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South Kesteven Local Plan 2023-2043

Housing Density Report

July 2025



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Executive Summary

This report examines the approved planning applications following the adoption of the 2020 Local Plan. The findings reveal that in the four market towns of South Kesteven District Council (SKDC) – Grantham, Bourne, The Deepings, and Stamford – the average housing density exceeds the 30 dwellings per hectare specified in the adopted Local Plan. In contrast, housing densities within the Larger Villages of the district adhere to the Local Plan’s guidance.

Based on the analysis, this report recommends revising the Local Plan’s housing density standards to better meet district needs and to support SKDC’s corporate vision of creating a thriving District to live in, work and visit. Specifically, it proposes increasing the housing density target for market towns from 30 to 35 dwellings per hectare, whilst maintaining the 30-dwelling target for other settlement types.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This report evaluates the major housing developments approved across the district since the adoption of the South Kesteven District Council (SKDC) Local Plan 2020. Its primary objective is to assess whether the approved housing densities align with the Local Plan's standards. The analysis focuses on housing densities across different settlement types including the market towns of Grantham, Bourne, The Deepings, and Stamford, as well as the Larger Villages. While the market towns are reviewed individually, the Larger Villages are considered collectively to provide a comprehensive understanding of rural development patterns.
- 1.2 The SKDC Local Plan 2020 outlines an indicative housing density target of 30 dwellings per developable area hectare for major developments. Major housing applications are defined as proposals comprising 10 or more dwellings. All such planning applications referenced in this report are publicly accessible via their application numbers on the SKDC website.
- 1.3 This report assesses whether the Local Plan's density target of 30 dwellings per hectare remains appropriate in light of approved applications and district needs. The findings are underpinned by a detailed review of housing densities for major applications across the district, supported by evidence-based analysis. Where necessary, recommendations for adjusting density standards are provided to ensure alignment with strategic goals and priorities.

2. Current Housing Density Standards and Rationale

- 2.1 The SKDC Local Plan 2020 has an indicative housing density number of thirty dwellings per developable area hectare. This has been included within the local plan to provide guidance on the housing density that Planning Officers and developers can use to determine and design applications.
- 2.2 The developable area of developments follows calculations presented in the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) June 2017. This assessment identifies that land use within housing applications usually reserves a portion of the site to be given over to access roads, public open space and other ancillary uses. The SHLAA states that the larger the site, the larger the area normally given over to non-developed uses. Therefore, the SHLAA identifies that the developable area of sites will be calculated using the following assumptions:
 - Up to 1ha then 95% developable area
 - Between 1ha and 4ha 80% is developable area
 - Over 4ha then 60% developable area

- 2.3 This will be the basis of the calculations used within this report to analyse the major applications that have been approved and their respective site size densities.
- 2.4 Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) states that housing potential should be guided by local conditions, including housing densities. The Local Plan has used the indicative number of thirty dwellings per hectare to inform the local conditions variation allowed through the PPG. The indicative density was presented by the Council to achieve balanced land use across the district and ensure that a controlled level of growth can be satisfied.

3. Analysis of Approved Applications Since 2020

- 3.1 The data being analysed during this report will be broken down into the Market Towns of South Kesteven, being Grantham, Bourne, The Deepings, and Stamford, and the Larger Villages. There will not be mention of any developments in the Smaller Villages, as identified in the Local Plan 2020, as there were no planning applications at, or exceeding ten dwellings that have been approved since the Local Plan's adoption.
- 3.2 Across the district, there are 29 applications that this report will be analysing. Of these, 15 are in the Market Towns, and 14 are within the Larger Villages. To allow for more accurate, representative settlement comparisons to be made, the Larger Villages will be reviewed separately to the Market Towns.
- 3.3 Across the four market towns, Grantham received the most approved applications, being seven, with Bourne the next at five. A table with all the towns developable area averages is shown in Figure 1. This figure clearly shows that all towns are exceeding the Local Plan's indicative figure of thirty dwellings per hectare. The town with the lowest levels of density is Grantham, with an average of 35.7 dwellings per hectare of developable land. Grantham is the only town to have an average density of less than forty.

