents, rather than residents having to fit around the needs of organisations.

Whilst we are proposing aligned TOMs for each unitary, the following sections outline how these statements and design principles have been applied to both Lincoln City and Rural Lincolnshire, reflecting the distinct needs and profiles of each area.

Through collaboration and shared ambition, the unitaries will deliver better outcomes for residents and lay the foundation for long-term public service reform.



Figure 10: Overview of the proposed model



# Key Service Target Operating Models

This section sets out how each key service within each new unitary could be designed so that it is tailored to the distinct needs of Lincoln City and Rural Lincolnshire, and will help address long-standing challenges such as rural isolation, economic exclusion, and unequal access to services.

## 10.1 Early intervention and prevention

**The early intervention and prevention offer within the context of the proposed two unitary authority model will adopt systems thinking and create the underpinning digital and data infrastructure and organisational design to ensure intelligence is harnessed to proactively deploy the right and appropriate level of resources within communities, reflecting their unique needs. It also means comprehensively analysing resident needs beyond the obvious need and coordinating the appropriate services around residents and their aspirations which may differ across the Lincolnshire footprint. Our resident survey shows that although there may be common aspirations, people face and perceive very different challenges and barriers across Lincolnshire (e.g. transport and access to employment, education and leisure was cited as a very big issue in areas outside of Lincoln).**

We understand that the wellbeing of residents cannot be viewed in isolation to persistent challenges experienced by residents across Lincolnshire including economic exclusion, rural isolation, insufficient affordable housing and digital exclusion – fundamentally this requires an assets and relational based approach that enables delivery of public services closer to communities, predicated on their needs to create a more sustainable and equitable future for everyone.

The early intervention and prevention model enables this ambition to be realised across the Lincoln City and Rural Lincolnshire. At the heart of the model is a single, unified

pathway that complements and works alongside existing community-based provision. This pathway will focus on building community resilience by bringing services together, enabling collaboration between agencies, and using shared data to design personalised support – making prevention a principle that defines service delivery across both unitaries and their partners.

Central to this new pathway will be partners including sovereign Public Health services, NHS, Police and VCSE sector organisations, whose local knowledge and data intelligence will inform commissioning and service delivery priorities across the footprint, to mobilise resources where they are most needed. Partners can also determine the level of integration to deliver seamless public services and pool resources to align on preventative efforts and collectively define joint outcomes – boosting operational efficiency and improving resident outcomes.

Joined up data will play a vital role in identifying and supporting people through this pathway. Predictive analytics underpinned by artificial intelligence will help achieve a single view of residents and identify households, streets and communities at risk of homelessness, seasonal unemployment, social isolation or financial hardship, enabling proactive outreach and engagement with residents to prevent these poor experiences and life outcomes.

Multidisciplinary teams will operate out of service hubs which will be places that make sense to people, whether that's a library, a family hub, a community centre, or somewhere else

# A localised response to maximise impact

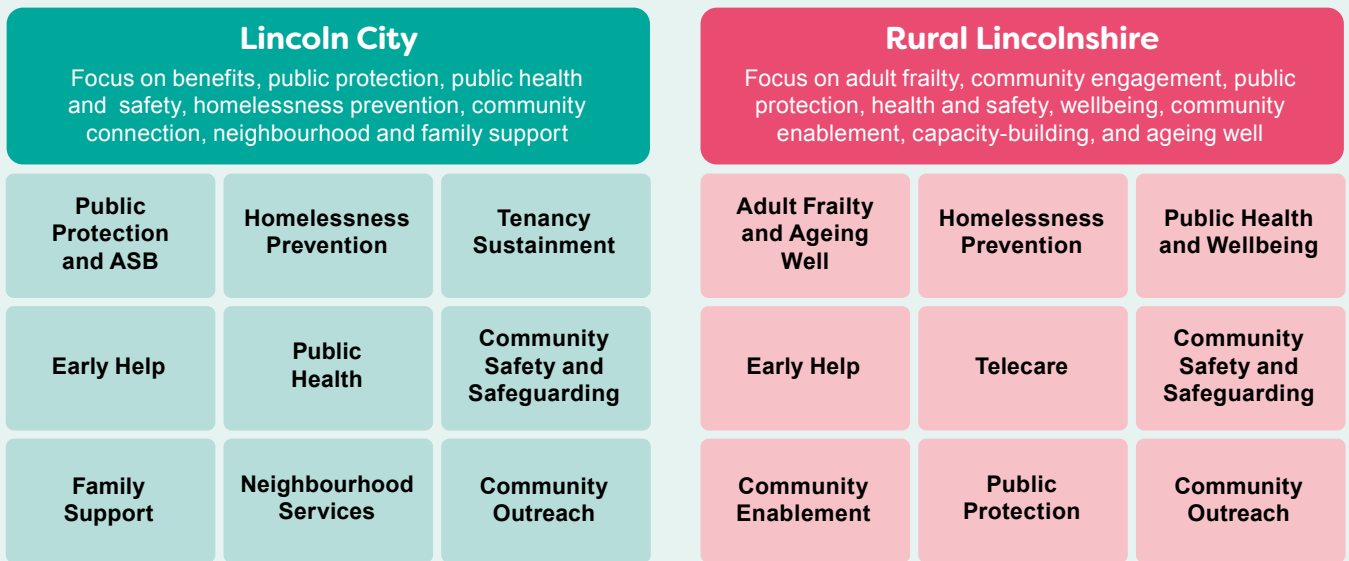


Figure 11: A localised response to maximise impact

familiar. These spaces will bring together multiple services under one roof, and comprise of partners across health, education and beyond to explore the most effective use of community-based assets. This will enable the co-location and alignment amongst services to deliver on national agendas including the transition to neighbourhood health services.

The model recognises the critical physical infrastructure limitations that are particularly present within Rural Lincolnshire, which has led to public services being harder to reach and access for residents. To combat this phenomenon, mobile teams will deliver early support directly to residents and digital solutions will be used to explore functions that can be delivered virtually whilst not compromising the resident experience and outcomes; 90% of Lincolnshire is connected to superfast broadband, with further ambitions to boost internet connectivity, there is potential to offer remote services.

Each unitary will design and develop a bespoke early intervention and prevention pathway, shaped by the voices of residents to reflect the realities of local communities and geographies – urban areas and market towns like Sleaford and Boston require a different offer than coastal seaside resorts like Mablethorpe and Skegness. The core pathway offer will be rooted in delivery of non-statutory functions such as Public Health, Early Help, social care information

and tenancy management advice and guidance. However, the function will simultaneously triage, refer and coordinate statutory support rapidly to prevent crises – delivering a preventative and responsive service, rooted in place.

The early intervention and prevention model across both unitaries will mobilise services that reflect Lincolnshire is not one homogenous geography – it will consider the distinct assets and pressures that influence why and how residents access support across the footprint. This includes factoring in poor transport connectivity in Rural Lincolnshire that further exacerbates access to healthcare for an ageing population that aspires to age well. Similarly, employment and housing advice will be key to alleviate concentrated housing pressures and high unemployment in Lincoln City.

The model will enable resolution of resident challenges earlier, community resilience to be strengthened and a reduction in the reliance of costly statutory services to future proof the system, which is particularly critical given the forecasted rise in population sizes across both unitaries driven by economic growth. This will improve the quality of life of residents across the Lincoln City and Rural Lincolnshire. It will mean that public services intervene proactively through a deeper understanding of household-level needs, equipped with the resources and capabilities to deliver tailored support.



## 10.1.1 Lincoln City

**An early intervention and prevention approach in Lincoln City should prioritise housing stability, youth engagement, and digital inclusion. Given the pressures on the housing market and the concentration of homelessness support services in the city centre, there is a clear need for upstream interventions such as tenancy sustainment, enforcement in the private rental sector, and the development of affordable housing options.**

Lincoln City's younger demographic calls for targeted support around school attendance, mental health, and pathways into employment to prevent long-term disconnection. Addressing digital exclusion is also critical, particularly in the city's most deprived neighbourhoods, such as Minster, Glebe, Castle and Park, where access to online services and opportunities remains limited. Services should be designed to strengthen community resilience by improving navigation support, expanding the role of voluntary and community organisations, and ensuring residents can access help before reaching crisis point. To enable this, investment in shared data infrastructure and workforce

alignment is essential, allowing services to identify risk early and respond in a coordinated, proactive manner.

At an operational level, cross-council expertise should be joined up and co-located. There are already strong examples of early intervention and prevention practice across the current City of Lincoln footprint that should be preserved within a two-unitary model. Effective partnership and neighbourhood working are currently concentrated in areas near the city centre supported by a well-regarded network of community connectors. Multi-agency teams are actively addressing street-related issues, through regular case meetings that assess vulnerability and respond to local needs and contexts, bringing together staff from the VCSE, DWP and other community partners.

Developing a singular pathway will also enable a single view of residents and enable the join up of public protection, homelessness prevention, safeguarding, welfare, neighbourhood services, community outreach, tenancy sustainment, Early Help, public health, community safety, neighbourhood and family support to achieve better outcomes.

## City of Lincoln Council | Partnership working with VCSE

**City of Lincoln Council currently works with a number of different community/voluntary organisations:**

Delivering Household Support Fund in Lincoln – meeting a whole host of diverse community groups and needs, relating largely to food and energy support (but also wider essential items – e.g. working with Lincoln Hygiene Bank). We have successfully helped residents move away from a reliance upon foodbank through (initially funded) community grocery usage, and accessing wraparound support (e.g. employment skills, debt/budget advice, social isolation, warm spaces).

Meeting food/energy advice support -by working with a local library community hub open on Wednesday evenings and Saturday mornings, to help working residents access this support.

Supporting GoGro's 'Chop Chat & Change' initiative - (GoGro CIC - Chop, Chat & Change) which helps to reduce social isolation, promotes healthy low-cost eating, with food packages produced being transferred to Lincoln Community Grocery – these are extremely popular and fly off the shelves!

Provision of a Community Grocery – a need for specific foodstuffs for ethnic groups was identified and an 'International Foods' section is now in place.

Lincoln City Foundation – working on food/energy support, to meet a range of community groups at their 'Extra Time Hub' sessions.

The council is continually seeking other voluntary sector partners to meet cohorts/individuals who may not routinely present at the Council for a whole host of reasons (e.g. a very recent partner is Veterans Support Service).



## 10.1.2 Rural Lincolnshire

**With an ageing population concentrated in areas such as East Lindsey, South Kesteven, and South Holland, and high levels of deprivation in areas including Gainsborough, Friskney, Wainfleet, and Skegness among others, services must be designed to address economic inactivity, social isolation, and limited access to healthcare. Poor transport infrastructure and long travel distances to work and medical appointments further exacerbate these issues, particularly in East Lindsey and South Holland.**

The Early Intervention and Prevention model should therefore focus on improving local accessibility to services, enhancing digital and transport connectivity, and delivering targeted support for older residents and isolated communities through community-based outreach and integrated service provision.

The early intervention and prevention-led model will unify services previously split between county and borough councils, creating a single, coordinated route into early support. A prevention-led offer will bring together community engagement, public protection, health and safety, homelessness prevention, wellbeing, telecare, early help, and public health expertise.

They will work across the unitary with VCSE partners around local hubs to jointly offer services to those facing difficulties and conduct needs assessments. These hubs will be supported by mobile outreach teams serving villages and coastal settlements, establishing a “no wrong door” approach that simplifies access to support in familiar, local settings. The model will also connect residents to community and peer support, strengthen social relationships, and ensure households have the information and assistance needed to manage finances into older age.

Addressing digital exclusion will be critical, with targeted programmes to improve access and literacy, enabling residents to engage with services, employment, and community networks.

Below is an illustration of how the innovative early intervention and prevention pathway will support residents to secure positive outcomes for them, compared to the current traditional delivery approach.



Figure 12: Early intervention and prevention pen portraits  
A more detailed explanation of this pen portrait is included in **Appendix B.1**.

## 10.2 Housing Services

**The two new unitary authorities' model would deliver improved services through bringing together a wide range of services into a comprehensive, system-wide solution, which would support the move to a more prevention-focused model. This new model would be responsible for housing delivery with improved data on future demand to inform local housing delivery plans.**

In respect of Homelessness and Rough Sleeping, our vision for a two unitary structure would see these housing-related services rooted in prevention, building on examples of good practice that are well established and embedded across Lincolnshire. Operating statutory homelessness over two unitary councils, on footprints more aligned to the demand and seasonal changes would provide the opportunity to have a stronger preventative approach to deliver efficiencies and increased resilience with more specialised teams aligned to demand. Currently, across Lincolnshire, the city council and six district councils administer the Rough Sleeper Grant and Homelessness Prevention Grant independently. Although the District Councils recognise the need to collaborate to deliver the best outcomes, which see a shared countywide coordination post. Typically, each council develops its own strategies to reduce rough sleeping and submits individual bids and grant claims. As a result, there are different approaches and response teams of varying sizes. This proposal seeks to establish a more coordinated approach focussing on prevention, addressing local challenges more effectively and implementing targeted strategies for the long-term solutions particularly for, hard-to-reach groups of long-term rough sleepers.

Extending the concept of housing as a lever for prevention, it is well established that access to high-quality, safe, and affordable homes contributes to positive outcomes particularly in relation to health; both mental and physical.

