

Ms Mary Travers
Planning Inspector
c/o Ian Kemp.

8th January 2018

Melton Local Plan Inspection

Dear Ms Travers,

I write as a resident of the village of Somerby. I am no planning expert (I am a senior executive with a multinational organisation), so I hope you will forgive the lack of technical language in my letter. I have thus far had no involvement in the development of the local plan, but would like to make my views known.

General

As a businessman, it appears to me that the plans developed bear little in relation to the real needs of the community (and I speak as a long-standing resident), having much more to do with the perceived requirement to construct large volumes of housing within MBC. This overarching 'need' to construct housing seems to have been used to create a rather partial process where the expressed needs and desires of residents have largely been ignored and the overarching dictat of MBC to 'build some houses' has won the day. My brief engagements with MBC have typically resulted in an answer of "tough – we need houses – we have a government target to hit – if you don't like it, you'll have to lump it".

The document ignores significant developments which are in process on the borders of MBC. For example – the substantial investment being made in Oakham to construct housing in a well serviced, sustainable manner has been ignored in favour of significant additional housing planned for my own village (Somerby) – a village that has poor transport links, no employment opportunities, and where there would appear to be some risk of flooding in the proposed development areas. Set this against the thousands of houses being built some 5 miles away in a town with good transport links, good employment opportunities, and an infrastructure (housing, health etc) which can cope with an expanded population.

The developments proposed within the plan appear to take little account of sustainability needs, employment opportunities, or environmental considerations – the sole focus is to build houses. The plan as cast will result in significant damage to heritage environments, large increases in traffic in rural/agricultural villages (since people will need to drive to get to work in either Melton or Oakham), and will turn some villages into small towns.

Employment is a key driver of housing need – and building houses in villages, miles from any employment opportunities will result either in more traffic/travel, village populations consisting largely of those who are not in economic activity, or both.

Matter 3 – Overall requirement for Housing

It appears that the figures being used (6,125 dwellings) ignores a more up to date, better calculated figure of 4,250 dwellings (170 dpa over 20 yrs). The rationale behind using the older number rather than the newer one is unclear, but supports my thesis that the MLP is only about building as many houses as possible, ignoring any evidence that they may not actually be needed.

The employment calculation (3,420 new jobs will be created) seems very very ambitious. As a businessman I can tell you that this sort of job creation has never been achieved in the last decade in Melton and would require a growth in the local economy of around 3% pa. This in an area with relatively poor transport links (so no major warehousing need), little large scale manufacturing, and no significant infrastructure for service economy jobs (call centres and the like). Looking at historic figures, a job creation forecast of c. 1% per annum would be a more realistic forecast.

So the evidence base that MBC are using to calculate housing need would appear to be erroneous at best, and should be reviewed in detail. It would appear to me that figures have been 'adjusted' to meet perceived need, rather than being based on sound evidence.

I would close in suggesting that MBC would do well to look at other rural councils (for example Harborough) who appear to have taken a more rigorous, evidence based approach to calculating need and demand, and who have taken time to understand the nature of such need, and recommend development in places appropriate to that need.

Thank you for taking the time to read this submission.

Simon Scrivens.