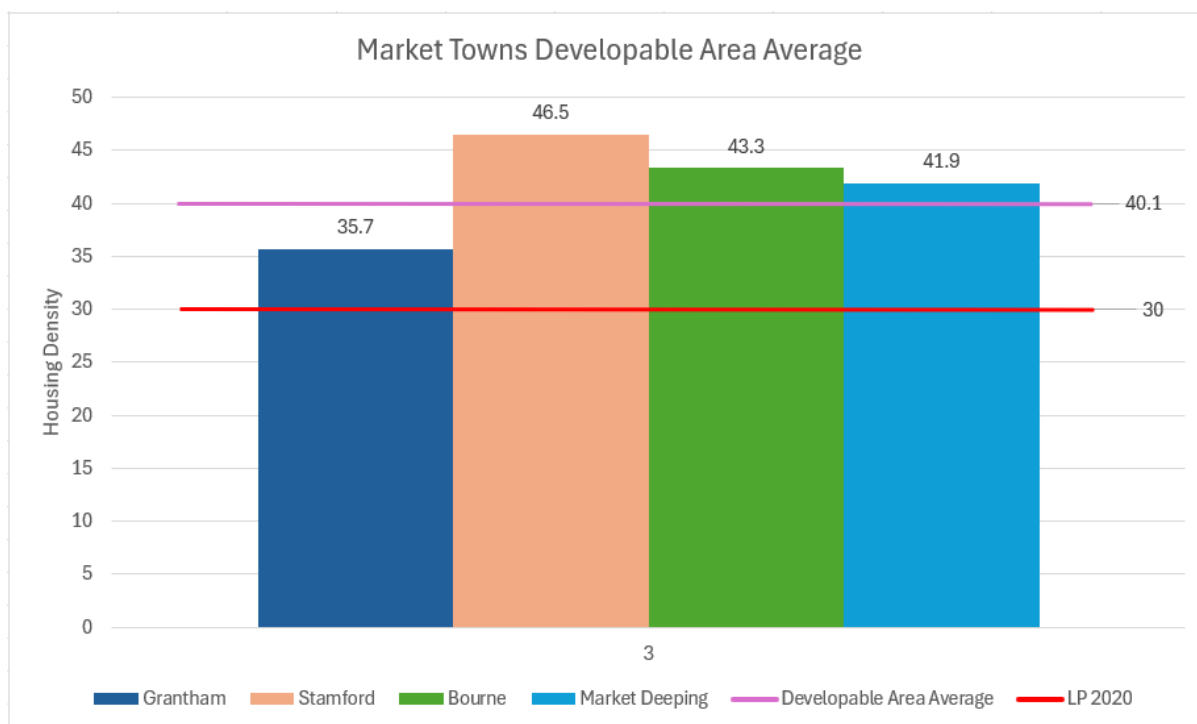


Figure 1: Market Towns Developable Area Average

- 3.4 Whilst looking at Grantham on an individual level, it can be seen within Figure 3 that the variation of development density can be wide. With five out of the seven total applications exceeding the indicative unit of thirty. There were two applications which came below the Local Plan unit, showcasing that not all development is in excess of the thirty units per hectare.
- 3.5 The average developable area density for the Grantham area is 35.7, as seen in Figures 1 and 3. This equates to an increase of 19% from the Local Plan 2020 figure of thirty.
- 3.6 The densities within Bourne follow a similar trend as Grantham, with a majority of applications exceeding the thirty dwellings per hectare. Figure 4 shows that of the five applications approved, one of these was below the LP 2020 figure of thirty. Two of the approved applications exceeded fifty dwellings per hectare when looking at the developable area, with the highest at 57.1 dwellings per hectare.
- 3.7 The average density recorded within Bourne was 43.3, a 44.3% increase on the Local Plan indicative unit of 30.
- 3.8 The Deepings received the fewest approved applications with one, however, the emerging trend of higher densities within the towns remains present. The Deepings single application had a developable area density of 41.9, which equates to a 39.7% increase on the Local Plan 2020 indicative unit.

- 3.9 Stamford as the remaining town within SKDC, received two approved major housing applications. Both of these applications exceed the 30 dwellings per hectare, further indicating the trend of the towns within the district having developable area densities above the Local Plan 2020 figure.
- 3.10 The densities within Stamford had an average of 46.5, with the densest application being 55.9 dwellings per hectare. This equates to an average developable area density increase of 55% against the Local Plan 30 figure. This is shown in Figure 6 within the appendix.
- 3.11 Within the four market towns, three of the fifteen applications were below the Local Plan 2020 level of thirty. Two in Grantham, one in Bourne. This means that 13 applications exceeded this figure, or 86.7%.
- 3.12 There is a noticeable trend of development within the towns exceeding the thirty dwellings per hectare, and instead there is an average density of 40.1. An average density across the towns of 40.1 results in a 33.7% increase on the Local Plan 2020. This increase indicates that there is scope for the density within future SKDC Local Plans to be adjusted to better represent the district.
- 3.13 When reviewing the Larger Villages within South Kesteven, however, a differing trend emerges. Figure 2 plots the average densities of all villages that received a major housing application. Using this chart, it can be seen that the average densities closely follow the Local Plan 2020 indicative unit of 30, with the average density being 30.4. There are disparities seen from this chart, however, that show Ancaster with an average density of 43 from two housing applications. The least dense village was Langtoft, with density of 14.4 from a single approved application.
- 3.14 There is a contrast between the towns of the district and the villages when it comes to the densities approved for new housing developments. The towns experienced an average of 40.1 dwellings per hectare, with the villages at 30.4. This disparity between density indicates that there is potential for settlement types to have differing indicative developable area densities across the district.