### 10.2.1 Lincoln City

**Lincoln is a fast-growing and ambitious city – home to a thriving knowledge ecosystem and boasting a rich cultural and historical identity. However, like many other cities, it is also a place of stark contrasts, where spaces of innovation and growth sit alongside concentrated deprivation and poor health.** It contains two universities which drives impacts on the availability of larger rental accommodation, in addition to the historic areas of the city having high house prices. The private rental market has seen prices increase by 53% since 2015. Due to Lincoln City's status as an economic hub and university centre, there is significant potential to spearhead housing reform, support urban development, and effectively address local challenges such as the provision of affordable housing.

For Lincoln City, the opportunity of LGR is to build on what works locally and extend it across a functional geography. This will enable the city to have the right tools to align housing, health, skills and infrastructure, allowing the city to better address the root causes of

These outcomes are the platform for further social benefits such as reduced crime rates, increased civic engagement, decreased unemployment, improved health, and better school attainment and attendance. These benefits are numerous and wide-ranging. Facilitating seamless collaboration with Adult Social Care (ASC), Children's Social Care (CSC), Care Leavers services, Public Health (including better Disabled Facilities Grants spending), and being able to engage constructively with Integrated Care Boards (ICBs), Lincolnshire Partnership NHS Foundation Trust (LPFT - Mental Health), Lincolnshire Police, Probation, and other partners will foster a coordinated system response. This approach is expected to yield significantly better outcomes and more cost-effective service delivery. Housing is also an important lever for supporting our significant veterans and armed forces community. Greater Lincolnshire as a whole has over 160,000 people connected to the armed forces, of which over 44,000 are veterans. A considered and bespoke approach to understanding the issues at the various key points of their journey will be essential to providing the right support.

Whilst the two areas have differing housing pressures the ethos of the new model will be consistent across the two authorities, whilst allowing for a more tailored approach responding to the different levels of demand and complexity of need. A key focus will be targeted growth on the delivery of quality affordable housing. In terms of private sector housing, the service will work with private sector housing functions to drive good quality private sector homes, critical to meeting the housing demand across Lincolnshire. In line with the corporate focus on prevention, this service will work in close collaboration with the social housing landlord functions to manage any further increases in stock.

poor outcomes, support growth in high-value sectors and become truly preventative. Connecting services to people in a way that is personal and tailored to the unique needs of Lincoln is at the heart of this proposal.

The proposed model of service delivery would align homelessness, housing teams and commissioned services (e.g. Wellbeing Lincs which supports adults across Lincolnshire to achieve independent living) into a prevention focused model while preserving the social landlord function to provide a responsive service to tenants.

This service would:

- ▶ Improve the integration of homelessness and housing services into a new way of working with agreed pathways focusing on prevention and multi-disciplinary working. This will support a reduction in the level of homelessness; the number of residents being placed in temporary accommodation and reduce the number of people waiting for permanent accommodation.



- ▶ Utilise Lincoln City's HRA and landlord infrastructure to manage, maintain and increase stock across the unitary, including much needed additional one-bed homes and driving up standards for the private rental sector (PRS).
- ▶ Strengthen private rental sector (PRS) management through selective and additional HMO licensing.

- ▶ Use a blended development approach: in house, and partnership delivery with local housing development companies to meet the need for increased stock in high demand areas and stimulate growth, especially in fringe urban areas.

## 10.2.2 Rural Lincolnshire

Rural Lincolnshire covers a large geographical area with a mix of rural and coastal areas with housing markets dominated by owner occupiers. Rural Lincolnshire's profile, from deprivation hotspots to rural isolation and coastal market pressures, needs a local, place-based response. The unitary would join up services through early help hubs, outreach, and existing landlord capacity, keeping delivery close to communities and tailored to local markets, while using integration and scale to improve consistency and efficiency.

Key local market towns including Boston form an integral part of Greater Lincolnshire's housing and economic landscape. The presence of military bases, particularly near RAF bases, has a notable impact on housing demand and market dynamics. However, current Local Plans are providing approximately 25% less housing growth than is required, creating a shortfall that risks constraining local development and economic potential. Aligning housing priorities more closely with transport and infrastructure frameworks will be essential to support sustainable growth.

An ageing population with 25.2% of residents in Rural Lincolnshire aged 65 and over, further influences housing needs, requiring a greater diversity of accommodation types and tenure options. The region also faces challenges linked to housing utilisation, with 8% of dwellings recorded as unoccupied in 2021 compared to the England average of 6%, up from just 4% in 2011. This trend is exacerbated by the growth in second homes and holiday lets, particularly in coastal areas.

Additionally, the lower share of social rented housing compared with both regional and national levels highlight a shortage of affordable housing, and the need for reform to deliver a more balanced, accessible, and responsive local housing system.

The Rural Lincolnshire unitary would bring homelessness and housing (allocations / private sector) together in a prevention-focused model. Social Landlord services will continue to be a separate and specialist function. This will enable a focus on:

- ▶ Prevention and multi-disciplinary working, with housing officers located in community hubs and mobile outreach teams to reach residents earlier to support with the needs assessment and triage processes.
- ▶ A consistent allocations policy across the unitary, directly allocating homes to best use social stock and ease homelessness pressures.
- ▶ Promoting access to more quality private sector rentals which in turn will ease homelessness and housing register growth.
- ▶ An expanded HRA and landlord infrastructure to manage and maintain stock across the unitary.
- ▶ Targeted development growth in one-bed and 4+ bed homes, including adapted homes to enable ageing in place.
- ▶ Aligned development companies to deliver housing that matches needs across the new unitary area.
- ▶ Explore the use of the Second Homes Council Tax Premium earned through large numbers of second homes on the provision of social housing investment.

These opportunities are only possible through unitarisation, bringing together the scale, data, and decision-making authority needed to design housing solutions that reflect Rural Lincolnshire's unique pressures and deliver earlier, more effective support.



## 10.3 Adult Social Care

The two-unitary authority model presents the most effective approach to achieving the vision for delivering a prevention focused approach to Adult Social Care across the Lincoln City and Rural Lincolnshire footprint. This model supports a locally focused, person-centred approach to care, one that reflects the distinct demand, cost pressures, and community characteristics within each of the two proposed unitary areas. Service delivery would be grounded in a detailed understanding of Lincolnshire's communities, drawing on local strengths, assets, and challenges, and underpinned by strong partnership working with community organisations and the NHS.

This vision aligns closely with the Government's 10-Year Health Plan, emphasising community-based support, the use of digital innovation to promote wellbeing, and a strong focus on prevention. Building on the valuable role that Lincolnshire's district councils already play in tackling health inequalities, the move toward neighbourhood-level working would be better enabled through a more localised unitary structure. This would allow for more integrated, place-based service delivery, including the co-location of teams to strengthen joint working. Within Adult Social Care, this approach would support closer collaboration to prevent hospital admissions, embedding multi-disciplinary, early intervention, and prevention-based models that respond effectively to Lincolnshire's specific health and care needs.

Building upon the existing 'Working for a Better Future' strategy held at county level with a strategic vision focused on strengthening services for vulnerable people, simplifying interactions for residents, and saving taxpayer money by avoiding duplication. The two new unitary authorities will focus on community resilience and local knowledge of the residents, to enable service delivery that is connected to their communities, and that places co-production at the centre of service delivery.

The current county level service has been noted by the Care Quality Commission (CQC) as providing 'Good' services, with marked areas of strength. However, there were areas of improvement identified. These included clearer pathways for autistic people, the development of improved pathways for young people in transition to adult services, the implementation of care plans and additional Extra Care housing schemes, as well as bespoke options for people with complex needs.

While maintaining consistent service delivery models across Lincoln City and Rural Lincolnshire, the proposed two-unitary authority structure will enable each authority to tailor services to the specific needs of their local populations. Central to this model is strengthened partnership working, particularly with the local Integrated Care Board (ICB), to build upon existing positive relationships and further embed neighbourhood-based approaches. The proposal seeks to retain and enhance the collaborative work already underway with the ICB, including the successful discharge initiatives that have improved patient flow and outcomes. As the ICB undergoes significant transformation, the two unitary authorities would work jointly to commission services that operate across geographic boundaries, ensuring a coordinated approach and reducing the risk of localised competition for placements. This integrated approach would support consistency, efficiency, and equitable access to care across the whole of Lincolnshire.

The diagram below presents a comprehensive overview of the functions, indicating those assigned to the two unitaries, those managed by the new Adults service, and those delivered collaboratively with other departments. Existing county-wide partnerships where there is a strong case for continuing (e.g. the Adults Safeguarding Board) will be retained to bring together statutory and non-statutory organisations and support these through their connection to a more localised service delivery model. Market sustainability will be addressed through a joint commissioning function. To support children transitioning into Adults, there will be a dedicated Preparing for Adulthood team which will work collaboratively with children from the age of 14.

### Functions delivered in partnership across the two Unitary Authorities



### Functions delivered by each Unitary's Adult's Social Care Service



### Functions delivered in collaboration between ASC Service and Other Departments



Figure 13: Functions of the future ASC model

### 10.3.1 Lincoln City

Lincoln City's adult population presents a distinct set of challenges for adult social care compared to the wider Lincolnshire area. While only 19.8% of residents are aged 65 and over, reflecting a younger and more working-age demographic, partly due to the influence of the university, the city still faces increasing demand for both preventative and long-term support services. Workforce recruitment and retention pressures, along with the growing complexity of needs, place additional strain on service delivery. Within the urban area, issues such as loneliness among older residents and higher-than-average hospital admissions highlight the need for timely, community-based interventions that promote independence and prevent escalation of care needs. Strengthening existing partnerships and integration between health, social care, universities and voluntary sector partners will be key to addressing these pressures, alongside ensuring that Lincoln City's care market remains sustainable and equipped to meet diverse and changing local demand. This covers supporting older people, but also our younger student and working-age population.

### 10.3.2 Rural Lincolnshire

Rural Lincolnshire, home to the largest population within the county, has the highest number of both working age and older adults across all areas of social care provision. This demographic profile creates significant demand that also presents a clear opportunity to design and deliver services differently, prioritising more cost-effective, enabling models such as home care, reablement, and supported living. By shifting focus towards helping residents remain independent in their own communities, the structure can achieve better outcomes and greater financial sustainability.

Current projections indicate a need for approximately 759 specialist homes for older people each year, excluding traditional care home provision. In addition, there are substantial pressures in districts such as East Lindsey, where an estimated 13,108 households require adaptations or newly built accessible housing to meet the needs of residents with disabilities. These figures underscore the importance of integrated planning between social care, housing, and health to ensure that Rural Lincolnshire's future provision is both inclusive and responsive to local demand.

The social care offer will build on the city's established strengths in innovation, partnership working, and community resilience to promote independence across all age groups. A strong focus will be placed on short-term, reablement-based support and on creating meaningful employment pathways that help residents live fulfilling, independent lives.

The city is well positioned to lead a transformative approach to accommodation for older adults, as well as for people with learning disabilities and mental health needs, shifting the emphasis from costly residential placements to supported, community-based living. A priority is to expand supported living options for older adults in Lincoln City, which currently supports a very small cohort and could have a sizeable impact on costs. By strengthening alignment between Adult Social Care and Housing, Lincoln City can take a proactive, data-driven approach to planning future accommodation needs, ensuring that provision is sustainable, evidence-based, and capable of meeting demand effectively.

The new unitary should consider how it can develop more bespoke local methods of support particularly tailored to meet the needs of residents in rural areas to tackle risks around isolation and long stretches of time spent travelling to physical support services.

According to Newton analysis, Rural Lincolnshire will see a 15% increase in demand for nursing and residential care by 2040, based upon the current model of service delivery. Future models of care should include considering how technology can play a greater role in supporting the maintenance of relationships and enable self-management of conditions with remote monitoring.

As part of the new unitary authorities' approach to service delivery and market management, there is an opportunity to review the comparatively very low use of specialist housing for older adults and a focus on enabling people to live and age well at home with community-based support.

## 10.4 Children's Social Care

**The two-unitary model will deliver Children's Social Care services across Lincoln City and Rural Lincolnshire through a shared service model with one authority acting as the 'host' under a formal shared services agreement or delegation. This delivery model will provide service delivery continuity, retention of the outstanding county-led Children's service, whilst providing an opportunity to further deliver on improvement areas – ensuring all children have an equal opportunity to grow up in a safe, stable and loving environment to achieve their potential.**

Lincolnshire County Council delivers an outstanding, nationally recognised children's social care service that has supported other authorities including North-East Lincolnshire to design and deliver their improvement journey in their capacity as Sector-Led Improvement Partners. The service has also closely collaborated with the DfE on early adoption of children's reforms as participants on the Families First for Children Pathfinder program – the learnings from this pilot have shaped national policy and county's insights will be used to inform national rollout of reforms.

However, areas of improvement remain centred on care leavers to promote their welfare, progress and safety, and national children's social care challenges remain. These include placement sufficiency shortages despite LCC possessing in-house provision, and budgetary challenges which are exacerbated by rising demand and complexity of needs in children and young people – this phenomenon has been described by a local councillor as the 'perfect storm'. The impact of these pressures is evident as Lincolnshire County Council's Children's Service has increased its use of unregistered children's home placements which led to the council spending £992k on two children in 2024/25.

