

Melton Local Plan “Issues and Options”

Response & Contribution from Barkestone Plungar and Redmile Parish Council

Note on these comments

The BPR Parish Council has agreed these responses following an Extraordinary General Meeting of the Council, which was held on 6th January 2015. All residents of the villages were made aware of the meeting in early December and about 40 attended, spread roughly evenly between the three villages, and were invited to make their views known. The Council believes that these comments reflect the key views of those village residents.

For our specific parish we are not a suitable candidate for sustainable development since we lack the fundamentals of employment, adequate broadband, medical facilities, shops, and good public transport etc. What is important to our residents are the quiet and distinctive nature of the villages, the community spirit in them, the rural character and access to countryside and the quality of the traditional buildings. Residents are strongly in favour of retaining village envelopes, Protected Open Areas and the village character and community spirit which already exists. This was very clear from the responses we received from residents regarding the things they valued about living in our parish.

We are either not qualified/informed enough, or there was not time or resource during the consultation period to consider and respond to every question in the Issues and Options Document. We have provided responses to those questions which we consider to be most relevant to our villages.

Q1: Yes.

Q2: Currently for most residents of BPR, Grantham, Bingham, Nottingham and even Newark are the focus of our activities for leisure, work and shopping. This is for many reasons including communications. However, there was general agreement that residents would like Melton to become more of a focus for work and leisure. Residents who do go to Melton think it used to be a much more attractive town to visit, and would like to see it revived.

We support the vision as expressed, particularly the revitalisation of Melton Mowbray and the preservation of the heritage of Melton Borough’s villages. In our view this means a focus on planned development in Melton town, creating a genuine mother town for the Borough villages, which in turn will draw economic benefits from increased interaction between the town and the wider Borough. Inevitably this will also mean significant investment in Melton, with a corresponding constraint on investment on development in the countryside.

Q3: We do support the objectives, in particular to improve access to public transport.

Q4: We agree generally.

Q5: As we have stated earlier, the villages in the North of the borough currently use Grantham/Bingham/Nottingham/Newark because of good communications and facilities. We would like to see Melton become a more prominent “mother town”.

Q7: Option 1 is the preferred option – development focused on Melton Mowbray with lesser development in larger villages.

In small villages such as ours, there are very limited resources for the work required to produce full Neighbourhood Plans and to engage in the process of planning development at a local level. Indeed the Parish Council in BPR decided that it did not have the resources to produce or lead the production of a Neighbourhood Plan (although we do already have a Village Design Statement which the residents regard as very valuable). Development undertaken in Melton town and the larger villages is much more likely to benefit from full engagement at a local level, leading to a better quality of outcome (as distinct from the Wild West of development which has at times prevailed in smaller villages historically).

Village residents were also at pains to point out the serious lack of infrastructure in the villages even at present. Just a few examples are the drainage system in Barkestone, very limited broadband particularly in Redmile which is not going to improve on the foreseeable future, no shop, only a small village hall in one village, a limited bus service. Significant further development in these villages, even if desirable, would require a massive investment in infrastructure.

It is also clear that residents are not worried about reduced village vitality – they appear to like the community spirit in these villages as it is.

Q9: There was a mix of views on this.

Q10: Issues with Normanton airfield include the quality of the road into Bottesford which is unsuitable for increased traffic, and the location of the site in the far North of the Borough.

Q11: It has always been a mystery to us why Redmile is included in the list of villages which offer a number of key services. Whilst it has a pub and a primary school, it has only a limited bus service, and no other facilities, in particular no shop, no village hall, and very poor broadband.

Q12: We support Option 1.

Q13: Yes

Q13b: The criteria need to be rated sensitively. For example, if a village has a large population, are they working locally or commuting to work – this should affect the settlement role. Or if there are bus services, are they going to appropriate places (e.g. Bottesford to Grantham).

Q15: Our view is that these villages should not be developed with schemes which would require affordable housing. Affordable housing in any case is not appropriate in small villages since families requiring such housing need good access to the facilities and jobs in larger communities.