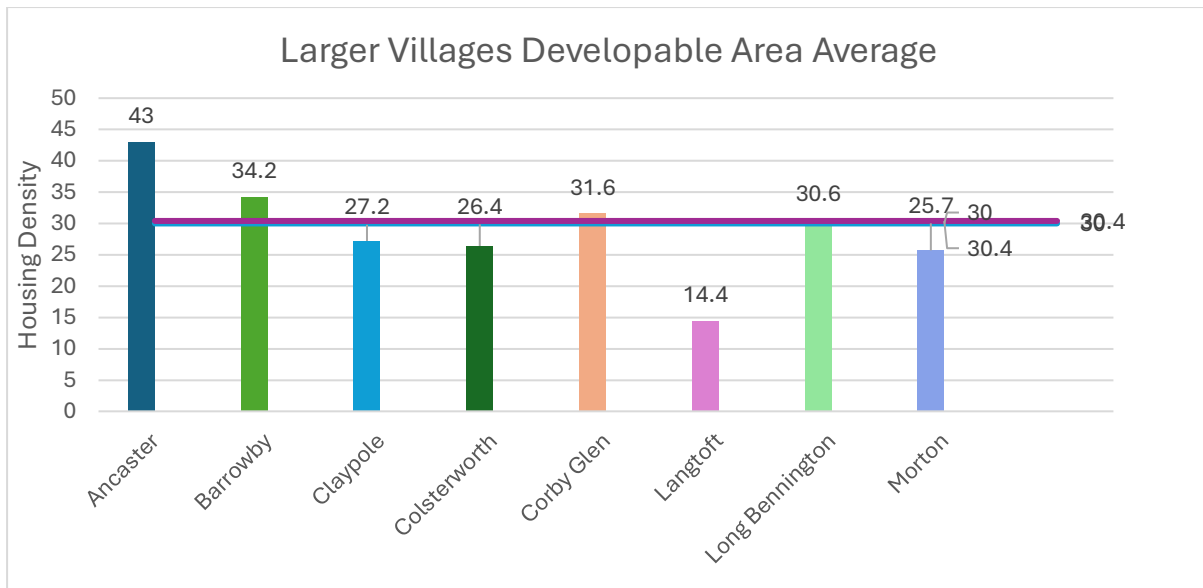


Figure 2: Larger Villages Developable Area Average

4. Implications of Higher Density Approvals

- 4.1 An increase in housing density allows for less land to be allocated to meet this target, preserving the landscape of South Kesteven.
- 4.2 The average density of 40.1 across the towns of South Kesteven indicates that there is already a local need for increased density developments. More provision of affordable housing, limitations in available land, and demographic trends towards smaller household sizes all indicate towards an increase in the developable densities across developments in the district.
- 4.3 Housing developments that are constructed to a higher density can have improved infrastructure capabilities. Public transport can be incorporated into sites in a more efficient form, with shorter, faster routes. A higher concentration of population can make transport and utilities more feasible and attractive to private investment. Multiple transport nodes, including bus stops and cycle infrastructure can be encouraged on sites with higher density, and can encourage a reduction in car reliance.

5. Challenges and Considerations with Increasing Density

- 5.1 Applications being considered with higher densities than that of the Local Plan 2020 will need to consider the potential for infrastructure strain. Currently, there is concern over school sizes, both primary and secondary, across the district. Further increasing populations can be challenging to this system and need to be planned for carefully. Additionally, health care provision is in a similar position. Local strain can be added with more housing developments, and with these potentially being denser, there is scope for these services to be put under further pressure. It is important to note, however, that these facilities are determined externally from SKDC, and are largely calculated on population sizes and projected increases. There is, therefore, a point to be made that increasing densities can increase the population sizes of settlements, pushing for new provision of these services, relieving the issues currently present.
- 5.2 There is potential for concern from some community members over an increase in housing density with it resulting in a change of neighbourhood character. Currently, the data shows that higher density developments are regularly being approved, approximately 80% of approved applications reviewed in this report exceed the 30 dwellings per hectare. It is therefore necessary that careful planning be considered to conform to local vernacular. This is largely a planning process matter, and SKDC has systems in place to encourage this to take place, with a Design Officer regularly reviewing major applications across the district to ensure that developments are in keeping with the areas they are building within.
- 5.3 Green space within new developments is calculated through the SHLAA 2017 developable area percentages. Alterations to housing densities will still conform to these restrictions, with provision of green, open space remaining to come forward. Whilst there is potential worry for green space to be reduced, in practice this is not experienced.

6. Proposed Recommendations for Revised Density Standards

- 6.1 This report has found that the current densities that new development achieve in practice within the urban areas of SKDC is different to what the current Local Plan proposes. However, this disparity is not found within the larger villages. The recommendation from this report, therefore, is to increase the housing density recommendation within future Local Plans to a density of 35, up from 30. This change, however, will only be applied to the four market towns of SKDC, and not the remaining settlement types.