This necessitates an innovative and refreshed approach to fine-tune the service and ensure it is future-proof, financially sustainable and responsive to evolving demand which continues to rise despite a core service focus and investment in early intervention. Lincolnshire County Council have recognised the risk that under current funding arrangements and rising demand pressures, services could reach a point where their focus shifts from providing early intervention to crisis response. The estimated budget net expenditure on cared for children alone has risen from £58.07m in 2024/25 to £70.64m in 2025/26.

To ensure this risk does not continue to escalate in the future, it is critical to recognise that children's social care services are most effective when they do not work in isolation. Joint working and integration across local services to coordinate responses to meet the needs of children and families is core to proactive demand management.

The establishment of Lincoln City and Rural Lincolnshire to realise this vision through embedding place-based partnerships as the default way of working across

both unitaries - delivering tangible service and system improvement through engagement with communities and predicating service design on their voices.

This will create a heightened focus on root causes contributing to family breakdown to intervene holistically as upstream as possible to prevent escalation into statutory care, strengthen integration between children's and adult services, make best use of financial resources and drive oversight and service quality. Place-based organisations are proven to support the quality and sustainability of local services.

Children's social care will be pivotal to the place-making agenda as children's wellbeing, safety and life chances are directly impacted by the places they inhabit. The two unitary proposal provides an opportunity to enhance integration across core council functions including housing, planning and regeneration to better reflect social care requirements across placemaking priorities and local economic development strategies. This will place emphasis on key place-making dimensions including the interface between social care and the built environment and economic inclusion.

Reducing socio-economic inequalities is a critical priority across the footprint as child poverty is a persistent issue across Lincolnshire, with a steady increase in children living in relative poverty – figures are highest in Boston (30.8%), Lincoln (30.5%) and East Lindsey (30.4%). The UK Government's Social Mobility Commission also rated Lincolnshire County Council in the middle group across three out of the four measures that constitute their definition of social mobility, including promising prospects, conditions of childhood and labour market opportunities for young people.

This socio-economic landscape means limited job opportunities for young people, especially care leavers, and poor child health outcomes. Deprivation is strongly correlated to many disadvantages, including experiencing fuel poverty which increases risk of children developing lifelong physical health implications, as well as lowered educational attainment – creating an intergenerational cycle of poverty. Household poverty and material deprivation are also linked to higher rates of child protection investigations and care entries.

This model is therefore best placed to address current barriers faced by children and families. The proposal will unlock bespoke housing solutions, drive inclusive economic growth to alleviate child-poverty, ensure that prevention is everyone's priority across the footprint and further develop social care services in areas where they are needed the most - configured to local needs across Lincoln City and Rural Lincolnshire to reduce inequalities.

The shared service model will remain flexible in relation to designing bespoke functions and services predicated on the needs profile of children and families in each unitary.

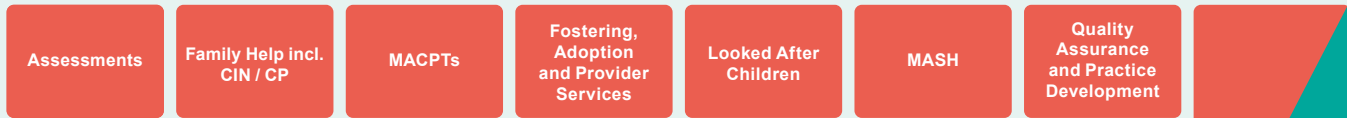




## Functions delivered in partnership across 3UAs



## Functions delivered by each Unitary's Children's Social Care Service



## Functions delivered in collaboration between CSC Service and Other Departments

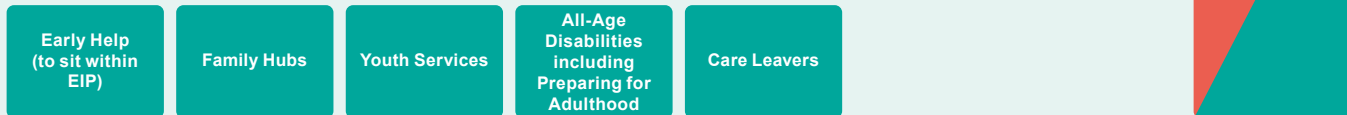


Figure 14: Functions of the future ASC model

### 10.4.1 Lincoln City

On vesting day Lincoln City will inherit 34% of the overall cared for children population currently overseen by Lincolnshire County Council. Despite the lower number of cared for children, Lincoln City will represent 45% of residential placements across the two unitaries. Whilst numbers of children and young people in residential care currently only represent 9.4% of the total cared for children across the county - expenditure on this type of provision has increased year-on-year from £15.76m in 2022/23 to £28.71m in 2024/25.

Lincoln City will continue to design and deliver a service offer that is tailored to meet the needs of a densely populated urban city. Residents in Lincoln have struggled with increasing housing prices which are up 4% in 2025 compared to the previous year – the city is also experiencing high levels of deprivation including income inequality and unequal access to education and high-quality housing. This has contributed to more residents requiring council housing as working households are getting priced out of the private market. Like other urban geographies, Lincoln City is experiencing an increase in youth crime and rates of violence and sexual offences which are significantly higher than most other local authority districts in East Midlands.

Evidence suggests that a combination of any of these factors can lead to care entries, including deprivation which is a major preventable driver – child poverty driven from low family income and material deprivation places unnecessary strain on families, increasing the risk of children being neglected or abused and ending up in the care system. Emotional abuse (11%) and neglect (83%) are the two key categories of abuse assigned to child protection plans across Lincolnshire.

Lincolnshire has a higher number of children in need compared to the mean number for East Midlands (ADASS Region) authorities, however, has fewer children subject to child protection plans. These performance trends are indicative of Lincolnshire's significant investment across early help services – Lincolnshire County Council's revenue allocation for 2024/25 committed £20.18m to family support services.

Lincoln City's prevention pathway will be critical to proactively providing the holistic support offer families need to prevent breakdown at the earliest possible point, using predictive analytics to capture vulnerabilities prevalent in urban geographies including households experiencing rent arrears.

### 10.4.2 Rural Lincolnshire

The data on Rural Lincolnshire like Lincoln City, shows a correlation between deprivation and care entries, as areas with higher overall percentages of relative and absolute child poverty including South Kesteven, East Lindsey and Boston form 67% of the total cared for population across Rural Lincolnshire.

On vesting day Rural Lincolnshire will be responsible for 66% of the total cared for children population. Children's service delivery across the unitary needs to focus on addressing the fundamental challenges in relation to provision of services that arise across a sparse and rural geography. The place-making agenda needs to provide the core enablers to improve service delivery, including meeting the housing needs across urban and rural locations in Lincolnshire, improving road and transport infrastructure and boosting employment.



The early intervention and prevention hubs will focus on addressing the diverse needs of dispersed communities across Rural Lincolnshire through developing tailored support offers based on hyper local insights. Staff will be deeply embedded within communities, operating on the principle of proactive outreach to improve resident outcomes. This will include designing pathways that pull in all relevant services that address existing operational trends; there is

an increase in younger care entrants across Lincolnshire and cared for children requiring mental health support.

Lincoln City and Rural Lincolnshire will need to collaborate closely to develop and shape the market to address sufficiency challenges across the footprint – particularly focusing on independent suppliers to provide children with effective placements.

## 10.5 Special educational Needs & Disabilities (SEND) and education

**The national SEND system has not successfully delivered improved outcomes for children and young people and is financially unsustainable contributing to many councils being on the brink of bankruptcy. This scenario has been temporarily prevented by extension of the dedicated schools grant statutory override to March 2028. Nonetheless, whilst UK Government develop changes to funding formulas to better reflect the demand levels of SEND services and a blueprint for system reform - local authorities across the country need to urgently deliver a local response to tackle rising demand and cost, capacity shortfalls and systemic strain.**

To this end, Lincolnshire County Council have successfully completed the implementation of the *Building Communities of Specialist Provision* Capital Programme, to create an integrated system where an increase in capacity and capability means pupils can attend their nearest school and be confident that their needs will be met. Additionally, several other improvement initiatives have been delivered consisting of £7m invested in special needs hubs across the county and a recent shared transport initiative has driven £2.5m in savings.

Despite the positive impact realised across the local SEND system from these innovations - SEND expenditure remains a significant strategic risk to the council. Service cost pressures in 2024/25 have been primarily exacerbated by an increase in the number of children with SEND and demand for specialist placements; linked to a rise in home to school transport costs – the county experienced an additional £5.55m cost increase for Home to School Transport in 2025/26. This leaves children and young people frequently travelling long distances to access specialist support that is not consistently available to all schools across the county.

The SEND capital delivery programme has expanded the special school estate by 527 additional places and notable enhanced facilities. However, due to the exponential growth in SEND demand both nationally and locally, spaces are filled instantly, meaning that the programme has not been sufficient to meet special school demand. The authority anticipates it needs a further 700 special school places within the next three years and is forecast to spend £22m over its budget on special needs provision. The county has also outlined there is increasingly limited

scope to drive efficiencies against a forecasted increase in cost pressures – requiring solutions on a local level.

The Ofsted inspection for SEND children highlighted improvement is required to address inconsistent experiences and outcomes for the cohort. Key areas of improvement identified included the quality of EHC Plans, waiting times for some specialist services, insufficient information for parents to access and navigate the partnership's local offer and identifying children with SEND in primary schools, to embed support early and avoid current high levels of exclusion for this cohort.

Permanent exclusions across Lincolnshire are more than double pre-Covid figures - placing unsustainable pressure on the availability of Alternative Provision in the county. Lincolnshire had a permanent exclusion rate for SEN pupils of 0.58% in 2023/24, significantly higher than the mean for all English county local authorities (0.43%). It is acknowledged that the authority has developed a second phase of their SEND capital programme to address these issues. Nonetheless, these poor outcomes require a systemic system change and transformation journey to meet future needs.

The creation of Lincoln City and Rural Lincolnshire unitary authorities provides an opportunity to best deliver the necessary operational and infrastructure improvements to ensure Lincolnshire's SEND system is fit for the future - a system that can cope with forecasted demand with the robustness to adapt to the potential influx in migration due to economic development. The proposal will deliver on this ambition as it is predicated on a commitment to enhance and develop new infrastructure. Urban extensions will be the location of key facilities such as schools, to ensure they are within easy walking and cycling distance of most properties, supported by high-quality public transport including bus corridors.

The establishment of two unitaries will unlock school and infrastructure building capacity across Lincolnshire through greater alignment between key strategies and functions, including housing, planning, economic development and transport. Expanded boundaries will unlock land availability and accelerate development of suitable provision to enhance school attendance amongst children with SEND. It will also create planning



flexibility to ensure responsiveness to evolving SEND demand and place education infrastructure planning at the heart of delivery ambitions for inclusive growth.

This proposal also creates the conditions to strengthen the SEND Local Area Partnership through a core focus on place-based partnerships, enabling strategic coordination across the footprint whilst retaining co-located multi-agency locality teams. This will create deeper integration, greater alignment on joint priorities and adoption of a whole-system approach that enables responsiveness to the scale and types of needs in both unitaries – helping to better manage existing SEND system design challenges for all partners to deliver on a shared ambition. For example, current legislation means ICBs are legally required to have a SEN executive lead but only

two of their 32 competing priorities relate to SEN. Similarly, schools can be incentivised to exclude SEND pupils however this is in direct conflict with the local authorities' duty to find placements for children that deliver value for money.

The county council have made it clear that doing nothing is not an option. Our proposal provides an opportunity to maintain and build on the existing SEND structure to better drive value for money and consistent outcomes for children. This includes investment into improved data systems and sharing to develop the intelligence required to further enable data-driven commissioning across both unitaries - creating the conditions to realise benefits from upcoming Government SEND reforms that will focus on early support, local provision and partnerships to develop sustainable SEND systems.

### Functions delivered in partnership across 2UAs



### Functions delivered by each Unitary's Children's Social Care Service



### Functions delivered in collaboration between CSC Service and Other Departments



and brokerage

Figure 15: Functions of the future ASC model

The proposal outlines a vision for education founded on collaboration and efficient service delivery throughout Lincoln City and Rural Lincolnshire. By promoting a shared service model for Children's Social Care and Education, the proposal seeks to ensure a consistent and high-quality experience for all pupils across the two new unitary authorities. This unified approach is intended to maintain standards and continuity, supporting both mainstream education and the needs of all children.

This proposal acknowledges the significance of coordinating education planning and aligning education infrastructure, housing, planning and economic development. The proposed boundaries of the new unitary authorities will help unlock land and accelerate the development of suitable school provision that is supported by suitable public transport. Additionally, the proposal recognises the importance of integrating education and children's services with housing and regeneration to address social care requirements, support inclusive economic growth and ensure that education provision is responsive to the distinct needs of Lincoln City and Rural Lincolnshire.



## 10.6 Place

**Place-based services such as Planning, Highways, Leisure and Culture amongst others have a fundamental role in ‘placemaking’ – shaping areas and neighbourhoods into spaces that are great to live, work and visit.**

LGR presents a big opportunity to fundamentally transform the way these place-based services are delivered so that they meet the needs of the distinct communities in each new unitary area. Services can be brought under the control of a single organisation in each area so that they are coordinated and aligned to provide tailored delivery that meets the local needs of their neighbourhoods, particularly in the case of providing a focal point for communities and co-locating different support to improve accessibility.

