



EXTRAORDINARY MEETING OF THE COUNCIL
OF THE BOROUGH OF MELTON

PARKSIDE, STATION APPROACH, BURTON STREET, MELTON MOWBRAY

19 SEPTEMBER 2016

PRESENT

Councillor D.R. Wright (Mayor)
T. Beaken, T.S. Bains, M. Blase,
P.M. Chandler, T. Culley, P. Cumbers,
J. M. Douglas, T. Greenow, L. Higgins,
E. Hutchison, J. Illingworth, S. Lumley,
J.T. Orson, A. Pearson, P.M. Posnett,
J.B. Rhodes, J. Simpson, J. Wyatt

Chief Executive
Strategic Director & Deputy MO (KA), Strategic Director (CAM)
Head of Regulatory Services, Regulatory Services Manager;
Local Plans Manager; Democracy & Involvement Officer

CO36. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Baguley, Botterill, de Burle, Glancy, Graham MBE, Holmes, Manderson, and Sheldon. Councillor Hurrell was also not present.

CO37. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors Pearson, Posnett, Orson and Rhodes each declared a personal interest in any matters relating to the Leicestershire County Council due to their roles as County Councillors.

Councillor Orson declared a disclosable pecuniary interest on agenda item 3 (Minute CO38) as a land owner within the Borough and indicated he would leave the meeting before consideration of the items on the Melton Local Plan commenced.

[Councillor Orson here left the meeting.]

CO38. MELTON LOCAL PLAN – CONSIDERATION OF SITE ALLOCATIONS

Members had before them a report prepared by the Head of Regulatory Services (copies of which had previously been circulated to Members) which explained the application of the Council's approach to the 'settlement hierarchy', site assessment exercise and the resulting proposed site allocations to be formally put forward in the submission stage in the production of the Melton Local Plan. Tabled at the meeting was a paper which set out corrections to the previously circulated documents:

- (a) Covering report: table at para 3.4 amended to update house numbers in Bottesford and Easthorpe;
- (b) Appendix B – replacement page for the Old Dalby Site Assessment (text);
- (c) Appendix D – page 21: narrative for Frisby on the Wreake amended;
- (d) Appendix D – pages 48/49: corrections to site names for allocated sites.

The Chairman of the Melton Local Plan Working Group, Councillor Chandler, made the following points before she moved the recommendations on the Order Paper relating to agenda item 3:

- the paper before Members represented the implementation of the approach agreed by the Council at its meeting on 1 September 2016 when it was agreed to review the approach to village distribution following the reaction to the approach set out in the Emerging Options consultation, and devised a scheme based on the presence of key services and proximity to them;
- a key feature of this approach was to rely on 15% as windfalls (small sites in all of the villages, under the new policies) and to allocate the remaining 1822 to specific sites in the selected Service Centres and Rural Hubs – those locations with the most facilities and better accessibility;
- another key feature was that the allocations should be proportionate; all villages affected should accommodate a similar proportion of growth, so that the scale of the allocation was defined by the existing population of the villages;
- the report set out this approach in some detail, showing how the allocation had been calculated and then applying refinements to take account of commitments already made. One issue that had given the Working Group difficulty was how to make provision for villages which were not able to accommodate their allocation due to lack of sites;
- the Working Group considered a range of options, which included directing the shortfall to Melton Mowbray, or to the 'highest ranked' villages (Asfordby and Bottesford) but considered this 'dispersed approach' the best in the circumstances. The former was rejected because it would be a step towards the over-concentration and dependency on Melton Mowbray which was one of the reasons that lead to the failure of the last Local Plan in 2013. The latter is hampered by the fact that those locations barely have enough sites for their own allocations. It was considered inherently fair to accommodate the rural area's proportion of the whole (35% within the rural area);
- the paper before Members proceeds to translate these allocation to specific sites. To do this, every site put forward has been examined and assessed against a wide range of planning criteria. The results of this are included in Appendix B. They were then ranked in terms of their suitability, and the sites selected (shown in Appendix D) are those needed to meet the allocation. These include sites where permission is in place or has been recently granted

(including appeals) and typically these are ranked top because their future is settled. Appendix D also includes specific policies that are intended to ensure key issues are addressed when the sites come forward, whether they relate to a general concern such as the capacity of infrastructure or a site specific requirement;

- a final component to be highlighted is the introduction of 'reserve sites'. These are intended to provide headroom should sites fail in any given location, so they can be replaced and allow the objectives of the Plan to proceed without having to go to wholesale review;
- site selection is far from an exact science and whilst there has been a strong use of evidence, there remains an element of subjectivity. Going forward with the Council's agreement, the next stage will be to incorporate the sites into the Submission version of the Local Plan and invite comment on whether it is the right approach to produce a plan that will pass the test of soundness at Examination. It is anticipated that Plan will be presented to the Council for consideration in mid October.

