

3. The Character Area Assessment

Key features

Reepham Parish is situated in the Central Lincolnshire Vale and is an agricultural landscape at the southern edge of the National Character Area (NCA) 44. There are expansive long distance and panoramic views with particularly pleasing views of Lincoln Cathedral and the Wolds. Reepham village is situated within the Parish centrally from an east/west direction and slightly towards the southern side. The Church is more centrally located within the Parish at the northern side of the village.

Reepham Parish has a predominance of low-rise properties. A key part of the design-code for all Character Areas is to retain this aspect. New development within the existing settlement should not have a higher roof line than existing properties in the area, and where development is expanding the village settlement into open countryside there should be a transition to a higher roofline from within the existing settlement. This policy should also restrict properties to two storeys above ground.

A further design-code element to cover all character areas is to ensure the current housing density for each character area is not exceeded (NIGEL TO WORD BETTER and refer to the existing density for each area).

Village Edges

To the northern side of the village the edges are tree and shrub-lined softening the village with the Church tower rising above the trees. Only glimpses of village house roofs are visible through the trees. This is a pleasing view of the village with traditional routes also having green open space to soften the transition to open countryside and agricultural land. The south and eastern approaches are across historic moorland so there is not the same kind of tree cover naturally present, but some planting has helped to soften this and could be accentuated.

Recommendations in the Plan are to:

- Retain soft landscape edges of the village
- Maintain rural appearance of village gateways
- Maintain rural character of roads and lanes
- Retain views of St Peter and St Paul's Church from all directions

So these aspects have been focused on during the Site Selection process.

Character Areas A- Hawthorn Road

This area comprises a discrete development from a similar era of construction with no recent new development other than extensions. It is detached from the main village which has an attraction of its own. For the most part the linear development comprises low-rise buildings with a few Victorian villa style properties. The development mirrors one in Cherry Willingham Parish across the road with the Reepham side being just the ribbon of houses along the roadside. The deep back gardens are assets to the properties with open views to the countryside behind. The properties are also set back from the road with good sized front gardens with soft planting. This adds to rural feel of the development. The development has open fields between it and the main village.

A- **Design code**- Presumption against new build. Alterations and extensions to reflect existing styles and materials. Retention of hedges along road side. Retain attractive and distinctive frontages; any alterations to be coherent with existing structures. The design code should reflect the Neighbourhood Plan policy of retaining bungalows as affordable housing for both the young and older generations as per Community wishes.

Character Area B-Fiskerton Road/Meadow Close/Moor Lane

The properties in this area date from around the 1930's to the present day. It is therefore an entirely 20-21st Century development area. The earlier properties are characterised mainly by bungalows with a few modern larger houses towards the Parish boundary. Development has been such that there is no restriction of views across the open countryside and further to the Wolds from these houses on the eastern side of the road, with no two storey houses being built to overlook the bungalows at the time of writing. The views to open countryside are important for this character area as they comprise views over historic moorland. Currently a mix of housing styles, dates and designs but predominately using traditional materials.

B- Design code – New buildings/alterations to be well built and resilient, sustainable and energy efficient. New/extended properties to include suitable green planting to enhance opportunities for nature and improve environment. This is the least cohesive area of the village so most suitable for limited but well-designed changes using materials in keeping with existing properties. The design code should reflect the Neighbourhood Plan policy of retaining bungalows as affordable housing for both the young and older generations as per Community wishes. As bungalows predominate in the 20th century buildings of the village it is important that transitions to newer housing are sympathetic and respectful in terms of roof lines and over-looking existing properties.

Character Area C- Infill developments off The High Street/Station Road area

20th Century cul-de-sacs of primarily single rise bungalows with front gardens and most having soft planting, which is important to retain for the character. The properties date from around the 1960's to the present time. The newer housing comprises larger properties sensitively placed to not overlook the bungalows. Chapel Close would have a better relationship with the countryside beyond if the row of houses at the bottom end of the close had also had single story dwellings amongst them, The Chase has no soft planting and Beck Hill has a group of houses that are beyond the scale of any other houses in the village apart from historic properties, and has contributed to loss of views of the Cathedral and the Church from within the village setting. Mellows Close has retained much of its 1960's character with original appearance still in tact. The low-rise, uniform appearance with soft planting on the frontages should be preserved. Manor Rise comprises 39 houses which are a mix of 3-4 bedroom properties with 4 affordable housing town houses. This was an add-on to the shape and form of the village and comprises the largest development in the Parish. The houses do not impinge excessively on the character of the village due to sensitive development style and green corridor. Green verges also run through the development.