- 6.2 This change will allow the Local Plan to more accurately represent the current landscape of house building within the district. The key findings from this report make it clear that the existing proposal of 30 dwellings per hectare as found in the SKDC Local Plan 2020, are not representative of current practice within the four towns of South Kesteven. A revision to this number, specifically for the towns, is therefore justifiable and encouraged.
- 6.3 This change is caveated that an increase in density from 30 to 35 is only applied to the urban towns of South Kesteven, and that the village density proposal remains 30. There are few examples of developments exceeding this figure across the villages and this cannot be taken as prescriptive of what the villages should experience. The average density for village developments is 30.4, showing that the current figure of 30 is accurate and representative of the rural character and makeup of the larger villages found across the district.
- 6.4 This report identifies that current housing densities achieved in urban areas of SKDC diverge from the Local Plan 2020's target. In practice, urban areas often exceed the proposed 30 dwellings per hectare, whereas densities in the Larger Villages generally align with the Local Plan's standards.
- 6.5 Based on this finding, it is recommended that the Local Plan's housing density target be revised to 35 dwellings per hectare for the four urban market towns – Grantham, Bourne, The Deepings, and Stamford – while maintaining the existing target of 30 dwellings per hectare for all other settlement types, including the Larger Villages.
- 6.6 This adjustment aligns with both the character of the district's settlements and the current landscape of approved applications. Notably, analysis of average densities across the Larger Villages indicates a figure of 30.4 dwellings per hectare, reinforcing the suitability of the existing target. The proposed increase in density for market towns is both practical and justifiable, reflecting the evolving housing demand within these urban areas.

7. Benefits of Increasing Density

- 7.1 Revising housing density targets within the Local Plan offers substantial benefits for South Kesteven. Increased density allows for more efficient land use, reducing the amount of land required to meet housing needs and limiting potential urban sprawl. This ensures that green spaces are preserved and supports the council's sustainability goals.
- 7.2 A higher density of housing can also yield significant economic benefits. By concentrating development within urban areas, businesses are better supported by increased local populations. This creates a positive economic feedback loop, boosting local investment, employment opportunities, and community spending.

- 7.3 From a planning perspective, increased densities help achieve the council's housing targets while minimising infrastructure costs. Building in higher-density urban areas ensures more efficient service provision, such as transport, utilities, and other public services, further supporting sustainable growth.
- 7.4 By optimising the use of urban land, the council will be better positioned to meet its five-year housing supply targets while ensuring housing developments aligns with its strategic long-term economic growth.

8 Conclusion

- 8.1 This report concludes that the current housing density target of 30 dwellings per hectare in the Local Plan 2020 is appropriate for the Larger Villages but does not reflect the reality of approved applications in urban market towns, where densities already exceed this figure.
- 8.2 Increasing the density target to 35 dwellings per hectare for market towns is both feasible and necessary to accommodate housing demand and achieve more efficient use of available land. This recommendation aligns with broader strategic goals, such as reducing urban sprawl, preserving green spaces, and supporting sustainable growth.
- 8.3 This adjustment will ensure that new developments remain consistent with the existing urban fabric while addressing the districts housing needs. Additionally, it avoids drastic changes that could disrupt the character of new developments, particularly those on urban fringes.
- 8.4 Overall, the recommendation to increase the housing density target for market towns ensures that SKDC can meet its housing objectives while maintaining a balanced approach that respects both urban and rural settlement needs.

