



**Melton
Borough
Council**

Planning Committee

25th July 2019

Report of:

**Assistant Director of Strategic
Planning and Reg. Services**

19/00286/OUT: Land off Granby Lane, Plungar

Proposed new build development consisting of 4 new dwellings, public open space and off road parking.

1. Summary:

The site comprises a parcel of land to the west of Granby Lane with dwellings to the north, south and west. The land is currently undeveloped and provides an open space within the village.

The proposal is in outline with all matters reserved for the erection of four dwellings. Indicative plans have been submitted with the application providing a potential layout together with a potential housing mix which comprise 1 three bedroom bungalow, 1 three bedroom dwelling and two four bedroom dwellings.

2: Recommendations:

It is recommended the application is refused.

3: Reasons for Recommendation:

In the opinion of the Local Planning Authority the proposal would, if approved, result in the erection of four market dwellings without a convincing case to demonstrate a proven local need for the proposal. The development is in an location where there are limited local amenities, facilities and jobs, and where future residents are likely to depend highly on the use of the car, private motor vehicle. The proposal is therefore contrary to Policy SS3 of the Melton Local Plan which states in Rural Settlements a local proven need is required.

In the opinion of the Local Planning Authority, the proposal, if approved, would develop a current green and open space which makes a positive contribution to the settlement. As such, the fundamental character of the site, which is a green and open space, would be eroded and the proposal would not meet the tests set in Policy

EN6 of the Melton Local Plan which requires development to not harm open areas which contribute positively to the individual character of a settlement. The proposal is also contrary to Policy D1 of the Melton Local Plan which states all new developments should be of a siting and layout sympathetic to the character of the area.

4: Key factors:

Reason for Committee Determination

The application is required to be presented to the Committee due to the number of representations received.

Relevant Policies

The Melton Local Plan 2011-2036 was adopted on 10th October 2018 and is the Development Plan for the area.

- **No inconsistency with the NPPF has been identified that would render Local Plan policies 'out of date' in reaction to this application.**

Please see Appendix D for a list of all applicable policies

Main Issues

The main issues for this application are considered to be:

- Principle of development
- Impact upon the character of the area
- Impact upon residential amenities
- Highway Safety

5: Report Detail:

5.1 Position under the Development Plan policies

The site is within Plungar and policies SS1-SS3 apply.

5.2 Principle of Development

The site occupies a location within Plungar and comprises an undeveloped open space. The area is predominantly residential although there is a mix of building types.

Policy SS2 sets out the development strategy for the Borough for housing. It identifies a sustainable approach to development, establishes settlements as Service Centres, Rural Hubs or Rural Settlements and sets out the type of development appropriate to each. Plungar is identified as a Rural Settlement. Policy SS2 states alongside Service Centres and Rural Hubs, Rural Settlements will accommodate a proportion of the Borough's housing need, to support their role in the Borough through planning positively for new homes as windfall sites within and adjoining settlements by 2036. This development will be delivered through small unallocated sites which meet the needs and enhance the sustainability of the settlement in accordance with Policy SS3. Policy SS3 supports new dwellings in such villages only where there is a proven local need. The policy requires a demonstration that the development provides housing which meets a proven local need as identified by substantive evidence, for example within a Neighbourhood Plan or appropriate community-led strategy or a housing needs assessment or other evidence provided by the applicant.

In order to address the policy requirements the Agent has stated a report by Midlands Rural Housing was carried out in December 2018 in order to obtain clear evidence of the local housing need for a range of housing tenures for local residents in Plungar. The report concluded that the residents of Plungar identified an immediate need for one affordable and two open market properties. These comprised one three bedroom dwelling for the open market, one four bedroom dwelling for the open market and one three bedroom shared ownership dwelling.

In addition, amongst other matters, the report went on to show the provision of a public space/play area was felt to be important by 41% of residents followed by social facilities (35%) and the balance of housing and shop facilities (29%). Parking was also identified as an issue. The proposal is to provide dedicated parking for 4, 6 & 8 Frog Lane will alleviate this issue; open space is also shown on the indicative plan.