In the case of Heritage, Culture and Leisure, tailoring service delivery in each area could further promote Lincoln City’s heritage offer, and the coastal and rural character of Rural Lincolnshire - boosting their visitor economies.

There are also opportunities to bring together in each area closely related services. For example, Planning, Building Control and Highways (including the Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA) role), Registrars and Bereavement (Cemeteries & Crematoria) services, Parking and Public Transport, and a whole range of Regulatory and Public Protection services (e.g. Anti-Social behaviour, Licencing, Trading Standards, Food Health & Safety, etc.).

This creates a substantial opportunity to support new housebuilding and growth, simplifying and speeding up development delivery by combining into each new unitary all the planning, LLFA and highway development management functions, the separation of which currently significantly hampers growth. The amalgamation of these functions also supports the ability to understand, effectively respond to and work to improve the resilience of our communities in relation to flood related events and the impact of climate

change more widely. The close links with the Mayoral County Combined Authority responsibilities around strategic transport will need to be factored into the future design of the unitaries’ Highways & Transport functions.

Future service models are complicated by the fact that several of those services currently run by the county council are wholly or partially outsourced – specifically Highways, Waste Treatment and Disposal, and Libraries. In addition, some Waste Collection, Street Scene, Leisure services and Crematoria are outsourced by some district councils.

There are also some alternative delivery models being used for district place-based services. South Kesteven has already set up a shared Building Control service with other district and borough councils, outside of Lincolnshire. East Lindsey has a LATCO (Magna Vitae) that delivers Leisure services on its behalf. In addition, some Crematorium services are outsourced, and Lincoln outsources Waste Collection and Street Scene.

Most services can be aggregated and delivered in-house, however there are some exceptions of those services transferring from the county council. The two unitaries will need to agree interim arrangements for Waste Treatment & Disposal, Highways and Libraries, whilst the existing contracts are still in place. In these cases the two unitary councils will operate as a shared services whilst reviewing each service to develop a plan for its long-term future. For the interim model although Highways will run jointly, each unitary will take a place-based perspective on local operations. There will also need to be close links to the MCCA as it has a strategic transport role.

The two unitaries service radically different geographies and populations, which require very different service delivery for those place-based services such as Planning, Waste and Street Scene. The future services will reflect the unique context, challenges and needs of each new unitary.

## 10.6.1 Lincoln City

Lincoln City services will support a more urban, densely populated area with a substantially different demography and economy to the rest of Lincolnshire, that faces challenges and opportunities akin to other cities in the UK. Lincoln City comprises a central urban area with a destination city centre, surrounded by a network of villages that form part of Lincoln's recognised functional economic housing market and transport areas.

This will influence how council services will need to be set up to support the area. For example, Planning will assess more complex planning applications that require careful consideration of denser urban environment, space constraints (that may affect waste collection services) and heritage and conservation impacts.

Lincoln City also has a wealth of heritage and culture assets, providing an important draw for tourists all year round. A unitary responsible for managing them all would allow for better coordination and joint working (e.g. shared ticketing, cross promotion) that could further boost the city as an attractive tourism destination and driving growth in the visitor economy.

Management of both Leisure facilities and Libraries provides some economies of scale and feeds into the

opportunity to maximise value for money and impact. It also allows Lincoln City to reconfigure these services to serve the wider community to provide 'third spaces' for neighbourhoods to live, socialise and access support.

The City of Lincoln already manages some of these services (e.g. Waste Collection, Street Scene) through an outsourced supplier and there is flexibility in the contract to cover the extended boundaries in the new unitary.

Currently the Central Lincolnshire Local Plan area covers multiple local planning authorities. The new unitary boundary for Lincoln City would mean that the operational elements of planning (i.e. the development management and committee functions) will align with the policy area. This would mean a simpler, more efficient process to encourage and support sustainable development.

Several place-based services (such as maintenance of green spaces) within the larger unitary boundary are managed by Parish Councils. Therefore, the new unitary will need to agree with the parish councils regarding how they will commission these services in the future to gain maximum efficiencies. This will be complemented by the city's already strong track record in looking after its green spaces, demonstrated by four of Lincoln's parks receiving Green Flag awards in 2025.

## 10.6.2 Rural Lincolnshire

Rural Lincolnshire services will support a much more dispersed geography which brings different challenges in terms of transport links and accessibility to services. A place-based approach could build upon the county council's community hub model, drawing in a greater range of council and partner services that reflect the needs of local communities, providing a focal point and improving access through creating 'one stop shops' for residents.

In addition, Rural Lincolnshire will have some unique geographical features that will influence the support provided by place-based services. For example, the unitary will be responsible for protecting areas of outstanding natural beauty (such as the Lincolnshire Wolds National Landscape), supporting the area's key role in national food and energy security, and mitigating the effects of coastal erosion.

The aggregated Leisure, Waste Collection, Planning & Building Control and Regulatory Services will provide significant economies of scale and resilience for Rural Lincolnshire. However, it will need to decide how it might bring together some of the alternative delivery service models it will inherit, in the form of a shared Building Control service and a LATCO to run Leisure.

Given the wide range of existing councils that would form part of Rural Lincolnshire, the new unitary would need to consider how to harmonise services such as Waste Collection, where each existing council has different policies, service standards and offerings (e.g. some offer a trade waste services).





## Case Study | Working together for a safer city centre

There has been a long history of the City Council working with partners to make Lincoln City Centre a safer place for shoppers, visitors and those seeking an enjoyable evening experience. The City Council has convened a range of forums to tackle individual issues, which are also prevalent in many city centres across the country (such as Anti-social behaviour, rough sleeping, illegal drugs, unauthorised delivery vehicles in the pedestrian area) as well as thematic partnerships focused on both the evening economy and daytime economy.

Partners have included Lincolnshire Police, Business Improvement District (Lincoln BIG), both Universities, Bailgate Guild, Future High Street Group, Pubwatch and Lincolnshire County Council.

However, to more effectively coordinate all this activity the city council has worked closely with the police and Lincoln BIG to develop a partnership strategy document and annual activity plan for the city centre. Termed the City Centre Partnership Plan 2025/26, it was launched in June 2025 and has already noted a number of successes that together have helped to retain the city centre as a safe place for people to spend their time. Crime rates are down, anti-social behaviour is reduced, and Lincoln City centre both is and feels a safe place. This plan has been widely communicated raising awareness amongst the business community about what the council and partners are achieving and have been used as the basis to meet our commitments in the latest Home Office/ MHCLG guidance to PCCs and Councils on the 'Winter of Action' in Town Centres.

It is this partnership approach that ensures the core city centre, which is so important in terms of the local economy, the history/heritage of place and that sense of community/ belonging, remains a place that people want to come and spend time.

### Lincoln City

A Lincoln City Unitary would enable:

- ▶ This approach to be expanded. Bringing the Highways, Community Safety, and Public Health functions under the unitary council will enable common priorities for action to be progressed much quicker:
- ▶ A fresh look at how the city centre functions, not just through master plan work but practical changes such as further restricting vehicle movements.
- ▶ Invest is renovating key areas and introducing new features such as greenery to mitigate the impact of climate change and enhance the look and feel of the city centre
- ▶ More effectively deliver services to rough sleepers and those presenting as homeless through joined up package of funding, outreach and supported accommodation.
- ▶ Investment in street furniture that sits with LCC but is looking very tired and is so critical to that feeling of investment in place.
- ▶ Progress on tackling vehicle-based terrorism threats to the city centre (where there has been a particular difference of view on responsibility between district and county).
- ▶ Tackling a wider range anti-social behaviour of concern to local people, such as speeding cyclists in the pedestrian area.

### Rural Lincolnshire

A Rural Lincolnshire would enable this way of working to be adopted wider to enhance other key market towns across Lincolnshire, building on the experience in Lincoln but crucially adapting to local circumstance and concerns, including rural crime.



## 10.7 Growth and Economic Development

**Although Growth and Economic Development will form part of a place-based approach set out in the “Place” section, we think there is merit in highlighting the opportunities that arise from LGR.**

Currently, there are economic development functions at all levels of local and regional government in the current ecosystem. This poses challenges in terms of coordination, communication and potential duplication – especially in relation to the current two-tier system. It should also be noted that the diverse economies across Lincolnshire means that ‘one size fits all’ interventions won’t be successful and that a mix of tailored approaches are required to maximise growth.

In future we propose each unitary has its own Economic Development function that can provide tailored support that meets the unique needs of the clusters and sectors within its boundaries.

### 10.7.1 Lincoln City

Lincoln City is a regional centre with high productivity and growth that is driven by innovation, education and knowledge-intensive employment. It is home to two universities (University of Lincoln and Lincoln Bishop University), Lincoln College, a science and innovation park, and clusters of creative, digital and professional businesses. It also benefits from a highly educated population, and some of the best transport links in the region.

It also faces some challenges in terms of high levels of inequality – there are some very affluent neighbourhoods but also some deprived areas within the city area – and relatively poor health outcomes. These will require a whole-council (Early intervention and prevention-led) approach to tackle, but the unitary’s Economic Development function will

These functions will differ slightly in their focus and priorities, given the different contexts, economies and types of business, industries and clusters that are located within each unitary. The existing Growth Hub is retained in some form, because it can deliver consistent generalist business support that will be valuable across the whole of Greater Lincolnshire and can leverage economies of scale. Through grouping areas with similar context, greater focus on strategies and contexts can be developed.

The Combined County Authority will continue to play a strategic role across the region in attracting inwards investment, supporting skills development and delivering infrastructure projects to make Lincolnshire attractive to businesses.

All key organisations will work closely together to ensure that there is a clear, coherent and strategic approach to fostering inclusive growth, with from the regional to local levels.

need to support access to education, skills and employment opportunities for disadvantaged residents as part of delivering an inclusive economic growth strategy.

The big opportunity for Lincoln City is that it is no longer constrained by the current city council boundaries complicated by a range of differing economic strategies. The wider boundary is more reflective of the current economic area and allows the unitary to unlock growth and housing opportunities with a single coherent strategy and plan utilising all the unitary authority levers along with a voice and a vote at the GLCCA that the current two-tier council arrangement and boundary geography prevents.

## 10.7.2 Rural Lincolnshire

Rural Lincolnshire has longstanding strengths in its agri-food and food manufacturing producing nearly a third of all food grown in the UK. It also has a highly seasonal tourism sector. It is well placed to capitalise upon emerging green energy sectors with its coastline and proximity to the North Sea wind farms.

It faces some challenges due to its dispersed geography and transport links that make it difficult for some residents

to access education and employment opportunities. Furthermore, there is a skills divide in some areas, with high proportions of residents lacking formal qualifications.

At a unitary level Rural Lincolnshire will seek to address these challenges (in partnership with the County Combined Authority) and capitalise upon its unique combination of strengths and opportunities to deliver growth for the area.

## 10.8 Enabling Services

**Enabling services either run key processes to keep front line services operating or enable the organisation to plan and deliver change. These will be integral to supporting the transition to a two-unitary model, and for those unitaries to design and execute successful programmes of public sector reform that realise benefits for Lincolnshire.**

Currently, most enabling services are delivered in-house, but there are some big exceptions; Public Sector Partnership Services Limited is a LATCO (delivering Finance, HR, Procurement and other services) owned by three councils that will form part of Rural Lincolnshire, and the County outsources elements of its HR and Asset Management Services.

Both new unitaries will require, and therefore run, the same range of Enabling Services and adopt a mix of centralised (e.g. Finance, HR, IT & Digital) or hub and spoke models (e.g. Transformation & PMO, Insight). They will have substantially different capacities, given that Rural Lincolnshire is much bigger a unitary than Lincoln City.

We have used conservative estimates of the efficiencies that could be achieved through aggregating Enabling functions across city, district, borough and county councils. These largely align with the earlier work that we had commissioned when we initially explored the LGR options available.

It is worth noting that Boston, East Lindsey and South Holland councils have already merged a portion of their management structures and have established a shared Local Authority Traded Company (Public Sector Partnership Services Limited) that delivers a variety of Enabling services such as Finance, ICT, HR and procurement on their behalf.

We have not had access to the staffing data within PSPSL and therefore have not included them in our modelling, so we anticipate that there will be some additional efficiencies within Enabling services from aggregating the functions that sit within this LATCO.

### 10.8.1 Lincoln City

Lincoln City will run all its enabling services in house, except for any county assets that are managed by a supplier (at least in the short-term, unless contracts can be re-negotiated or terminated without penalties for the unitary(s)).

Lincoln City will be a substantially larger organisation, in terms of range of responsibilities, budgets and workforce – and will therefore require enabling services with a capacity to match the requirements associated with this change.

### 10.8.2 Rural Lincolnshire

Rural Lincolnshire will need to decide whether to expand its LATCO to increase capacity and deliver to a broader range of services or bring it all in house.

Rural Lincolnshire will also be significantly bigger than Lincoln City, and therefore this will need to be reflected in the capacity of its enabling services. Furthermore, if Rural

Lincolnshire does act as the host of a shared Children's Services offer, then this will also require increased capacity of enabling services (relative to Lincoln City) to support the associated large, complex service, with a substantial workforce.