Appendices

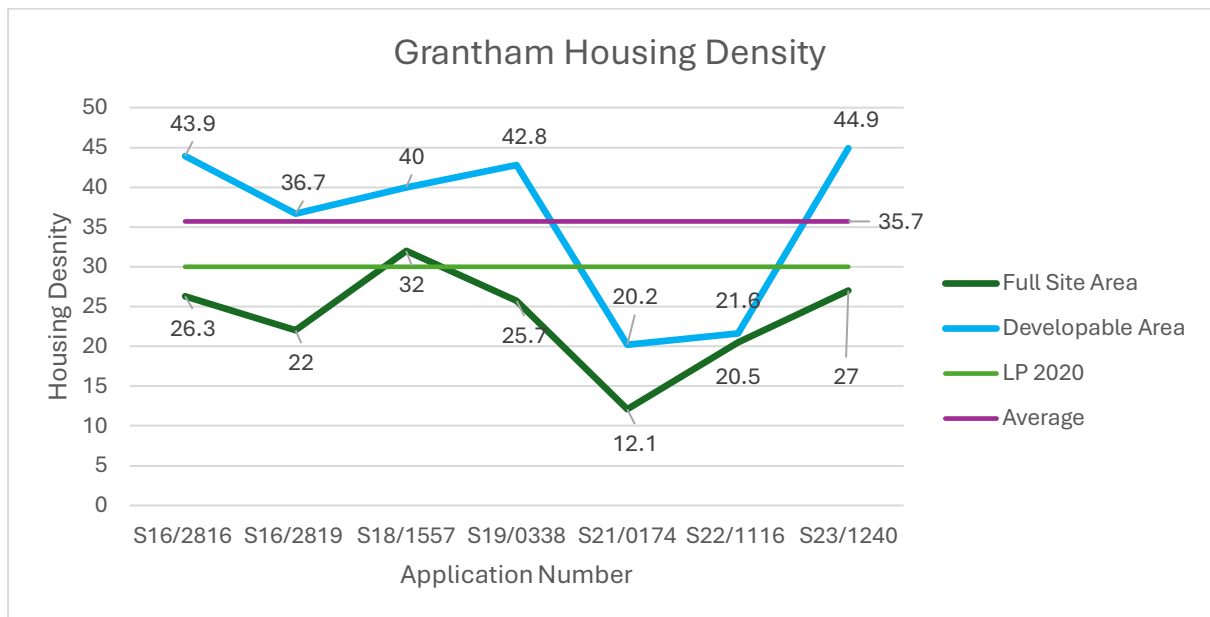


Figure 3: Grantham Housing Density

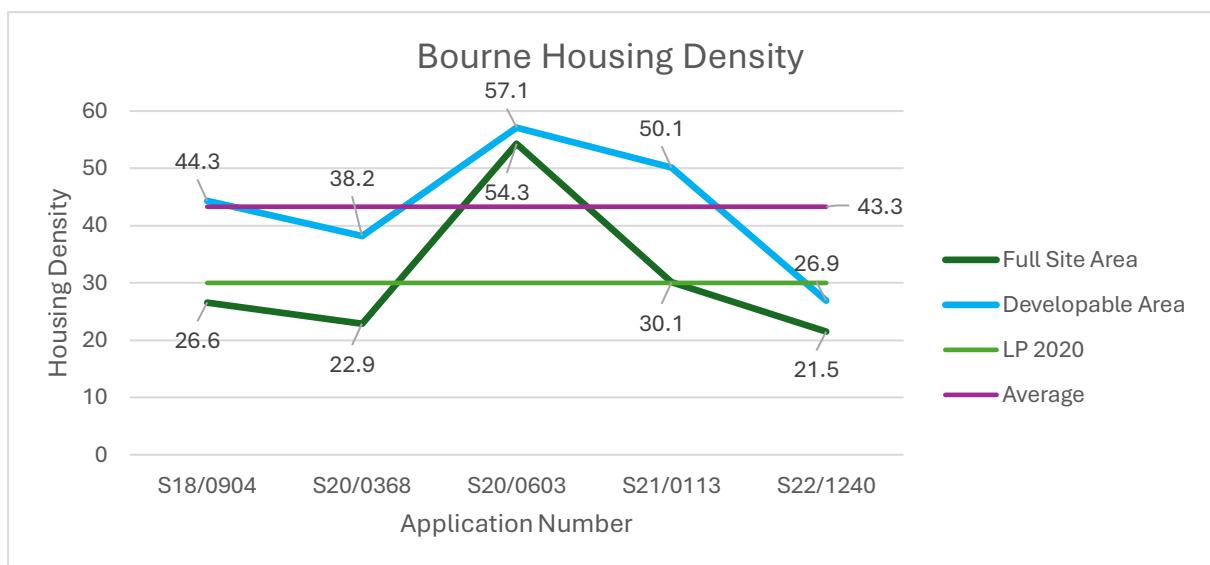


Figure 4: Bourne Housing Density

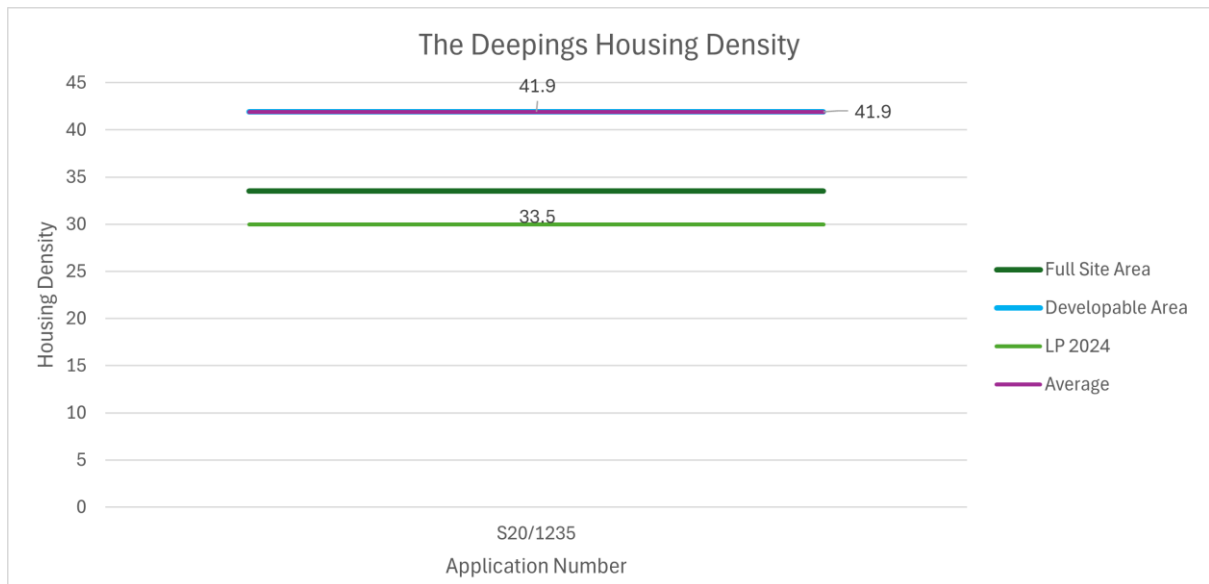


Figure 5: The Deepings Housing Density

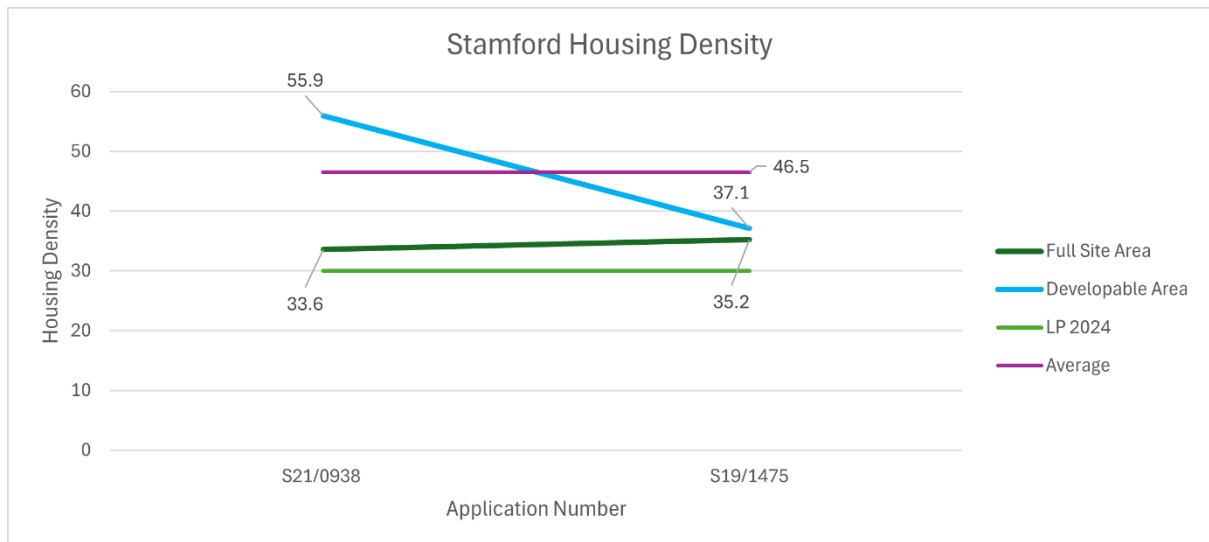


Figure 6: Stamford Housing Density

**S16/2816 Rectory Farm,
Barrowby Road, Grantham**

Approved Houses: 228

Site Size: 8.66ha

Net Density: 26.3

Developable Area Density: 43.9



Figure 7: S16/2816 Rectory Farm, Barrowby Road, Grantham

**S16/2819 Land at Rectory Farm
(Phase 1 West), Grantham**

Approved Houses: 220

Site Size: 9.98ha

Net Density: 22

Developable Area Density: 36.7

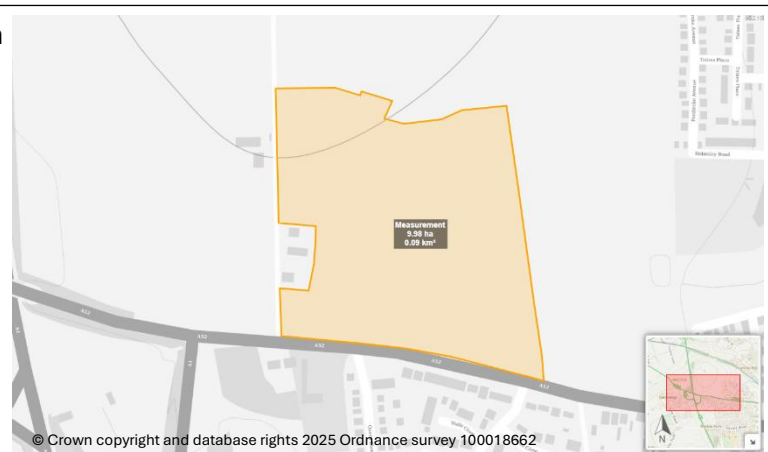


Figure 8: S16/2819 Land at Rectory Farm (Phase 1 West), Grantham

**S18/1557 The Grantham Church
High School, Grantham**

Houses Approved: 40

Site Size: 1.25ha

Overall Density: 32