The Chairman of the Planning Committee, Councillor Illingworth, seconded the motion and reserved his right to speak.

Before making her contribution to the debate, the Leader of the Council addressed the members of the public present referring to those Councillors whose apologies for absence had been given: she explained that this was because of a number of genuine reasons: some had interests that precluded them from participating in the meeting or, due to the short notice of this meeting, some had other commitments or health issues that prevented their attendance.

The Leader then made the following points:

- the Council had now reached another significant stage in taking forward the local plan and it was absolutely critical to maintain the progress to ensure that it was submitted early next year. There were several reasons for this but in particular the Council must be able to defend against the ever increasing number of planning applications being submitted for the villages and the towns. This could not be done without a Plan. The Plan was also needed to support the ambitious bid for funding towards the relief road and asked how this would be perceived if it was delayed at this critical stage;
- there was the threat that the Council's planning function could be taken over by the government and a Plan imposed upon Melton Borough. There was the potential that the Council's financial sustainability could be undermined if the new homes bonus was withdrawn and the timetable for the Plan was not achieved;
- there would be some who would not be happy with what was being proposed; reassurances were given that the Council had listened to the concerns raised regarding distribution as part of the previous consultation, and had adopted an amended approach. The Council could delay and continue to refine through many further different iterations, but there was the danger that none would be acceptable in terms of the balance between planning requirements and village aspirations. Meanwhile, planning applications had to be considered and decided upon in the context of the

NPPF and no five year land supply until this was addressed by approving a Plan;

- put forward the following issues for consideration: in response to assertions that some villages could not take growth, this would merely increase the numbers for others to take. The reports before Members represented the culmination of a professional assessment process by the Council's officers and careful consideration had been given to how certain infrastructure constraints can be managed by ensuring that developments only come forward when certain issues have been dealt with;
- decisions must be taken in the best interests of the Borough as a whole and this could be difficult when many were unhappy at the need to take additional houses. It must be remembered that these houses would provide homes for local people, those moving into the area to work, those with growing families, or seeking their first house as well as those seeking to downsize;
- there would still be an opportunity for representations to be received towards this methodology as part of the submission plan and an inspector will be able to consider those representations as part of the hearing;
- concluded by referring to the marathon task needed and thanked the staff who had risen to the occasion despite significant set-backs and challenges along the way. The Leader commended the report for the Council's approval to enable it to continue to the next stage of the plan making process.

A discussion then ensued during which a number of Members made contributions which covered the following points:

- the village of Frisby on the Wreake had contributed to the consultations; the parish council had formed a Neighbourhood Plan Group. The residents had accepted that Frisby should take a share of the new homes but felt it was unfair that it should have to take an additional allocation from other villages. It was felt that the rural hubs should take their fair share. The Local Plan was a fluid document and could be reviewed at the 10 year stage. It was suggested that the Council should look at brown field sites to avoid over development of the villages which would create further pressure on village schools;
- the frustration expressed by some rural residents was acknowledged and parish councils had been encouraged to start Neighbourhood Plan Groups earlier but few had done so. Such Groups would run alongside the Local Plan. The issue of schools provision was the subject of ongoing dialogue with the County Council as Education Authority and the possibility of Section 106 monies being used to help schools take additional children was one form of mitigating action that could be taken;
- concerns were raised about young people being effectively 'locked out' of the villages they grew up in; the demographic of small villages and market towns was changing with an increasing older population which was putting pressure on rural communities. It was suggested that it was still possible to sustain a vibrant, rural economy if there was the provision of affordable homes within the villages that would enable younger residents to remain or young families to move into these communities;
- reiteration of previous concerns expressed about insufficient provision of school places in some of the Borough's villages to meet the Council's proposed house building targets. The contention was made that if a local village school did not have sufficient places for the children from a new

development, then that development should not be approved. The Member stated that he was pleased to see that these concerns had been taken on board as officers had qualified the capability of service centre and rural hub villages to deliver their full allocation of houses. The example of the SHLAA Assessment Summary for Long Clawson was cited where it was made clear that no development could take place unless or until provision was made for more primary school places. However, 128 houses were still insisted as the housing allocation for Long Clawson even though those houses could not be built unless there were sufficient school places. Qualifying statements were also made in Appendix D, the site allocations and policy paper, for a number of other villages but like Long Clawson, the housing allocations were not amended;