## 10.9 Customer Contact Services

**We have identified a “Customer Contact” function within the unitary operating models. This function is focused on offering residents and businesses the most convenient and efficient means with which to access services.**

It is distinct from Early Intervention Prevention in that it is aimed at users who are largely self-sufficient and only interested in specific services (e.g. pay council tax / rent, apply for planning permission, etc.). Users with more complex circumstances who could benefit from additional support will be quickly identified and triaged to EI&P.

Customer Contact will apply a digital first approach and offer community-based touch points, to maximise ease of access and experience for residents while maximising value for money. It will also seek to harness AI technology and data-led decision-making to improve self-service opportunities and support improved back-office functions. This will be supported by the consistent application of suitable technology, expertise, and skills across all services throughout the council.

## 10.10 Fire & Rescue Services

**Across Greater Lincolnshire, there are two fire and rescue services that service the area. Lincolnshire Fire and Rescue is governed and delivered as a county service, funded by Central Government and council tax precept via Lincolnshire County Council as its parent authority. It provides a wide range of emergency services across Lincolnshire, often in partnership. The Northern Unitaries are covered by Humberside Fire and Rescue, financed through the local authorities of East Riding, Kingston-Upon-Hull, North Lincolnshire and North-East Lincolnshire.**

We are proposing that this currently county-wide Lincolnshire service footprint would be retained under the Lincoln City and Rural Lincolnshire unitary authorities proposal, retaining a combined service and encouraging partnership working on a footprint that is conterminous with the Lincolnshire Police and the Lincolnshire ICB. Our proposal retains existing partnership services, including the tri-service emergency hub

with police and ambulance services, local arrangements for delivering co-responder medical support and the Lincolnshire Resilience Forum. This avoids disruption to the high performing arrangements currently in place. There will also be strong links with each unitary’s early intervention & prevention offers (e.g. community safety, safeguarding). There will be effective and joined-up leadership across operational, tactical and strategic touchpoints, to deliver a coordinated offer.

Similarly, we seek to adopt a shared Local Resilience Forum (LRF) where both unitaries collaborate with category one and two responders. Each unitary may have its own differentiated plan, in preparation for localised incidents and catastrophic emergencies relevant to its area, however they will work as part of the same LRF and with the same partners, in doing so.

As part of the development of the GLCCA, we anticipate that as part of devolution this may take on the statutory fire duty, providing the opportunity to coordinate this service across the entirety of Greater Lincolnshire.



EC  
22  
P2

LINCOLNSHIRE FIRE & RESCUE

KEEP LOOKING WHEN  
COOKING



# Implementation map

Local Government Reorganisation represents the most radical, complex and wide-ranging portfolio of change for local government in Lincolnshire. This will likely represent the biggest initiative for the region since the two unitaries of North East Lincolnshire and North Lincolnshire were established.

## 11.1 Overview

We recognise the delivery challenges that LGR presents and aim to develop a comprehensive and robust, multi-year implementation roadmap to support this. The key stages of our roadmap and milestones are shown in the timeline below.

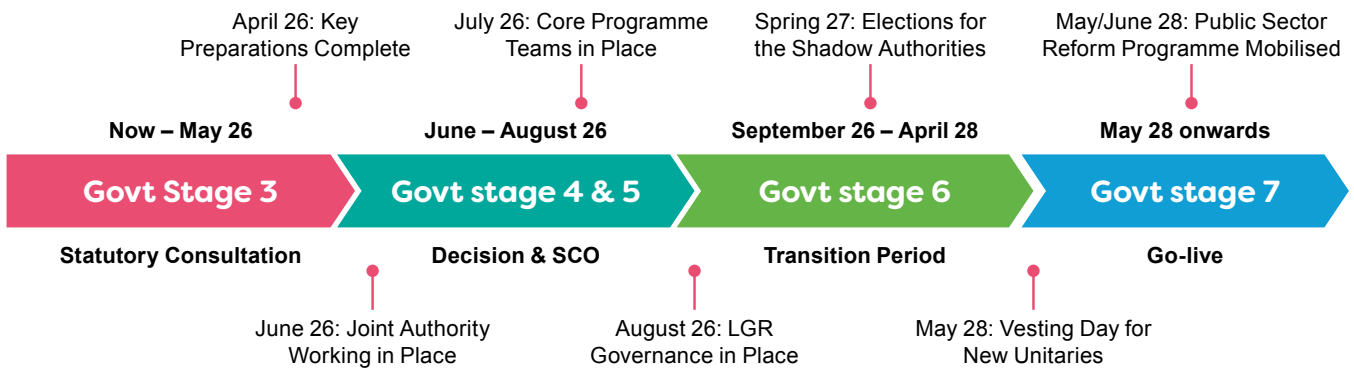


Figure 16: Overview of the implementation roadmap with some key milestones and developments highlighted. We set out the detail of the roadmap in the following sections.





## 11.2 Future state

We anticipate that the new unitary councils will be fundamentally different to the current two-tier system. We have summarised some of the key changes in the diagram below.



Figure 17: Some key features of the future state for each unitary.

All of this entails widespread, fundamental and systemic change – and therefore will need to be supported by a comprehensive and long-term transition and transformation programme.

## 11.3 Implementation roadmap

**Our LGR proposal will require multi-year programmes of transition to two unitary councils and transformation of those organisations to deliver the benefits that we believe it could unlock for Lincolnshire. Our roadmap sets out a long-term, strategic approach to delivery.**

We have broken down our implementation into a series of key stages and workstreams, to help bring structure to what is a very complex programme of work. These are explained below.

Before we set out our roadmap it is important to acknowledge that given the scope, complexity and timescales, there are a wide range of uncertainties and interdependencies, which makes producing a detailed plan impossible. Rather than planning work that is hostage to fortune, we have built in the work to address these as part of our roadmap. For example, we have set out blueprints of what the two unitaries could look like - these will require detailed design, but we will need to secure buy-in and involvement at the start of and during the process from our neighbouring councils and partners; both these activities have been built into our roadmap.

### 11.3.1 Cross-cutting workstreams

**We have identified a set of cross-cutting workstreams that will form a critical part of every project within the delivery roadmap for LGR.**

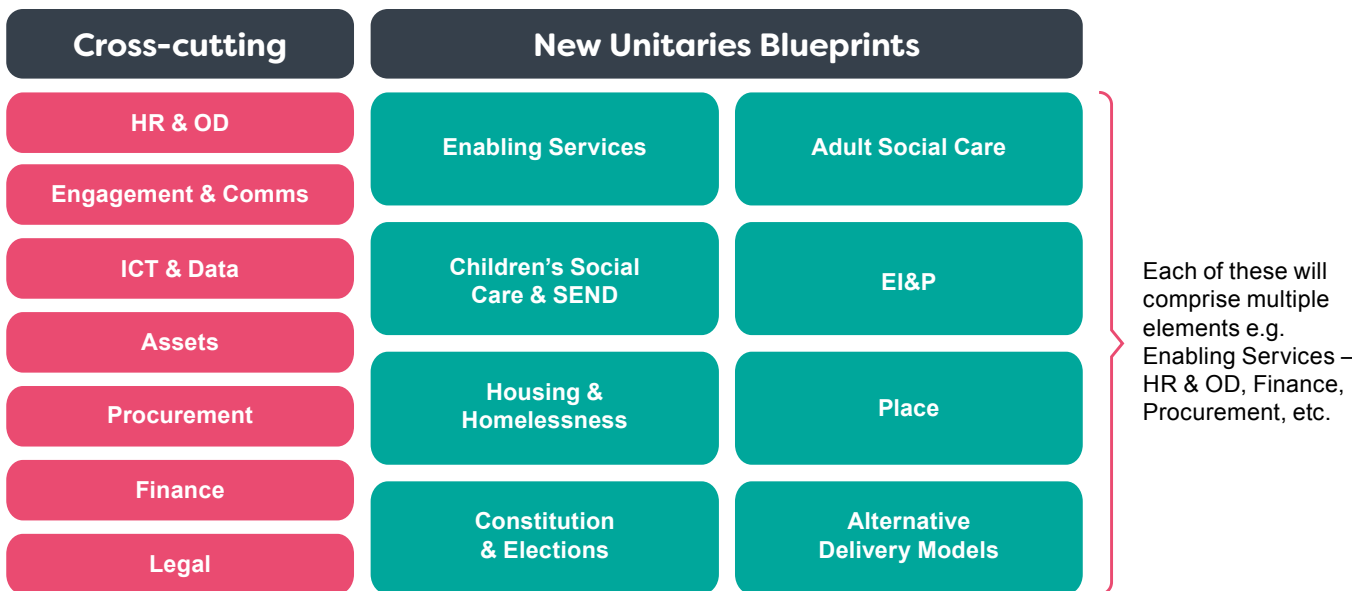


Figure 18: Cross-cutting workstreams and links to wider LGR implementation.

They will be considered and addressed as part of the design, transition and transformation of all services and functions for the two unitaries. These cross-cutting workstreams are set out in the table to the right.

Workstream	Description
Engagement & Comms	<p>Communication and engagement with stakeholders as part of the delivery.</p> <p>This includes internal groups such as members, managers, the wider workforce and union representatives.</p> <p>It also includes external groups such as residents, businesses, suppliers, media, statutory partners (Police, Health, Combined Authority, etc.), and wider partners (e.g. Voluntary and Community Sector).</p>
HR & OD	<p>Supporting our workforce through LGR is essential to ensuring readiness for “safe and legal” unitaries, securing change that sticks, and retaining our talent.</p> <p>This encompasses the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Workforce requirements for the new unitaries</li> <li>▶ Transfer of staff and matching of roles</li> <li>▶ Statutory consultations as part of any change</li> <li>▶ Development clear job descriptions for teams</li> <li>▶ Workforce wellbeing and retention during the transition</li> <li>▶ Any recruitment and redundancy implications</li> </ul>
Finance	<p>This includes the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Disaggregation of budgets and allocation to unitaries</li> <li>▶ Assessing implications of LGR decisions and ensuring long-term financial viability</li> <li>▶ Budget setting processes</li> <li>▶ Budgeting for lifecycle costs of LGR</li> <li>▶ Monitoring and realisation of financial benefits of LGR</li> </ul>
ICT, Data & Digital	<p>We anticipate that data and technology will be key enablers for delivery of services within the new unitaries. It will form part of the design and implementation of every service and function.</p> <p>This encompasses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Data quality and ownership</li> <li>▶ Data transfer and management (including retention and disposal)</li> <li>▶ Use of data to drive decision-making and continuous improvement</li> <li>▶ Information governance and management of associated risks</li> <li>▶ Systems migration / consolidation and decommissioning of legacy systems</li> <li>▶ Use of technology and digital tools to support service delivery</li> </ul>
Procurement	<p>Existing councils and the new unitaries will rely on a network of suppliers to support delivery. We will need to strategically manage existing and future contracts and suppliers as we transition to the two unitary model.</p> <p>This encompasses the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Contract ownership, roles and responsibilities and supplier management</li> <li>▶ Contract novation and assessing associated commitments</li> <li>▶ Contract re-negotiation and re-procurement of goods and services</li> </ul>
Assets	<p>We have identified how services might deliver support to residents and businesses in the blueprint, which will need to be supported through effective use of assets. Each service and function will have specific requirements in relation to assets that will need to form part of a more coherent plan for assets.</p> <p>This encompasses the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Allocation of assets to the new unitaries</li> <li>▶ Strategic approach and plan for assets</li> <li>▶ Acquisitions and disposals</li> <li>▶ Planned capital investments</li> <li>▶ Use of capital receipts to fund LGR</li> </ul>
Legal	<p>Most elements of LGR will have legal implications that will need to be considered as part of delivery, such as compliance with regulations, meeting statutory responsibilities, etc.</p> <p>This also includes foundations of a “safe and legal” council such as holding elections and developing constitutions for the new unitaries.</p>

Table 19: Cross-cutting workstream for the transition roadmap.



## 11.3.2 Stages

**We have divided our implementation roadmap into four stages; Preparation, Mobilisation, Transition and Transformation.** We have chosen these stages because they reflect what we know and what we are able to do at each point in time – the focus of each stage, the activities and outputs/outcomes reflect this.

We have provided a more detailed breakdown of the activities and outputs we anticipate that we will need to complete during each stage within the appendix.