Developable Area Density: 40



Figure 9: S18/1557 The Grantham Church High School, Grantham

S19/0338 Bridge End Road, Grantham

Approved Houses: 205

Site Size: 7.98ha

Overall Density: 25.7

Developable Area Density: 42.8

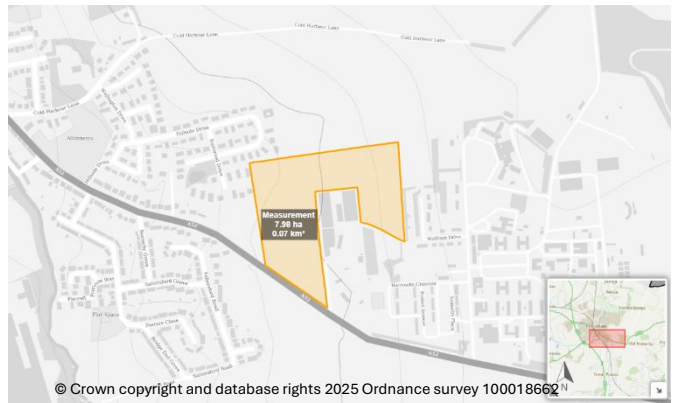


Figure 10: S19/0338 Bridge End Road, Grantham

S21/0174 Land to the North of Longcliffe Road, Grantham

Approved Houses: 480

Site Size: 39.55ha

Net Density: 12.1

Developable Area Density: 20.2

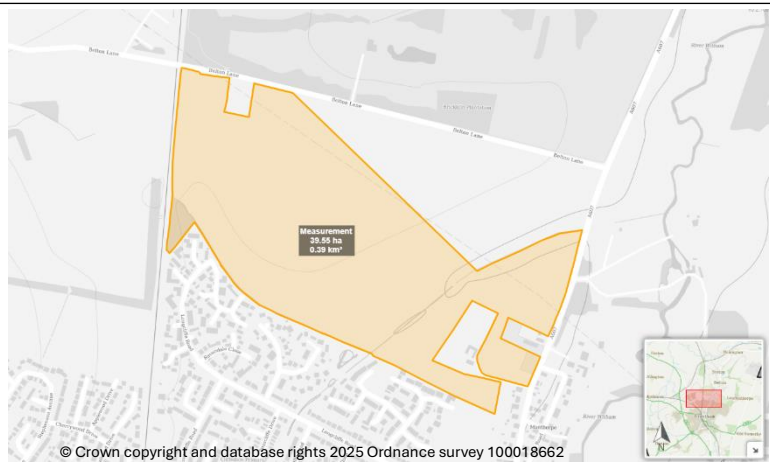


Figure 11: S21/0174 Land to the North of Longcliffe Road, Grantham

S22/1116 Gorse Lane, Grantham

Approved Houses: 17

Site Size: 0.83ha

Net Density: 20.5

Developable Area Density: 21.6

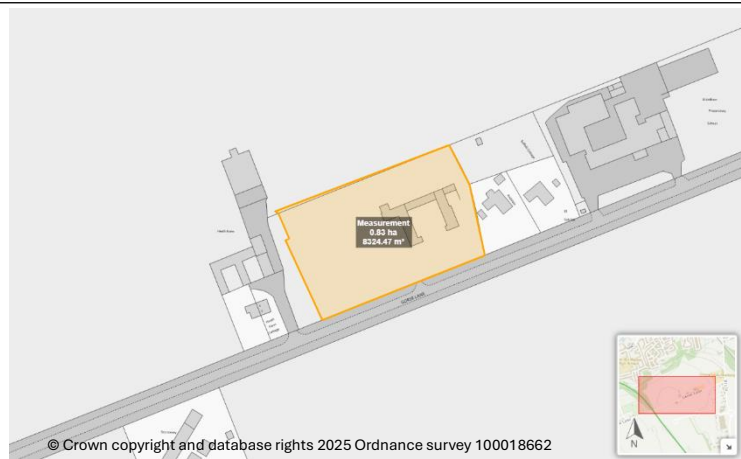


Figure 12: S22/1116 Gorse Lane, Grantham

**S23/1240 Land on North Side of A52
Somerby Hill, Bridge End Road, Grantham**

Approved Houses: 250

Site Size: 9.27ha

