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MELTON LOCAL PLAN EXAMINATION

MATTERS AND QUESTIONS

(I have used the same numbers used in the questions to reference and number my paragraphs below)

Matter 2: Overall Spatial Strategy

2.1 No

The selection of the 4 essential requirements under SS2, to classify villages as Service centres are arbitrary:

-Primary school

-Access to employment

-Fast broadband

-Community building

2.1.2 Access to employment is good essential criteria but there is no employment opportunity in range of Somerby, our own NP evidence shows that this is the case and MBC have been unable to show us evidence that it does. So MBC ignores essential criteria when it suits. Overdeveloping Somerby, (by classifying it as a Service centre) from which the main economy comes from equestrianism and tourism is inconsistent with the Strategic objectives: *5. Help regenerate the rural economy and 6. Promote the tourism potential of the Borough through its food, equestrianism and heritage assets creating a Melton Borough "brand"*.

2.1.3 Somerby is a major site for Equestrianism with 2 large riding establishments using the lanes and village of Somerby to ride around and through. In addition there are 2 International professional competition establishments and the Cottessmore Hunt using the landscape around the village. Many cyclists use the lanes around Somerby and there are 2 National cycling routes through Somerby. There are many visitors for walking in the area, with main footpaths (Leicestershire round) directly through Somerby which has incredible and under advertised landscapes surrounding it, but the

walkers know it is here. Many of the local village businesses depend upon the tourism that is brought to the village in this way. Tourism and horse riding cannot but be damaged by overdevelopment in this village with already struggling road infrastructure and huge numbers of horses and cyclists competing with agricultural traffic and HGVs using the totally unsuitable road through the village on a direct route between Grantham Peterborough and Leicester. The Sustainability Assessment did not even mention the equestrian, walking and cycling tourism economy of Somerby and I supplied them with information on this in April 2016. (see appendix 1). This makes me think that MBC are only interested in a tourism “brand” that relates to Melton itself, they have not demonstrated otherwise.

2.1.4 By putting such a large proportion of new development in villages without good work-hours friendly public transport ie Somerby, this is inconsistent with Strategic Objective 9. Reduce the need to travel by car and improve access to public transport. The existence of a community building surely cannot be more “essential” than good public transport (which was originally included in the list of essentials before MBC amended the list to the latest 4)

2.1.5 This framework is not sound as a method of selecting Service centres that will supply housing to the Borough from the villages. It appears that Somerby has been selected more on the basis of one village in the South of the Borough needing to be classified as a Service centre when it would have been more sound to have chosen a more sustainable village in another area of the Borough even if that would have geographically unevenly spread development, but placed it in better connected areas with access to A or B roads to main centres of employment and with hourly bus services. Transport by bus and or car has not been used as essential criteria and should have been. It seems to me that Rutland managed to select main well connected large villages to place most of their development whilst retaining the small picturesque villages in the County largely as they are, I don't understand why MBC has insisted from the outset on overdeveloping so many villages in the Borough.

2.1.6 This Policy does not help support Strategic objective 1. Help provide a stock of housing accommodation that meets the needs of the community, including the need for affordable housing because MBC has selected some wrong Service centres on flawed criteria, the scale of housing proposed for Somerby does not meet with the local community needs and it is hard for people in affordable housing already to afford the bus fares for the 14 mile round trips to job opportunity and supermarkets.

2.1.7 Large developments in wrongly selected Service centres like Somerby, do nothing to address Strategic Objectives -12. Improve access to services and facilities, including health, schools, social care, jobs, recreation, sport and education, broadband, 13. Promote sustainable communities and 14. Improve facilities for all the community. To do so would necessitate development on such a scale in order to secure large developer contributions that would turn the village into a small town and then impact negatively on all of the Environment objectives.

2.1.8 As such it is not Sound as it:

- has not been positively prepared as it is not based on a strategy which seeks to meet objectively assessed development and infrastructure requirements.

- is not justified – it is not the most appropriate strategy when considered against the reasonable alternatives, and not based on proportionate evidence.

- it is not consistent with National Policy, because it fails significantly to correctly identify sustainable villages

2.1.9 How should it be changed? Service centres should be selected on criteria relevant to actual sustainability which should include

– Good public transport, good road networks and exclude less relevant criteria that does not help to assess the top villages for Service centre designation such as Fast Broadband which is common to almost all areas of Melton Borough and Community building, similarly common to most villages.

In doing so, this may mean less Service centres are identified and those that are, needing to take a greater proportion of new housing, and then equally, a greater proportion should go to Melton itself or to the creation of new villages. This would be a sound and sustainable method of housing allocation. These issues have consistently been brought up to MBC by many villages and ignored.

2.1.10 No, The overall process of calculating down the development totals shown in table 7 appears to bear no relation to the site total numbers put forward in the plan for most villages. Large sites over and above the figures in table 4 should not have been put in the plan as sites that “will” be developed. If all of the sites are developed in Somerby the total number of new homes will exceed that in table 7 by 147%, if only 2 of the sites are developed (not the reserve) by 56%. The numbers in Table 7 bear no relation to the sites selected. It looks as though MBC want to put as many new homes in villages as they can get away with whilst falsely maintaining they have followed a rigorous process. This is not sound and is not based on robust evidence.

2.1.11 It does appear that at the outset, MBC decided they wanted to “front-load” development in the villages and have then devised processes to justify their selection rather than using a sound process to select the right places for development.

2.1.12 No, As previously explained, population size is not a sound basis for allocating proportions of development, lower populations in more sustainable locations may be better able to take more development if the Sustainability assessment of villages was done properly.

2.2 No it does not, this was changed following representations by the Borough Councillor and others who wanted to support small development in villages around the Southern area of the Borough that were not classified as Service centres, when he first talked to us about this he said it would take the pressure off the Service centres like Somerby which is isolated as a Service centre in the South. Unfortunately MBC did not tie in development in these small villages with the allocation to the Service centre, so there is nothing to stop repeated applications.

2.2.1 How can it be changed? If the whole Plan cannot be re done- It could be addressed by including a condition that sites like this have to be considered against the extent to which the Service centre allocation is met or unmet at the time of the application and allowing the Parish to provide. It shouldn't have been an extension to the plan, it should have been the basis for an alternative strategy but MBC were determined they would not hold up the plan to make substantial changes.