Policy SS3 requires a proven local need to demonstrate the type and number of dwellings proposed meets the identified needs. In this case, the recent local housing needs survey identified an immediate need for two market dwellings (3 and 4 bed) and an affordable dwelling (3 bed). However, the proposal comprises the erection of four dwellings and although the bedroom provision would meet the housing needs, the number of units would not.

Furthermore, no additional information has been submitted in support of the application in terms of demonstrating the type and number of dwellings are needed

in this village at this time. The Local Plan has provided for, and exceeded by some margin, housing supply requirements and several of the allocated housing sites are in close proximity to Plungar and no information has been provided to indicate why these provision are not suitable to meet the identified needs.

It is not considered sufficient evidence has been provided to demonstrate a proven local need as required by Policy SS3. As such, the proposal is considered to be contrary to Policy SS3.

It is noted the indicative layout would provide additional parking and open space; the housing needs survey identified a shortfall on both elements in the village. However, although these would be welcomed, they do not outweigh the harm resulting from the erection of four dwellings with insufficient proven local need in this unsustainable location.

In terms of housing mix, the Borough wide housing needs survey established a general, Borough wide need, for two and three bedroom properties and this proposal seeks permission for three x three bedroom properties and one x four bedroom property (indicative only). As such, the housing mix proposed is considered to be acceptable and to comply with Policy C2.

As such, the principle of development is not acceptable.

5.3 Impact upon the character of the area

The site lies within the heart of the village and provides an undeveloped open space. The site is not however a protected green space or within a Conservation Area. The application is in outline and the indicative layout plan depicts the siting of four dwellings together with a substantial area of open space.

The site makes a positive contribution to the village in terms of being open and undeveloped and although it did not meet the criteria for formal protection in the new Local Plan as a 'Local Green Space' it is nevertheless an important feature within the village.

Although the indicative layout demonstrates a significant proportion of the site would remain open and undeveloped, the fundamental character of the site, which is a green and open space, would be eroded. The proposal would not meet the tests set in Policy EN6 which requires development to not harm open areas which contribute positively to the individual character of a settlement. The proposal is also contrary to Policy D1 which states all new developments should be of a siting and layout sympathetic to the character of the area

On balance therefore, it is considered the proposal would be harmful to the visual amenity of the site and surroundings and does not comply with Policies EN6 and D1.

It is not considered the proposal would achieve a high standard of design and layout, and would be contrary to Policies EN6 and D1.

5.4 Impact upon residential amenities

The site is bordered by highways to the east and west and occupies a significant area. It is considered the site could be developed for four dwellings without harm to the residential amenities of neighbouring properties subject to satisfactory design, layout etc. Adequate separation distances could be achieved and would also provide satisfactory gardens for the proposed dwellings and adequate amenity for future occupants. As such, the proposal would comply with Policy D1 subject to details.

Overall, it is considered the proposal would provide a satisfactory level of amenity for existing and future occupants.

5.5 Highway Safety

The indicative plans illustrate access points to serve the proposed four dwellings although all matters are reserved. The Highway Authority has raised no objection subject to details being submitted at the reserved matters stage.

Overall, it is considered there are no highway safety implications subject to satisfactory details being submitted at the reserved matters stage.

5.6 Archaeology

The site has been subject to an archaeological earthwork survey and trial trenching. The results of the trial trenching indicated low levels of activity and LCC Archaeology has confirmed for this reason no further archaeological intervention is required.

Overall, it is considered there are no archaeological implications.

Consultation & Feedback

A site notice was posted, the application advertised and neighbouring properties consulted. As a result, 51 objections have been received.

Background Papers:

- Planning Application File 00/00201/FUL Proposed vehicular access – Refused.