Net Density: 27

Developable Area Density: 44.9

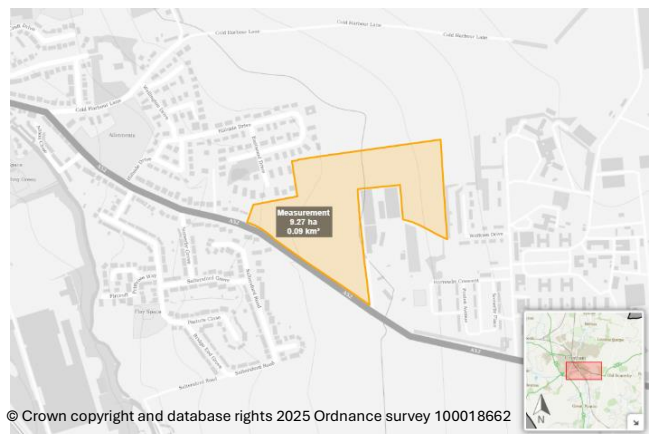


Figure 13: Land on North Side of A52 Somerby Hill, Bridge End Road, Grantham

S19/1475 Bowman's Paddock, Stamford

Approved Houses: 31

Site Size: 0.88ha

Overall Density: 35.2

Developable Area Density: 37.1



Figure 14: S19/1475 Bowman's Paddock, Stamford

**S21/0938 Stamford Business
and Retail Parks**

Approved Houses: 200

Site Size: 5.96ha

Overall Density: 33.6

Developable Density: 55.9



Figure 15: S21/0938 Stamford Business and Retail Parks

S18/0904 Land at Manning Road, Bourne

Approved Houses: 121

Site Size: 4.55ha

Overall Density: 26.6

Developable Area Density: 44.3

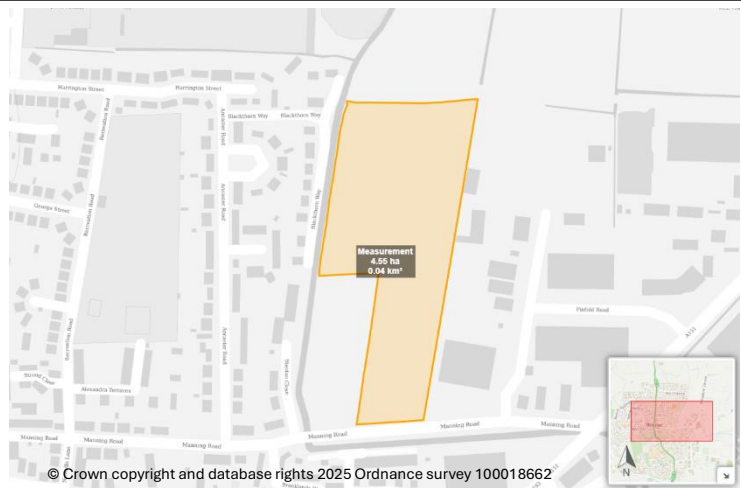


Figure 16: S18/0904 Land at Manning Road, Bourne

S20/0368 Land at Elsea Park – Zone 8, Bourne

Houses approved: 384

Site Size: 16.77 ha

Overall density: 22.9