- the Member had calculated that more than 500 houses could not be accommodated without some increase in the school place provision. Reference was made to the officers' proposal that these places could be financed from Section 106 contributions; the figure of £11,500 per property had been suggested as sufficient to cope with the problem in Long Clawson. A response received from enquires made to the County Council, would indicate that there would be insufficient money from this source because of competing demands for funding other infrastructure needs and likely resistance from developers. The Chief Executive was asked to provide assurance that due note would be taken of the advice from the County Council. The Chief Executive confirmed receipt of the letter referred to by the Member and stated that the local planning authority would be responding to the County Council as education authority in due course. The Member concluded by expressing his concern that as the paper before the Council stood, it had a significant problem which needed to be addressed or else face the risk that the Plan could fail at enquiry;
- a Member stated she did not support the distribution of the excess of housing allocations solely in the villages, but across the villages and the town. She stated that the council had a choice of housing of a demographic figure of 195 dwellings per annum, a mid -range of 220 per annum, and for maximum economic growth 245 dwellings per annum. If the lesser demographic figure of 195 had been chosen, this would have meant a reduction of 1250 houses would need to be built over the plan period. And 35% of that would be fewer houses to be allocated in the villages. She was also concerned over the school places needed and issues over how the allocation had been distributed. She felt that this should be revisited without delaying the Local Plan for too long. The Leader made a point of order that the last Local Plan had failed on an 80:20 split between the town and the villages. Councillor Chandler also added that the 65:35 split now being used was evidence based and had been consulted upon widely;
- The Deputy Leader also made a point of order that of the additional 1,250 houses, 35% would be allocated to the villages which meant only 6 houses for every village over the 25 year life of the Plan. The Deputy Leader said he wished to encourage those who had submitted representations to continue to participate to the next stage of the Plan. He acknowledged the challenge to keep amenities going in village communities and asked residents to bring forward local projects which could be supported through the use of developer contributions.
- a point of order was made in response to the Deputy Leader, that the 35% of housing attributed to the villages would only be shared by the villages with housing allocations, not all the villages.

As the seconder of the motion, Councillor Illingworth commented on the vast amount of work and staff time that had gone into the production of the draft Local Plan and the supporting documents. He acknowledged that it was not possible to produce a Plan that would satisfy everyone; the Working Group and the Council had deployed fairness in its decision making and he believed that the policies now presented were fairer than the previous ones. Sound planning criteria had been applied to arrive at the preferences set out. Referring to the concerns about provision of additional school places, Councillor Illingworth stated that the County Council was a statutory consultee in the process and the Borough Council could attach weight to its representations. However, the County Council was also the statutory authority to provide the solutions to the education issue. He was of the view that the Plan was now good enough and was becoming better as officers used their discretion and delegated power to amend it. He commended the recommendations to the Council.

In summing up, Councillor Chandler endorsed the remarks made by Councillor Illingworth, particularly in his praise for the Local Plan team. She stated that she had met with the Inspector who had indicated that he accepted the document was a good base to work from. However, in a note of caution, she mentioned that similar comments had been made by an Inspector about the previous Plan.

The motion was then put to the vote and was carried by a majority in favour.

RESOLVED that

- (1) the Local Plan is drafted on the basis of the housing allocations set out at para. 3.7.3 of the report.
- (2) the Local Plan is formulated on the basis of site allocations drawn from each of the settlement summaries comprised within Appendix D;
- (3) the approach concept of 'reserve sites' and inclusion of the draft policy suggestion at section 3.10 of the report be approved, and additional suitable sites (where available) are allocated accordingly;
- (4) The settlement specific appendices within the Local Plan explaining the choices made and specific policy requirements where necessary, on the basis of the content of Appendix D be agreed;
- (5) authority is delegated to the Head of Regulatory Services in consultation with the Local Plans Manager to make consequential amendments to Chapter 4 ('Growing Melton Borough – The Spatial Strategy'), Policies SS1 and SS2 and Chapter 5 (Melton's Communities – Strong, Healthy and Vibrant) and related policies, in respect of the content affected by the report;
- (6) authority is delegated to the Head of Regulatory Services in consultation with the Local Plans Manager to make adjustments to the content comprised in parts (1) – (5) above in the event of the requirement arising from any of the factors set out in section 3.12 of the report, and that any such changes will be presented to Council for approval prior to inclusion in the Draft Plan (Submission version).

The meeting, which commenced at 6.30 p.m., closed at 7.17 p.m.

Mayor