Appendices:

A: Consultation responses
B: Representations received
C: Recommended conditions
D: Applicable Development Plan Policies

Report Timeline:

Assistant Director Approval

12th July 2019

Report Author: Mr Joe Mitson, Planning Officer, Development Management

☎: 01664 502395

Appendix A : Consultation replies

Barkestone, Plungar and Redmile Parish Council

Object on the grounds that the parish of Barkestone, Plungar and Redmile consists of three small rural settlements and surrounding open countryside. As a Parish Council and community we actively engaged in the production of the Melton Local Plan by holding parish meetings, responding to the consultation documents and having Parish Council and resident representation on the reference groups. We have invested heavily in considering how the plan will affect the smaller villages, such as ours, which are categorised as unsustainable. An underlying principle of the current planning framework is that housing development should be actively directed towards sustainable locations. Applications should only be permitted in unsustainable locations in restricted and specific circumstances. This case will test how the new plan is to work in unsustainable locations by testing how rigorously and robustly policies SS2 and SS3 are to be applied. It also brings into focus how policy EN6 is to be applied to land which was formerly defined as a Protected Open Area.

The Parish objection is based on policies SS2 and SS3 as there is no demonstrably proven housing need and no substantive evidence of such. A housing needs survey was undertaken on by Midland Rural Housing in December 2018. This survey was, at best, misleading in its presentation giving the impression it was from or on behalf of the Borough Council and a generic survey of future housing requirements. The Parish Council wrote a formal letter of complaint to Melton Borough Council as many residents felt they had been deliberately misled. In particular, the question in the survey was not “Do you need housing in Plungar” but “Do you need housing in this Parish”, it did not consider whether there is already a housing supply available in the Parish, it did not ask whether the respondents would be better served in sustainable alternative locations, it did not indicate whether the affirmative responses were from

family members or friends/supporters of the applicant, it did not ask whether the respondent would want a home of the type being included in the application, it did not ask whether they could afford such a property, it did not ask whether they would wish to live in close proximity to the main road through the village or close to the local pub and it encouraged members of the same family to reply individually.

The application fails to recognise the importance of the paddock to the setting and character of the village. Quoting from the Inspector's appeal decision which related to a previous application on an adjacent site: *"The village has an open spacious layout, of which the most significant feature is the paddock at its centre. The importance of this open green space is recognised by its designation in the MLP as a 'protected open space'. It is described as providing an open area of considerable character in the heart of the village. The paddock is surrounded by old traditional small scale dwellings. These are however set sufficiently apart and far away to preserve its entirely rural character"*. Whilst Protected Open Area is a definition that no longer applies in the new Local Plan, the fundamental importance of the paddock to the character of Plungar remains. It is the defining feature at the heart of the village.

LCC Highways have expressed reservations about the proposed access and parking arrangements. We share the view particularly the dangers at the pinch point on Granby Lane which will be compounded if further access drives are added.

We draw attention to the fact that there is an existing permission for an 5 additional dwellings to be built at Merrivale Farm.

LCC Highways

The residual cumulative impacts of development can be mitigated and are not considered severe in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework 2019 (NPPF).

LCC Archaeology

The site has been subject to an archaeological earthwork survey and trial trenching. The results of the trial trenching indicated low levels of activity. For this reason no further archaeological intervention is required.

LCC Forestry

The Arboricultural Impact Assessment submitted in support of the proposed development appears to be a thorough, fair and robust appraisal of trees on the site. Of the six trees and two tree groups included in the survey only two trees and one group form part of the site. The remaining trees are located on adjacent land, i.e. are in private ownership. The remaining tree group may well form the boundary feature of an adjacent property, indicating this is also in private ownership.

Several other items are included in the survey, but these are predominately shrubs or clumps of young, poor quality trees (e.g. scrub). A small number of trees and a section of hedge are proposed for removal in order to facilitate the development. The

loss in terms of amenity value and bio-diversity could reasonably be off-set through the creation and instigation of a detailed landscape plan. There is adequate space on site to plant a number of small, medium and large specimen trees. In the event that the development is to proceed, and that trees are to be retained protective fencing should be installed around retained trees before any site works or ground preparation commences.

Historic England

No objection.

Ward Cllr

This development in the centre of Plungar is a modest application with reasonable density of housing. However, this green space is very much part and parcel of the look and feel of this village and to lose it would dramatically impact on the inhabitants. I therefore object.