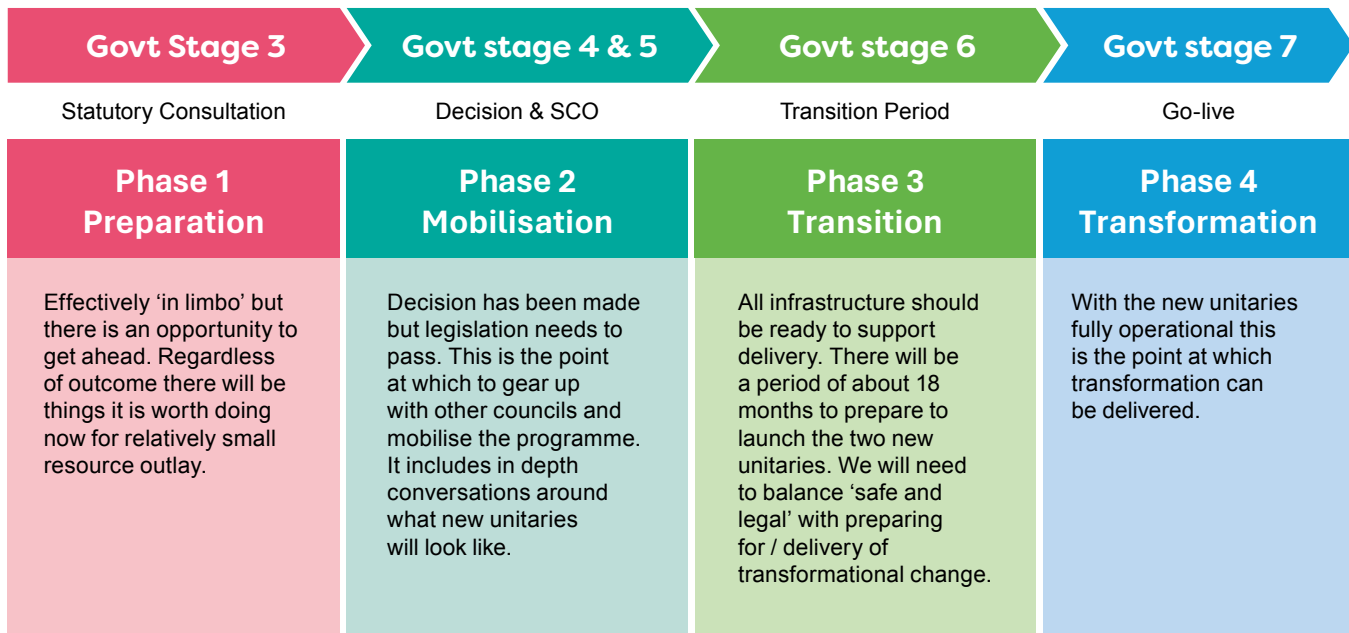


Figure 19: Cross-cutting workstreams and links to wider LGR implementation.

### 11.3.2.1 Preparation (December 2025 – May 2026)

**During this period all LGR proposals for Greater Lincolnshire have been submitted, and the government is reviewing them, carrying out a consultation and deciding on the option to take forward.** At this point we will not know what the outcome is, but we will need to assume that it will involve rationalisation of the current two-tier system. Therefore we aim to put ourselves (the partnership of councils) in the best possible position to be ready to go once the decision has been announced.

#### Activities:

- ▶ Review of key datasets such as establishment, IT systems, assets and contracts, led by a Subject Matter Expert and with input from service managers.
- ▶ Staff and union briefings on LGR and anticipated roadmap for changes.
- ▶ Schedule of regular network meetings across council and partner leadership to discuss LGR preparations.
- ▶ Encouragement of Directors and Assistant Directors to hold regular discussions with their peers on LGR.
- ▶ Allocation (ideally secondment, with backfilled positions) of subject matter experts for the cross-cutting workstreams (i.e. Finance, Procurement, HR, Communications, ICT, Assets) to support LGR preparations.
- ▶ Secure provisional budgets and resourcing required to deliver LGR.

- ▶ Preparation for recruitment of the key roles required to lead and support the programme (i.e. Programme Managers and PMO teams).
- ▶ Preparation to procure external partner(s) that can provide flexible capacity and expertise to supplement programme resources.

#### Outputs and outcomes:

- ▶ A coalition of Lincolnshire councils and partners that have agreement on the broad principles, approach and ways of working for any LGR changes.
- ▶ Networks of peer directors and managers actively discussing and working through the implications and future designs of their services in a single-tier system.
- ▶ Council workforce and unions aware and informed of the potential changes and impacts of LGR.
- ▶ Cleansed, validated, up-to-date data for all councils (e.g. establishment lists, contracts and asset registers, IT systems and infrastructure inventories, etc.) that can be used as part of the transition preparations.
- ▶ Agreed budgets to draw upon to resource LGR preparations.
- ▶ A core team of subject matter experts (e.g. HR, Procurement) that are in-post and have dedicated time to support LGR preparations.

### 11.3.2.2 Mobilisation (June 2026 – August 2026)

**In this period we anticipate that the decision has been announced and that the legislation required to enact the changes is being passed.** At this point we will be clear on what the ecosystem local government in Greater Lincolnshire will broadly look like, but the legislation that enables it will not yet have come into force. Nevertheless, with this clarity we can start to mobilise, working as a partnership of councils to put in place the infrastructure required to deliver the change.

#### Activities:

- ▶ Set up of provisional governance arrangements pending the Structural Changes Order.
- ▶ Revisiting unitary blueprints to agree high-level delivery models to be adopted (this includes decisions over the future of any alternative delivery models such as LATCOs, outsourcing arrangements and shared services).
- ▶ Recruitment of Programme Managers and PMO teams for both programmes of work.
- ▶ Set up PMOs to support the two programmes of work for establishing each new unitary, including the methodology and tools to be used.

- ▶ Mapping out the requirements for “safe and legal” unitary councils that will inform scoping and risk, assumptions, issues and dependency assessment.
- ▶ Detailed scoping of the transition stage to develop a detailed plan and resourcing schedule led by the PMO and Programme Manager, with input from core SME team.
- ▶ Secure wider programme resourcing – seconded / allocated staff supplemented by an external transformation partner.

#### Outputs and outcomes:

- ▶ Agreed LGR governance is set up, running and ready to incorporate Shadow Council arrangements once SCO is passed.
- ▶ A coalition of partners who have bought into a shared vision of LGR and approach based upon the proposal.
- ▶ Key programme infrastructure in place such as programme management approach, tools, and roles.
- ▶ A clear, detailed plan for delivering the transition to two new unitaries and the resource requirements associated with this.

### 11.3.2.3 Transition (September 2026 – April 2028)

**In this period the legislation will be in place so that we can start delivering the changes required to move to the two-unitary system.**

At this point our priority will be to carefully manage the transition from the two-tier model to establish to “safe and legal” unitaries that are fit for purpose, are equipped to meet statutory duties, and safeguard essential services such as social care, SEND, highways management and waste collection.

However, we will also seek to put each unitary in the best possible place to kick on after Vesting Day and deliver public sector reform required through setting up the necessary capabilities and infrastructure.

#### Activities:

- ▶ Recruitment of key roles to the shadow authorities (e.g. Chief Executive, S151 Officer, Monitoring Officer, Director of Adults Social Services, etc.).
- ▶ Delivery of elections for councillors of the two shadow authorities.

- ▶ Delivery of the detailed transition plan (e.g. detailed service design, migration of data and IT systems, contingency planning, contract novation, etc.)
- ▶ Staff and union consultation, engagement and onboarding preparation.
- ▶ Transfer of staff to the shadow authority in line with TUPE.
- ▶ Scoping of post-vesting day public service reform projects to develop provisional outline business cases.

#### Outputs and outcomes:

- ▶ Assurance that new unitaries are “safe and legal” for launch on Vesting Day.
- ▶ Launch of the two new unitary councils with minimal disruption to services.
- ▶ A pipeline of transformation projects to take forward after Vesting Day.

### 11.3.2.4 Transformation (May 2028 onwards)

**During this period we anticipate that we will have established two “safe and legal” unitary councils that are stable and we have the foundations to deliver transformational change. Our focus will shift to delivering a programme of public sector reform to realise the longer-term benefits to Greater Lincolnshire.**

#### Activities:

- ▶ “Hypercare” for essential services to mitigate risk of disruption during immediate period after Vesting Day.
- ▶ Closedown activities for the existing city, district, borough and county councils.
- ▶ Prioritisation a portfolio of public sector report projects and programmes.

- ▶ Explore possibilities to share services across unitaries where there is mutual benefit from doing so (e.g. ICT).
- ▶ Carry out boundary reviews for the two new unitaries.

**Outputs and outcomes:**

- ▶ Frontline services and other critical functions are stable and operating reliably.
- ▶ All vestigial councils are closed down.

- ▶ Immediate changes (e.g. rationalised management structures, decommissioning legacy systems, etc.) are completed and embedded to realise financial benefits.
- ▶ A portfolio of transformation programmes and projects have been mobilised and launched.

A more detailed breakdown of the activities and outputs is included within **Appendix C**.

## 11.4 Resourcing

**A programme of this scope and ambition will require substantial capacity to deliver. We expect to meet the resourcing requirements through deployment of core teams for the implementation of each unitary, as shown in the diagram below.**

These core teams will comprise the following:

- ▶ Programme Management Offices that will set up the infrastructure, tools, templates and processes (e.g. highlight reporting) to support delivery.
- ▶ Programme Managers that will manage the overall programme.

- ▶ Project delivery teams comprising a Project Manager who will be responsible for design and transition of one or more services and function to the new unitary.
- ▶ A Central Subject Matter Expert team of seconded officers to lead on each of the cross-cutting workstreams that we have set out earlier (e.g. procurement, finance, etc.)
- ▶ A pool of shared programme resources, drawing upon existing transformation and change management teams across the existing councils, and seconded staff.

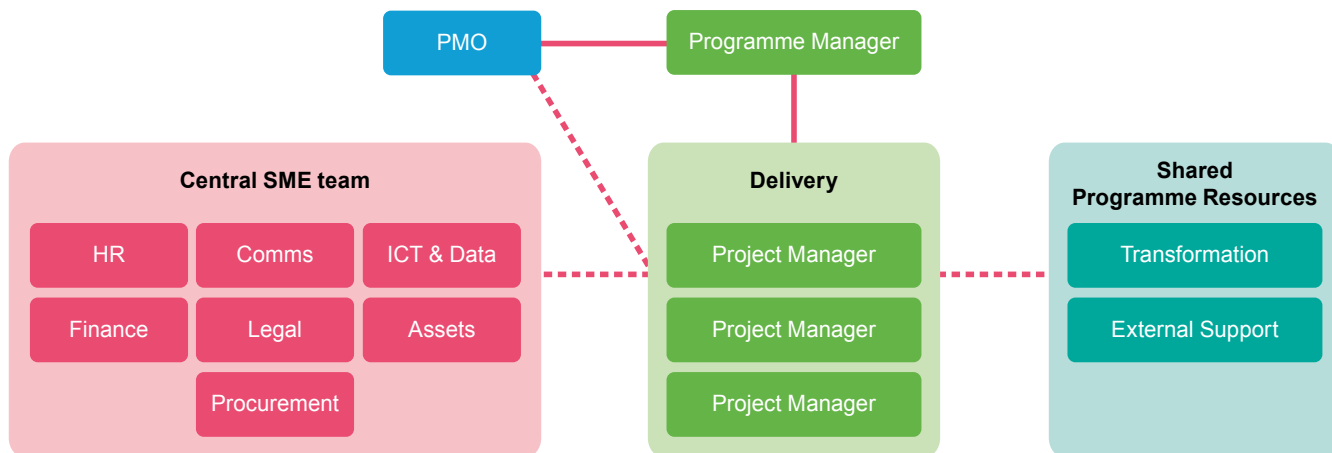


Figure 20: Structure of the core teams that we will stand up for each programme.

## 11.5 Governance

**We plan to run the implementation of the two new unitaries as two closely linked programmes of work, each with their own governance arrangements.**

We anticipate that the Structural Changes Order will specify the top level of governance such as the Shadow Authorities. Below this we will implement programme and project boards and structures, subject to agreement

amongst the coalition of Lincolnshire councils and partners, as shown in the diagram to the right.

Each board and group will have specific roles, responsibilities and accountabilities – these are summarised in the table to the right.



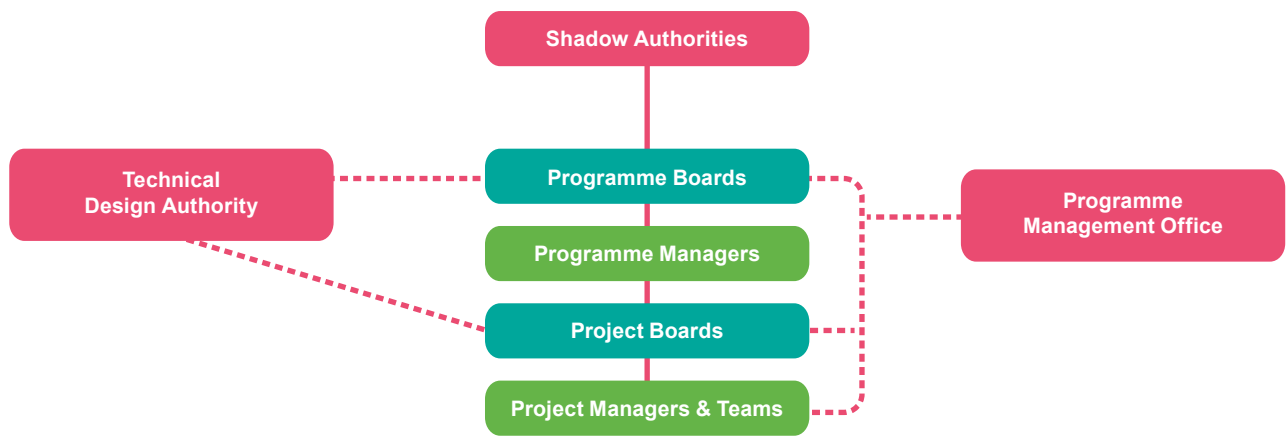


Figure 21: Proposed governance structure for each LGR programme of work.

