



Forward Planning Team
Melton Borough Council
Parkside, Station Approach,
Burton Street,
Melton Mowbray,
Leics, LE13 1GH

ConnollyNetherBroughtonLP/1

19 December 2016

Dear Sirs

Melton Borough Council Local Plan Pre-Submission Draft Nov 2016

Land off Main Road, Nether Broughton, LE14 3EU

Further to the above consultation, please find below representations on behalf of Connolly Land and Developments (North Midlands) Ltd who have legal control over the above land via an Option Agreement.

My client wishes to convey their **objection** to the Melton Borough Council Local Plan Pre-Submission Draft as currently drafted.

In particular, my client objects to the Spatial Strategy and distribution of housing set out in Draft Policies SS2 and SS3.

Since the publication of the Emerging Options Plan in January 2016 (which my client was supportive of), the Council have revised the Settlement Hierarchy, simplifying it from five to four tiers, and have altered the criteria used to classify settlements in the Settlement Hierarchy.

As a consequence of the above, some settlements which were originally considered '*Rural Supporters*' (considered suitable for up to 5 dwellings outside of those sites allocated through the Local Plan) have been re-classified as '*Rural Settlements*' (considered suitable for only 3 dwellings outside of those sites allocated through the Local Plan).

For example, **Nether Broughton** was originally identified as a '*Rural Supporter*' and given an overall score of 15 in the '*Settlement Roles, Relationships and Opportunities*' Report (April 2015).

The same Report confirmed that Nether Broughton has direct bus routes to neighbouring villages and cities and local services including a Village Hall, Public House, Garage, Place of Worship, and employment sites.

However, in the revised Settlement Hierarchy, Nether Broughton is identified as a '*Rural Settlement*' - which is now the bottom tier of the Settlement Hierarchy.

The simplification of the criteria used to classify settlements to just four 'essential criteria' (whether the settlement has a primary school, access to employment opportunities, fast broadband, and a community building) disregards many of the sustainability credentials of Nether Broughton and other settlements, including Plungar (which scored 16 in the Settlement Roles, Relationships and Opportunities Report) and Kirby Bellars (which also scored 15).

Moreover, it seems somewhat perverse that settlements which originally scored lower in the Settlement Roles, Relationships and Opportunities Report have remained within the same tier (now called '*Rural Hubs*') and considered suitable for up to 5 dwellings, for example Great Dalby (scored 12), Gaddesby (scored 12), Thorpe Arnold (scored 11), and Ab Kettleby (scored 11).

The new classification method clearly over-simplifies the approach to housing provision in rural settlements in the Borough and is not an accurate reflection of the sustainability of the Borough's rural settlements and the suitability of housing development in them.

By unnecessarily restricting development in some rural settlements my client is concerned that the Council may not be able to deliver the housing required to meet its objectively assessed housing need.

The number of settlements in the penultimate tier of the Settlement Hierarchy (in which up to 5 dwellings may be permitted) has reduced from 18 to 7 and my client is consequently concerned that this may jeopardise the ability of the Council to meet and maintain its five-year housing land supply obligations - particularly given the Council's evident and longstanding problems in this regard to date.

In addition to the above my client feels that the revised Spatial Strategy and housing distribution set out in Draft Policies SS2 and SS3 not only under-estimates the importance of rural housing development to overall housing provision and the ability of smaller settlements to accommodate additional (small-scale) housing, but also disadvantages these settlements by preventing housing development which would help enhance or maintain the rural economy and the vitality of these rural communities in line with paragraph 55 of the NPPF.

In this connection, the Settlement Roles, Relationships and Opportunities Report highlights that development in '*Rural Supporters*' could help make these settlements more self-sustaining and encourage more services (Table 6).

In the case of Nether Broughton, the village now benefits from one of the fastest broadband speeds in the country and, in granting permission for up to 20 dwellings at land off Hecadeck Lane, Nether Broughton¹, the Council clearly considers the settlement sufficiently sustainable to accommodate much more than the 3 dwelling threshold suggested in this latest consultation draft.

To remedy my client's objection the Council is asked to return to the previous Settlement Hierarchy and classification of settlements in the Borough, which is based on the thorough and evidence-based assessment of the sustainability of Borough's settlement in the Settlement Roles, Relationships and Opportunities Report 2015.

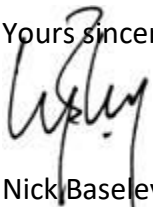
Alternatively, in recognition of the valuable contribution that rural settlements can make to overall housing provision in the District, and reflecting advice set out in paragraph 55 of the NPPF, the Council is asked to widen the classification requirements set out in paragraph 4.2.5 of the Pre-Submission Draft.

In particular, the Council is asked to lower the threshold for 'Rural Hubs' by removing the requirement for 'Rural Hubs' to contain a Primary School, a requirement that is considered overly onerous and contrary to paragraph 55 of the NPPF.

I trust the above is helpful in progressing the draft Local Plan and look forward to being notified of the Examination details and each and any subsequent consultation stage leading up to adoption.

Should you require any further information about the site in the interim, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely



Nick Baseley
MA(Hons) TP MRTPI
Director



December 2016

¹ LPA reference 15/01019/OUT