Appendix B : Summary of representations received

No Additional Housing Needed

The additional housing needs survey that was conducted was poorly put together, it gave the impression it was in co-operation with Melton Borough Council. There were 116 surveys sent out and only 17 returned, this is by no way an accurate representation of villagers wishes. Misrepresentations appeared such as 3 out of the 4 people who stated a need for more houses don't live in the village. The survey does not, in any sense, establish need. The Oxford English dictionary defines 'need' as *"Require (something) because it is essential or very important rather than just desirable."* There are frequently houses for sale in the village of around the same price bracket as the proposed houses. There are already 5 additional houses coming up for sale from the development on the Merrivale Farm site.

Unsustainable Village

Plunger was designated as a village with no sustainability in the Local Plan as there is no infrastructure in terms of schools, shops, doctor surgery etc. Single residential units on Barkestone Lane have been refused because of the unsustainable location of Plungar village and the subsequent appeal against the decision was dismissed in late 2018. The proposed development isn't compatible with the Village Design Statement which was adopted with the MBC Local Plan on 7th March. Policy SS2 requires that development of unallocated sites must meet the needs and enhance the sustainability of the settlement. The proposal satisfies neither of these requirements, given that the purported local need is considered to be questionable and it will provide no real benefits to the sustainability of Plungar as a community. Para 4.2.17 refers to the provision of 'up to 3 dwellings' only; regardless of any other considerations, how can a 4th unit been justified?

Notwithstanding the element of windfall sites in the overall housing strategy, reliance on such rural site is 'very conservative' at c15pa across the whole Borough (MLP

4.2.14). The planned housing delivery (to meet requirements) does not rely on windfall provisions until 2022 (MLP Fig4 and Table 3). The MLP housing allocations in Service Centres/Rural Hubs provide capacity for 1649 units against a residual requirement for 1403. Policy C1(B) provides for reserved sites. Hence, the adopted plan would appear to have significant robustness, without unwarranted additions such as the current application.

Village Character

The character of the village will change with the development. Comments made by Planning Inspector in dismissing appeal APP/Y/2430/A/95/2550023/P7 and APP/Y/2430/A/2550029/P7. "In particular the intrusive impact of the proposed development on the paddock area and on the character of the village centre means that material harm would be caused to the character and appearance of Plunger".

Agricultural land has been used for 100's of years as a grazing site for sheep, horses etc, it is part of our heritage. The paddock is an important archaeological site. While an archaeological assessment was made in the planning application it is not clear where the trenches were dug. It is also not clear if there was any examination in the middle of the paddock where it seems there would be the most interesting finds.

The design of the housing appears to be most inappropriate for a village which is comprised predominately of red brick/ironstone buildings with terracotta/Bottesford blue pantiles. The use of timber is particularly unsuitable. The village already has already suffered some particularly unsuitable additions in recent years e.g. the use of yellow brick on the corner of Barkestone Lane and Granby Lane.

Village Amenities

The application states that there is no play/public amenity space at present. This is irrelevant as most of the houses in the village have large gardens. There is no mention in the application as to who will take ownership and responsibility for the proposed play/public amenity and car park, including the maintenance thereof.

Road Safety

The section of Granby Lane has a footpath running along it on one side of the road, the children use it as the only access to the bus stop for school. It has a blind crossing at one end and a corner that vehicles take too quickly, these added access points will only add to their safety problems. From the plans it would seem each plot only has one reversing area, this means there might be many occasions when it would be necessary to back out onto a blind portion of Granby Lane. There has never been a parking problem along Frog Lane. There will be many more vehicles to access this road which has farm traffic and other large vehicles, which can make driving difficult already.

Appendix C: Recommended Conditions

N/A

Appendix D : Applicable Development Plan Policies

Local Plan

- Policy SS1 Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development.
- Policy SS2 Development Strategy.
- Policy SS3 Sustainable Communities (Unallocated Sites)
- Policy C2 Housing Mix.
- Policy EN1 Landscape.
- Policy EN6 Settlement Character.
- Policy EN8 Climate Change.
- Policy IN2 Transport, Accessibility and Parking.
- Policy IN4 Broadband.
- Policy D1: Raising the Standard of Design.