Workstream	Role	Responsibilities / accountabilities
Shadow Authority	Provides overall strategic direction for implementation programme and the ultimate decision makers and escalation point for risks, issues, etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Accountable for overall success of LGR.</li> <li>Approves any decisions that have legal, financial or major reputational implications for the new unitary.</li> <li>Approves and releases any funding / resourcing requirements.</li> <li>Resolves any issues escalated by Programme Board.</li> </ul>
Programme Board	Provides leadership and oversight of the delivery of LGR and the design of the new unitary, including cross-cutting elements. Manages the projects and resourcing for the programme of work.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Responsible for successful delivery of LGR programme.</li> <li>Accountable for delivery of projects, programme resourcing/budgeting and benefits realisation.</li> <li>Provides oversight and challenge to project and programme delivery.</li> <li>Allocates resources to projects and wider programme within budget envelope.</li> <li>Resolves escalated project and programme-level issues.</li> </ul>
Project Boards	Provides steer on the directorate / service-level decisions such as design of services, detailed plans and engagement.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Accountable for delivery of LGR project.</li> <li>Reviews and approves design decisions, project planning and resourcing within agreed parameters.</li> <li>Resolves any project issues escalated by the project manager.</li> </ul>
PMO	Provides support to all levels of the programme and coordination of key programme processes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Responsible for setting the programme environment and infrastructure.</li> <li>Provides tools and templates for projects and programme to use.</li> <li>Runs project reporting cycles and supports governance boards.</li> <li>Provides assurance of projects.</li> <li>Supports management of programme-wide risks, issues, dependencies and assumptions.</li> <li>Plans and monitors programme resourcing.</li> </ul>
Design Authority	Assures all design and delivery proposals to ensure they align with key principles and form a coherent whole. This includes assessment through financial, procurement, HR, ICT and asset perspectives.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reviews and assures project proposals around design and delivery.</li> <li>Responsible for communicating common design principles and rules to use.</li> <li>Responsible for escalating any potential conflicts or risks to project and programme boards.</li> </ul>

Table 20: Implementation governance

## 11.6 Risks, assumptions, issues and dependencies

As part of the implementation infrastructure the PMO will be responsible for establishing a robust and consistent approach to risk, assumption, issue and dependency management. We have carried out an initial assessment and set out the main ones in the

register below. We will follow the guidance and advice provided by MHCLG to inform a more detailed risk assessment during the early stages of this roadmap.

Type	Description	Rating	Mitigation
Risk	Incorrect / inadequate allocation when disaggregating budgets, staff and contracts where existing councils are split between Lincoln City and Rural Lincolnshire.	High	Agree principles and rules for allocation of budgets, staff and contracts up-front.  Validated, accurate baseline data for staff, contracts and budgets.
Risk	Service data migration is not completed correctly resulting in data loss, service disruption or data breaches.	Medium	Secure Data & IT lead as part of core team.  Assess data risks and establish clear approach and guidelines for mitigating risks.
Risk	Volume of change and uncertainties unsettle staff and turnover increases, impacting capacity to deliver LGR and run services.	High	Clear, early communication and engagement of staff and unions.
Risk	Staff in Enabling Services (e.g. Finance, HR, ICT) struggle to support both business-as-usual and LGR delivery – resulting in burnout, staff turnover and loss of knowledge.	High	Secondment of staff to dedicated programme roles, and backfilling as appropriate.
Risk	Senior leader capacity to manage BAU / transition.		Robust planning approach for detailed LGR transition.  Avoiding optimism bias as part of planning and resourcing.  Managing expectations of key stakeholders over scope, timescales and outputs.
Dependency	Changes to local government “fairer funding” may influence allocation of budgets and resources across two new unitaries.	Medium	Ongoing monitoring of government policy around council funding.

Table 20: Risks and mitigation







# Stakeholder and Public Engagement

## 12.1 Introduction

**Collaboration and engagement with our local partners and stakeholders is important to how City of Lincoln Council operates now, within our neighbourhoods, across the city and across Greater Lincolnshire.**

Our approach to this proposal has used a mix of engagement methods. We have worked with all the other local authorities firstly in an attempt to establish commonality, and then, as it became clear that there would be no single proposal, our collaboration has been tailored accordingly with demonstrable commitment to working together where appropriate across all ten local authorities in the area.

**Collaboration with Greater Lincolnshire Councils:**

There have been meaningful discussions across senior leadership in both the political and officer space. There has been productive shared thinking and delivery through weekly conversations and actions supporting development of a communication framework, robust and detailed data sharing and updates on engagement activities. District-led bids jointly commissioned baseline assumptions to support the development of proposals. A series of service-themed workshops were facilitated and attended across the ten authorities to share knowledge and understanding of both district and county services. These included, Housing, Adult Social Care, Children's Social Care & Education, Customer Experience, Fire, Assets, Leisure & Culture, Economic Development and Highways.

**Using existing feedback and community views:** In shaping our proposals, we have considered feedback received from early engagement surveys and events that took place across Greater Lincolnshire from other proposal developments to avoid confusion and engagement fatigue amongst communities across Greater Lincolnshire.

This is alongside reviewing a variety of other engagement with residents and partners over the last couple of years, including on the Council's own Vision 2030 and insights from Lincoln Against Poverty. The experience from the Greater Lincolnshire Devolution bid and Vision 2050 work has provided useful insights and framing for the consideration of options and approaches. Partnership working and collaboration across authorities over the years, and across sectors at both political, senior officer and service levels, gave a good understanding of the strengths of, and challenges facing, the City, Lincolnshire's market towns, rural villages and coastal communities and of communities in North Lincolnshire and North East Lincolnshire.

We had thought provoking conversations with partners and stakeholders on what is important to them, their pressures and aspirations and sought feedback from young people for their ideas. Meaningful conversations, detailed analysis of data, and valuable feedback from residents and stakeholders has helped to shape every aspect of our proposals.

**Public Engagement Survey:** Public engagement has been informative when shaping our proposals and through a series of closed and open questions in our public survey, a range of views, experiences and suggestions have been shared with us. The survey was predominantly online; however, hard copies distributed to key community locations and shared through current networks. There were also opportunities for in person completion of the survey where respondents were supported to complete the survey if needed and wider conversations were had.

A full summary of the survey responses can be viewed in **Appendix F**. The following provides an overview of the findings and how these have been used to develop the final iteration of our submission, both in terms of preferred structure and improved service outcomes.

Respondents were asked for their views on:

- ▶ Their local area and identity
- ▶ What makes somewhere a good place to live
- ▶ The current way councils are organised across Greater Lincolnshire
- ▶ What is important to them when designing a new council
- ▶ How best to involve local residents
- ▶ City of Lincoln Council's proposals for Local Government Reorganisation

**What's important to our communities:** Most respondents were residents living in Greater Lincolnshire, who are proud of where they live. From the comments it was clear that local identity, history and heritage are important. Comments described their local identity using a mix of geographic references, landmarks, and community affiliations. Overall, the responses reflect a strong sense of place, often tied to both local heritage and practical geographic orientation. Our proposal recognises the importance of place and local identity to residents across Greater Lincolnshire.

Respondents told us that affordable and decent homes, health services and promoting healthy lifestyles, jobs & supporting people into work are important factors in making somewhere a good place to live. Our proposal has a key focus on delivering housing that meets the needs of communities across Greater Lincolnshire as detailed in chapter/section 10.2. The importance of improving skills and access to employment, and how our proposals deliver this are set out in chapter/section 10.8 and our approach to early health intervention and prevention through our new models in chapter/section 10.1 recognises the importance of health and wellbeing outcomes for our communities.

Key components of making a great place to live were also high on the agenda for our communities. Public transport, roads and parking, keeping the streets and public areas clean and tidy, maintaining roads and pavements and tackling anti-social behaviour and reducing crime all scored highly.

**What works well now in Greater Lincolnshire:** Waste collection and recycling were the most positively received, with feedback on the reliability of bin collection services and cleanliness of public spaces. Parks and green spaces were frequently mentioned as well-maintained and appreciated, alongside leisure facilities and cultural events. The feedback suggests that residents appreciate services that are visible, consistent, and locally delivered. Most of the feedback to this question focused on direct delivery of services. The importance of quality services and maintaining services was consistent throughout the responses and commentary. The approach in our proposals in terms of both financial efficiencies and service blueprints will protect service delivery.

The service delivery challenges raised by respondents related to transport and infrastructure, road conditions, funding constraints, long waiting lists, poor SEN support, housing shortages and environmental neglect. These are addressed in our proposals through our approach to economic growth and place-based services as well as new target operating models.

**Views on governance and structure:** Respondents valued the structure of district councils for their local knowledge and responsiveness, and local councillors were noted for their accessibility and community engagement. Consistently, the two-tier structure was referenced with respondents identifying confusion over which council has responsibility for specific services, duplication of roles and activity and frustrations with co-ordination. Our proposal protects local knowledge, enhances community engagement across the new unitary authorities and the creation of new unitary councils resolves the concerns about duplication and confusion over responsibility. Where shared services are proposed for delivery, the access point for customers and stakeholders will remain with the individual new unitary councils and customers will be clear on who to contact.







## 12.2 Views on LGR proposals

**Support for an expanded Lincoln:** Many respondents expressed support for proposals that expand Lincoln's boundaries, role and influence within the region and it was seen to be beneficial for economic development and regional identity. There was recognition and confirmation from respondents who view themselves as part of Lincoln, although they currently live outside the city's existing boundaries. There was also acknowledgement that residents adjacent to those boundaries access services and facilities within the city more so than their current district, and that for many residents and businesses in those areas the differing service provision was confusing and at times unfair.

**Recognition of local identities/voices:** Respondents also frequently expressed views about the significant differences between rural areas and the city and highlighted the importance of proposals that respect and reflect local identities. Respondents appreciated elements of the plan that aim to preserve community character and ensure that local voices are considered in future governance structures. Some respondents also commented on how they believe that Lincoln is prioritised in terms of spend which always marginalises the needs of their market town/village.

**Improved services/outcomes:** There was optimism that the proposals could lead to more efficient and consistent service delivery. Respondents felt that a unitary approach to local government might reduce duplication, improve coordination, and enhance the quality of services such as waste collection, planning, and social care. Some respondents felt that the proposed changes could simplify governance and make councils more accountable. They welcomed the potential for clearer roles, reduced bureaucracy, cost and better strategic planning across the area.

**Points of concern/queries:** Some respondents raised concerns about potential confusion by the changes and the risk of unclear responsibilities and loss of local accountability. Others were concerned about the potential disruption to services during the changes and others worried about risk to service quality. Our proposal mitigates against these concerns by recognising that a robust transition and implementation programme will be needed which is adequately resourced and monitored. Financial concerns about the cost-effectiveness of the proposed changes and concerns that reorganisation would require significant investment without delivering proportional benefits. This has been considered and our proposal sets out robust financial viability information which addresses these concerns.





**Concerns about scale:** Predominantly, the queries or concerns related to comments centred around the scale of the proposed new authorities. Much like the bids being developed across Greater Lincolnshire, there were differing views and feedback from respondents. A range of suggestions on different boundary splits were provided, some advocating for smaller unitary councils to better reflect local needs, others reflecting a larger unitary council covering a wider footprint. Concerns about Lincoln becoming lost in other proposals being developed and others suggested that Lincoln could become too dominant. There were concerns that smaller towns and rural areas might lose their voice in a larger, centralised structure. Calls were made to preserve local representation and ensure that community character is respected.

When illustrated on a map, the difference in size between the proposed new authorities looks stark, however, the sparsely populated areas of Rural Lincolnshire and the scale of Lincolnshire’s geography need to be recognised.

In our proposal, aligning services and approaches to market towns, rural villages and coastal communities where there are synergies supports efficiencies in models and delivery. The service delivery solutions in rural areas are different to those of a city.

Our proposal is clear that local identity, voice and place-based priorities are delivered in collaboration with local communities and stakeholders through existing town and parish councils alongside the new Neighbourhood Area Committees. The importance of local decision-

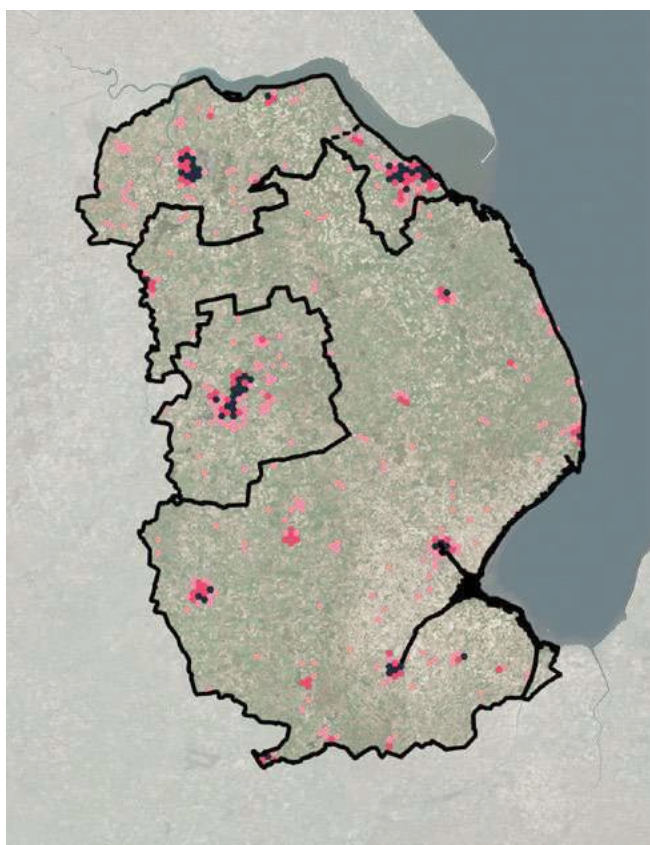
making alongside some concerns about the proposed scale of Rural Lincolnshire helped shape and refine our approach to the new Neighbourhood Area Committees and democratic engagement proposals. Additionally, respondents provided a variety of views and suggestions on the best way for new councils to involve people in local decisions, which have supported the development of our proposals in these sections and will be revisited when further designing and developing services. ‘Services that understand the local area and what people need’ was highlighted as the top priority from survey respondents.