Developable Area Density: 38.2

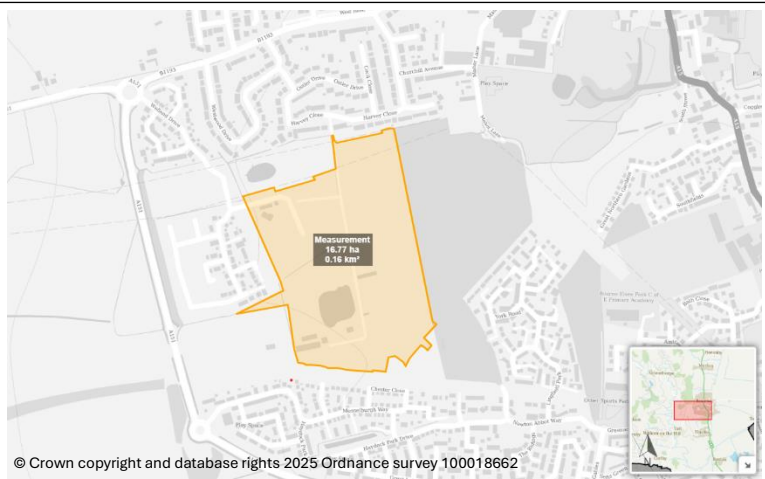


Figure 17: S20/0368 Land at Elsea Park - Zone 8, Bourne

S20/0603 Land off Falcon Way, Bourne

Houses Approved: 19

Site Area: 0.35 ha

Overall Density: 54.3

Developable Area Density: 57.1



Figure 18: S20/0603 Land off Falcon Way, Bourne

S21/0113 Land South of Harvey Close, Bourne

Approved Houses: 373

Site Size: 12.41ha

Overall Density: 30.1

60% developable land: 50.1



Figure 19: S21/0113 Land South of Harvey Close, Bourne

S22/1240 Elsea Park Phase 10B, Bourne

Approved Houses: 48

Site Size: 2.23ha

Overall Density: 21.5

Developable Area Density: 26.9



Figure 20: S22/1240 Elsea Park Phase 10B, Bourne

S20/1235 Land off Linchfield Road, Market Deeping

Approved Houses: 69

Site Size: 2.06ha

Overall Density: 33.5

Developable Area Density: 41.9



Figure 21: S20/1235 Land off Linchfield Road, Market Deeping