C-Design code – Predominant current design feature is of low-rise buildings of traditional materials. Spacious front and rear gardens with planting to soften the edges of the hard landscaping. Any alterations/extensions should respect front building line and height of existing properties and the nature of building materials. Extensions should respect the scale and 'mass' of existing properties and sight lines particularly to open countryside to the north of the settlement. Chapel Close is a good example of a successful building line incorporating both bungalows and houses.

Character Area D- Kennel Lane/Spring Hill

The properties here again date from the 1930's to the present day. The houses are solely on the east side of the road with open countryside to the west. Trees line the road adding to the rural feel of the approach to the village. Low rise buildings comprise the first few buildings and then the Spring Hill development dates from the 1960's and comprises 36 semi-detached former council houses. Three further affordable homes were built in the early 2000s. Views to Lincoln Cathedral are important to the character of the area along with the farmland providing part of the green-wedge and this should not be built on.

D- Design code - Bungalows set back from the road at the entrance to village from A158 set the tone for a gentle, pleasant feel of settlement. Front gardens and planting support the transition from open countryside to village. The cul-de-sac of Spring Hill houses is at right angles and so

does not dominate the view coming in to the village from the north. Any extensions/alterations should respect the scale and 'mass' of existing properties and sight lines particularly to open countryside to the north and west of the settlement. Building materials to be in keeping with existing properties. The design code should reflect the Neighbourhood Plan policy of retaining bungalows as affordable housing for both the young and older generations as per Community wishes.

Character Area E- Conservation Area

Many properties in this area pre-date the mid 1800's. There is a mix of one and two storey homes sensitively built to maintain privacy and apart from the High Street, most are set back from the lanes/roads. The area holds Conservation Area designation. Sinuous road and lane layout, green verges, hedges and trees are important to the character of this historic area. Notable view stops are cited in the Conservation Area Appraisal and these should be preserved. This is the most mature and attractive part of Reepham with listed buildings and landmark features in evidence. The visual connection to St Peter and St Paul's Church is important and should be preserved in line with policy relating to setting of listed properties. Key characteristics and crucial features include:

- Green verges
- Sinuous road/lane layout
- Hedges
- Mature trees
- Quiet and rustic feel
- Church, setting and views of the tower
- Views to open countryside
- Open spaces where there is traditional/historic transition to open countryside
- Quiet lanes

E- Design code - This is the most sensitive area of the village due to its historic nature and predominance of listed or landmark properties and heritage assets. Any extensions/alterations should respect the scale and 'mass' of existing properties and sight lines. Additions/alterations to properties, surroundings and boundaries should be designed with Conservation in mind and to enhance the appearance and setting in line with the situation of the property within the Conservation area. Again, the scale of development should be appropriate to its setting and building lines maintained.

The design code should also reflect the Neighbourhood Plan policy of retaining bungalows and smaller properties as affordable housing for both the young and older generations as per Community wishes.

Transition to the countryside is of key importance in this area, as are views, both into the village, such as views of St Peter and St Paul's Church and out to open countryside. Design should take account of this.

Character Area F- Rural farms and businesses

Rural farms form the character of the wider parish. Ward's farm in particular forms a significant feature at the entrance into the Parish from the A158 road. Tree cover and green verges make this farm particularly attractive. The associated brick house to the east of Kennel Lane is also situated well. The remaining farms have their own appeal set back from the roads and lanes they are situated on, many with fine farm houses, They reinforce the rural, agricultural nature of the Parish and should remain as isolated residences.

F- Design code - Development should be achieved with a sensitivity to the existing property and some form of screening to minimise the impact on the views of the open countryside and existing sight lines. Height is still a consideration for rural properties, especially where sight lines may be impacted, and setting in relation to other nearby features. Further development should be rural rather than industrial in nature, so less of the kind of development that has seen the Gathering Station and Sewage Works placed in the Parish.

Character Area G- Open Countryside

The character of Reepham Parish is largely defined by extensive arable fields surrounding the settlement areas, giving access to the countryside for residents and visitors. Views into and out of the settlements are important in giving a sense of place and enhancing the rural feel. Further large-scale developments, such as the Gathering Station would not be appropriate. A further sensitivity to this area is the transition to development, whether industrial, business or residential. As a rural area the transition is a key part of the character and identity.

G- Design code - Any proposed development should respect the rural nature and feel of the setting. Any extensions/alterations should respect the scale and 'mass' of existing properties and sight lines. Additions/alterations to properties, surroundings and boundaries should be designed with the rural feel in mind and to enhance the appearance and setting. Again, the scale of development should be appropriate to its setting and building lines maintained. There will be a presumption against new development in the open countryside. In addition to this, any business development that does not require a building but may impact on the current field boundary lines or change the site lines across the fields should be discouraged, due the impact on the rural feel, which should be maintained.