The valuable feedback received will continue to be utilised through the transition phase, advise future engagement activity and be considered during further service redesign.

### Public Engagement – Future Makers

Local Government Reorganisation is the biggest change to local government in 50 years, and the changes delivered will service communities for generations to come. It was really important to our proposal to consider the views of young people, on their views on services now, aspirations for the future, and for their suggestions on how young people can be actively involved over the coming years in both developing and designing services and in their neighbourhoods.

The council was able to deliver a challenge to a group of young people through the Future Makers programme, which is a free, week-long programme for 16–25 year olds to tackle a live challenge to and respond to issues that matter and make an impact.



## Population Analysis

### Population Density and Classification

#### Geographical Boundaries

■ New Unitary Authority Boundaries

#### Densely Populated Areas

Population per Kilometre Squared

- 400 – 1600
- 1600 – 3000
- 3000 – 8100

0 10 20km

Figure 22: Population densities across Greater Lincolnshire

The group were a mix of young people who had lived in Lincoln or had moved to the area and included young people who had, or were currently still living in, Greater Lincolnshire, including Skegness, Sleaford and North Lincolnshire as well as from further afield. They shared helpful reflections on their experiences growing up in their local area as well as their thoughts on local government and how they can help.

The feedback strongly demonstrated that young people want to be more involved in their local community. They gave helpful ideas on how local authorities can improve communication with young people, online but importantly in person, for community connection. They viewed Lincoln positively as well as highlighting the need for dedicated spaces for young people to connect, support job prospects and address barriers to transport and education.

#### **Public engagement – stakeholders**

Engagement with stakeholders has provided valuable insight which has supported the development of our proposals. There were key themes across as well as feedback specific to individual partners or sectors.

**New unitary authorities as a partner** – stakeholders have shared that the creation of unitary authorities presents an opportunity for achieving more by having a shared strategic vision across partnerships. A unified and effective leadership cadre across sectors can focus on the key objectives without being fragmented by competing ambitions and priorities. As well as other public sector partners, there is a clear opportunity for meaningful partnership work with higher education, the voluntary and community sector and businesses, both in delivery of support to communities and strategic place shaping. Partners would welcome clear operating principles and consistent touchpoints

at operational, tactical and strategic levels and our proposals for Target Operating Models and Neighbourhood Area Committees and place leadership enables this.

**Place shaping and boundaries** - Several stakeholders operate across Greater Lincolnshire and preferred not to comment directly on the boundaries. However, consistent themes included challenges with the current “postcode lottery” for residents, businesses and community groups when accessing services, support or grant schemes. A key area of importance raised by local stakeholders is the need for any new unitary to cover the whole of Lincoln’s existing urban area. This is so that the provision of services to businesses and communities is not constrained and the growth and investment of the city, which is significant, is not hindered.

#### **Neighbourhood collaboration for improved outcomes**

– Prevention and neighbourhood working are important for other public sector organisations. As an example, crime and disorder can be impacted by stagnating wages and underlying infrastructure and support service issues as well as insufficient mental health services, drug and alcohol intervention services. This generates additional demand for all public sector organisations, all of which are facing significant budget pressures. Co-production with residents and partners, the voluntary sector’s role in supporting people with lived experience is important for meaningful choice and control for individuals accessing services and realistic and positive visions for the future of communities in their neighbourhood. Small and medium enterprises are deeply embedded in local communities, not only contributing to the economy and local jobs but to the local community too and will be important partners in Neighbourhood Area Committees.

## **12.3 Views on LGR proposals from across Greater Lincolnshire**

**In the absence of being able to achieve a joint engagement strategy, which would have seen one survey across Greater Lincolnshire to seek views on LGR, we have looked at the key findings from the surveys carried out by other local authorities, which have been available to us when preparing the proposals.**

The responses highlight that residents across Greater Lincolnshire place a strong emphasis on local identity, community connection, and the quality of everyday public services. There was recognition that there could be benefits through single points of contact for services rather than two-tier and there could be reduced bureaucracy as well as better value for money. There is a pronounced sense of attachment to place, with respondents significantly rating the importance of their council feeling local. Many participants expressed concerns that local government reorganisation (LGR) could make decision-making too remote, reducing accountability and weakening the local voice—especially in rural areas. There were also views that current councillor numbers are excessive. The rural character of Lincolnshire is a recurring theme, with residents expressing pride in their environment

and a desire for future councils to celebrate rural identity rather than allowing urban areas to dominate. Concerns were raised about reduced local accountability from centralisation and that rural areas would lose representation.

Residents consistently highlighted the need for councils to be responsive, dependable, and open in their communication. The findings underscore the importance of balancing effective service delivery with maintaining trust and connection to local identity. Ultimately, residents want reassurance that their voices—particularly those from smaller and rural communities—will continue to be heard and that any reforms will strengthen, not distance, the relationship between councils and the people they serve.

We therefore feel that our balance of both a Rural Lincolnshire and a Lincoln City unitary authority, alongside strong partnerships with town and parish councils, community groups and the new neighbourhood area committees on boundaries as we have described them, is the best option to reflect what our communities are telling us.





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## Assessment against Government criteria

### 13.1.1 Criteria 1: A proposal should seek to achieve for the whole of the area concerned the establishment of a single tier of local government.

**This three-unitaries over time approach considers the entire area concerned, shaping boundaries around functional geographies and adopting a pragmatic approach, recognising the agency of North Lincolnshire and Northeast Lincolnshire.** Aligning each unitary authority around specific demographic and economic contexts will create new local governments with clear strategic priorities, enabling them to tailor policies and public services to local needs.

Lincoln City and Rural Lincolnshire are designed and scaled to ensure the new unitary authorities operate as a single tier of local government which enables the strategic transformation of public service delivery which will be tailored to hyper-

local needs through Neighbourhood Area Committees based around PCN boundaries. The envisaged Northern Unitary seeks to merge North Lincolnshire and Northeast Lincolnshire with their similar economies and demographics through deep collaboration, recognising their agency and need to consent to any merger. However, this proposal also delivers benefits to the entirety of Lincolnshire without this merger thanks to its prioritisation of meaningful, sensible geographies which will create strong and independent unitary authorities. This will be safe and legal from vesting day and will supercharge the trajectory of Lincolnshire, unlocking economic growth, creating sustainable new local governments and improving quality of life for all residents.

### 13.1.2 Criteria 2: Unitary local government must be the right size to achieve efficiencies, improve capacity and withstand financial shocks.

**This proposal envisages three new unitary authorities with sustainable populations (of between 208,000 to 567,000 in 2028/29), aimed at creating an effective and democratic single tier of local government whilst also achieving efficiencies, improving capacity and enhancing financial resilience.** It should also be noted that over the next 50 years the Lincoln City population will be in excess of 350k in size, thus increasing both tax base and population, which will further increase resilience. This proposal acknowledges the need for scale however, the design responds directly to residents' lived realities,

applying and tailoring national guidelines to Lincolnshire. Therefore, given the expansive geographic area and diverse and competing needs of residents across the current county area, Lincolnshire meets the requirements for an exception to this guiding principle. This proposal delivers efficiencies, improves capacity and financial resilience, whilst creating two new unitary authorities designed to improve outcomes for all residents of Greater Lincolnshire.

Through this proposal's ambitious approach to LGR, shaping the proposal around clear functional geographies



and transforming public services, it is estimated to achieve £43.9 million of cumulative financial benefit over five years.

The community-centred, preventative approach to public service delivery will also improve capacity through its joined-up approach whilst simultaneously improving the ease of access to support for Lincolnshire's most disadvantaged residents. The proposal also right-sizes democratic representation to ensuring equity for all communities and moving away from single-representative jurisdictions to improve capacity and access to local government representatives.

### 13.1.3 Criteria 3: Unitary structures must prioritise the delivery of high quality and sustainable public services to citizens.

**The design of this proposal seizes the transformative potential of LGR, using this historic opportunity to reshape local government to radically enhance the quality and sustainability of public services for citizens.**

Adopting an outcomes-focused approach, this proposal adopts a new community-centred, preventative approach to public services to improve the quality of life for all people across Lincolnshire. Given the similar demographic and social contexts of each new unitary authority, they will have the clear strategic vision to address the specific needs and priorities of their communities, whilst service delivery will be tailored to the hyper-local level through the new Neighbourhood Area Committees centred around Primary Care Networks.

By creating new unitary authorities centred around functional economic areas, this proposal enables the strategic targeting of policies to unlock the specific growth sectors of each unitary, creating a larger tax base to support local government. Additionally, the council tax harmonisation scenarios explored in this proposal identify the potential to increase Band D revenue in each new unitary authority which will increase their ability to withstand financial shocks.

Despite a strong commitment to these unitary authorities as independently prosperous places, this proposal puts service delivery first, also identifying current structures which should be preserved through a shared model such as the trailblazing Children's Social Care services currently delivered by Lincolnshire County Council.

This approach seeks to address the persistent health and educational inequalities within the City of Lincoln by expanding its boundaries as levers currently sit beyond the city's arbitrary boundary. Additionally, the creation of Rural Lincolnshire will enable public service delivery to be specifically designed to overcome challenges such as limited mobility infrastructure and the aging population.

### 13.1.4 Criteria 4: Shows how councils in the area have sought to work together in coming to a view that meets local needs and is informed by local views.

**The boundaries set out in this proposal are directly shaped around local needs, priorities and characteristics. Through the creation of dedicated Lincoln City unitary authority, enables services in Lincoln to be tailored to the needs of all residents, including the 102,000 who currently live beyond the cities restrictive official borders.** This will give these residents a democratic voice to shape policies and decisions concerning the future of their local area. As part of the LGR process, the creators of this proposal have collaborated with county council and South East Lincolnshire Council Partnership (SELCP) teams proposing different options which all recognise the importance of the City of Lincoln. However, this is the only proposal to move beyond symbolic recognitions to ensure local needs not only inform the structure of local government, but also regional representation, giving Lincoln City full and permanent voting rights at the GLCCA and continuing

the city's proud heritage of self-determination.

The new Rural Lincolnshire unitary authority will give a greater voice to residents in rural, coastal and market town communities in Lincolnshire. It responds to concerns that under the current county model, Lincoln pulls funding and attention away from these communities and creates a dedicated local government, strategically aligned with local needs which will focus on engaging these communities.

By adopting a pragmatic approach to North Lincolnshire and Northeast Lincolnshire, this proposal also responds to the local needs and views of these communities. Whilst it is envisaged that a combined, Northern unitary would offer a stronger voice for these communities, this proposal understands the need for deep collaboration and engagement to give communities within these unitary authorities agency over their future.

### 13.1.5 Criteria 5: New unitary structures must support devolution arrangements.

**This proposal envisages three unitary authorities with similar populations, designed around meaningful geographies to align with the functional areas of Lincolnshire. The scale of these new unitary authorities creates a new single-tier of local government, clearly delineated from the regional scale.**

Lincoln City and Rural Lincolnshire will support devolution arrangements by ensuring representation for two distinct sets of Lincolnshire communities at the GLCCA level. By separating Lincoln from the rural, coastal and market town communities of Lincolnshire, they are given a stronger voice, with their unique concerns undiluted by more populous urban areas. Additionally, this proposal moves beyond symbolic recognition of Lincoln to empower it with voting rights at

GLCCA level. Given Lincoln's status as an economic engine for the entire region, this enhances devolution arrangements and continues Lincoln's proud history of self-determination.

This proposal envisages the merging of North Lincolnshire and Northeast Lincolnshire seeks to create a strong voice for their residents' shared needs and priorities at a regional level. However, this proposal adopts a pragmatic approach, highlighting the need for deep collaboration to ensure the legally required consent of both existing unitary authorities. Even without this merger, this approach enhances devolution arrangements by creating strong unitary authorities to represent the distinct needs of their populations at a regional level.

### 13.1.6 Criteria 6: New unitary structures should enable stronger community engagement and deliver genuine opportunity for neighbourhood empowerment.

**Empowering neighbourhoods and strengthening the community engagement possible in local government was a core design principle for this proposal. The design of Rural Lincolnshire enables the shared challenges of rural, coastal and market town communities to be addressed by a strategically focused unitary authority.** Community voices under this new local government will be empowered through new Neighbourhood Area Committees

aligned with Primary Care Networks, the retention of parish councils and a move away from single councillor entities to ensure resilience and improve access to democratic representatives. In Lincoln City, the viewpoints of residents in communities such as Hykeham, which already operate as de facto areas of the city, will be given the power to shape policies concerning the future of their city.



