

Dear Madam,

Melton Local Plan Examination – Somerby & SOM 2 MBC/023/16

In write in connection with the Melton Local Plan Examination.

I have attempted to categorise my representation under the various Matters.

Matter 4

Somerby has already seen a number of new houses being built in recent years, and there are a further number of dwellings which have recently been granted planning permission. The proposed large scale sites of SOM1, 2 & 3 do not take into account the aggregation issues of such development and the impact on the local infrastructure. Whilst there will be no doubt some smaller development in the future, the quantity being proposed in the local plan and the size of those sites (and in some cases currently being brought forward to the planning process) is simply not appropriate for such a small village.

Matter 4 & 5

MBC have consistently ignored previous comments regarding the inability of Somerby's existing infrastructure to accommodate the proposed housing allocation through large sites. MBC seem to make their decisions on site allocation in a vacuum without considering the context of the wider surroundings. For example in summary:-

- High Street through Somerby (the only road through the village and the primary route to both Melton Mowbray and Oakham) is restricted to a single lane of traffic (two way traffic is not possible), has two extremely dangerous blind ninety-degree bends, with narrow or non-existent footpaths in places. High Street is incapable of supporting existing traffic let alone the additional traffic from site SOM 2. It is not possibility to widen the road due to the close proximity of the houses on either side of the road. This most important issue is incapable of being resolved. A site visit in the evening or weekends will demonstrate at first hand the issues involved.
- High Street is a narrow road and does not conform to minimum widths required for a road serving a school (6.75m).
- Parking on Somerby High Street causes vehicles heading eastwards to cross on the wrong side of the road for an extended distance and is restricted to single file traffic in a contraflow system.
- High Street contains three T junctions (Chapel Lane, Manor Lane and Church Lane) all with severe limited visibility. Any increase in the traffic flow caused by any of the sites but particularly SOM 2 and SOM 3 would increase the risk of accidents further.

- The school has no car park or layby for drop off parking, no proper playing fields, (the children have to use the village playing field, which is ear marked for development under SOM 2). The school does not have the space for physical expansion and this will be a necessity if the proposed development proceeds. Refer to the MBC SOM 2 site appraisal which stated “an increase of the capacity of the Primary School” was required. Any expansion to the school is simply not physically feasible and any capital expenditure on a school with such existing limiting factors is not viable and would be a folly.
- The existing village shop has just two car parking spaces is situated on a narrow blind ninety degree bend. There is no capacity for this to be increased if Somerby is intended to be a service hub. The pavement outside the shop is less than one metre wide at one point!
- Access to the site SOM 2 is on a dangerous 90 degree bend a site of previous accidents.
- The existing sewerage and drainage system within the village is already inadequate with no capacity for expansion. This is a well-reported issue and flooding has already taken place. SOM 2 & SOM 3 will fail policy EN11 to minimising the risk of flooding.
- There is no gas supply to Somerby limiting options for heating etc.
- Inadequate public transportation. A poor infrequent bus service.
- The existing community facility on High Street such as the Methodist church hall has no car parking and the Village hall has very limited parking. All community facilities are accessed on High Street which already suffers from congestion and difficult visibility. Increased traffic consequent from proposed sites SOM 2 and SOM 3 will exacerbate the problem.
- Existing pavements in Somerby narrow to significantly less than the recommended 2m (refer Leicestershire County Council 6 C’s Design Guide. In addition the pathway outside the school is less than 1.5m when the recommendation is it should be at least 3m. These inadequacies are incapable of rectification due to physical constraints. Any expansion of Somerby in the local plan does not take into account the constraints of local infrastructure to allow proper safe movement particularly those people with impaired mobility (footpaths too narrow for mobility scooters) or school children.

Contrary to the NPPF clause 7 MBC has completely failed to take into account the infrastructure provision requirements or set out any coherent strategy to solve the significant problems which will arise from potential large scale housing development in Somerby. NPPF stipulates “local authorities should work with neighbouring authorities and transport providers to develop strategies for the provision of viable infrastructure necessary to support sustainable development”. MBC has failed to provide any evidence or confidence that that the infrastructure will be provided to support the housing allocation and strategy for Somerby and therefore failed policy IN2 in the local plan. MBC has failed to explain how they would mitigate the impact on local infrastructure by the proposed growth of the village. MBC has failed policy IN1 to identify “The necessary infrastructure required to support development in accordance with Policy IN1 “

Matter 4 and 5

MBC have failed to properly explore potential “brownfield” sites and provide adequate importance weighting to sites such as Great Dalby Airfield. To simply mention this site under Policy SS6 is inadequate and MBC ought to be more specific regarding both the impediments for considering this site and what would trigger further review. Brownfield sites such as Great Dalby Airfield should be prioritized. NPPF 111 states, “Planning policies and decisions should encourage the effective use of land by re-using land that has been previously developed (brownfield land), provided that it is not of high environmental value. Local planning authorities may continue to consider the case for setting a locally appropriate target for the use of brownfield land.” There is no evidence that MBC have properly explored the Great Dalby Airfield site. They advise this has not been brought forward by the owner and is on the reserve list. One may speculate on the reasons this site has not been brought forward and it may be connected to the demands for Section 106 contributions. MBC ought to be transparent on the discussions which have taken place with the owner.

The brownfield site Great Dalby Airfield has many advantages for example:-

- Such a development would reduce the pressure to build large sites in rural communities, which have inadequate infrastructure to support increasing housing development as contemplated by the existing draft local plan.
- Will be closer to the Southern or Eastern distributor road than those proposed sites in rural communities.
- Is a brownfield site which would benefit from remediation.
- Is closer to Melton for employment, services, schools, shopping. Has better public bus service and road servicing the site. Will create lower carbon emissions.
- Is of sufficient size to have proper purpose built infrastructure rather than bolting on developments to existing drainage infrastructure, and electricity supplies etc. of small rural communities which are already unable to cope with existing demands.
- Is a rather unattractive desolate site which would greatly benefit from redevelopment. Planners and consultants would have a “blank canvas” to design a sustainable development and thriving community.
- Is of a size which would deliver a mix of housing catering for a variety of needs and have its own community
- Is a large site which should ensure its viability to cover such costs as remediation, infrastructure requirements.
- The site is of sufficient scale that it would be possible to build at an appropriate density far better than those proposed rural sites.

MBC should be playing a critical role in bringing forward brownfield land and yet this prime opportunity to develop is being missed with the consequent pressure to develop ill-conceived sites in rural communities such as Somerby. MBC is failing to realise the potential of brownfield sites.