Q20: Yes, however the services need to be sustainable. For example, in our parish there is probably not sufficient demand for a shop, but it may be possible to develop alternatives (such as “mini-shops” in public houses or similar, or mobile services), to cater for local needs and therefore lead to minimisation of needless journeys etc.

Q24: Option 1. The main centres for employment currently have room for further investment and this can be done with more effective results. Transport and communications are key for helping the rural areas access employment.

Q30: Yes to questions 30a and 30b.

Q35: Our villages benefit from great informal open spaces within easy reach, particularly the Grantham Canal.

Q37: We did not have a consensus view on this. In our specific parish we do not consider there are spaces which should be designated Local Green Spaces (assuming that the Grantham Canal is not suitable for such protection), but there is a strong view that the existing Protected Open Spaces in our villages should be retained as such.

Q54a: The lack of suitable broadband in our villages, particularly Redmile, is a challenge which appears will not be addressed by current initiatives. This has a considerable impact on many questions surrounding development, business creation, education etc.

Q55: We agree that better connectivity to rural areas, and parking in larger villages and towns, are and will continue to be key concerns.

Q61: Option 3 (locally developed design guidance) is our preference and we already have a Village Design Statement which we would like the Local Plan to recognise as planning guidance.

Q66: Outstanding and innovative design should be sought in all development applications and encouraged as one of a number of factors justifying development. However, good design itself should not be a single deciding factor in justifying small scale development – the policy should not be a way of enabling other policy constraints to be waived.

Q68: Option 2. This is a key issue for our residents, who were strongly in favour of retaining village envelopes.

In larger villages which have Neighbourhood Plans, the ability to assess proposed new developments in consultation with the wishes of village residents and in the spirit of the Localism Act 2011 is greater, and the application of a criteria-based approach for those villages, as proposed by Option 2, would work.

In smaller villages a more prescriptive approach is required. Village envelopes should be used as a tool to limit development and provide clarity, and a level of certainty.

If the village envelopes were to be reviewed (Option 1), we would favour a full consultation with local residents over the revised envelope.

Q70: The existing Protected Open Areas in our Parish are considered very important by residents (as demonstrated in consultations for the LDF and other planning meetings including the recent one) to preserve what is left of the heritage character of the villages. They should not be altered.

The POAs in our villages are not waste land, but part of the village community scene.

Question 72 – Housing Density

Yes, the Plan should have a policy on housing density. We are concerned that the village landscape is becoming urban in character. A site by site appraisal (Option 2) would help to mitigate against this. Quality of design should be considered alongside density.

Question 73 – Heritage assets

Option 2 – the retention of Conservation Areas as existing is desirable. However there are many community landscapes with Heritage assets which are not protected by that status for arbitrary reasons. There needs therefore to be a policy to cover these assets. New Conservation status for appropriate areas should be supported (we would welcome support for our work already done with regarding to Barkestone & Plungar).

Q74: We have a Village Design Statement which should be adopted as planning guidance.

Q75: A specific policy covering the use of advertising displays in the open countryside would help to provide clarity which is currently lacking.

Q82: We agree with the approach to selecting sites in accordance with the Local Plan Spatial Strategy, working with local parishes and Neighbourhood Plans, as well as the listed constraints.

Q83: We note that seven of the sites (MBC007/13, MBC075/13, MBC102/13, MBC074/13, MBC047/13, MBC085/13, MBC084/13) shown in the Issues and Options document are not in the SHLAA, being less than 0.3 hectares or having a proposal for fewer than 5 dwellings. These sites therefore appear to be potentially available for infill development. However the majority view of our residents is that these sites are not suitable candidates for sustainable development, since our villages lack the fundamentals of employment, adequate broadband, medical facilities, shops, and good public transport etc. The infrastructure of the villages (e.g. overloaded drainage, single track roads) is also wholly inadequate to support further developments.

One site in Plungar is already approved for development.

All the remaining sites (MBC100/13, MBC090/13, MBC089/13, MBC101/13, MBC103/13, MBC094/13) are not currently deliverable, being a Protected Open Area or outside the village envelope. Since we have identified the retention of the POAs and the village envelope as being the two key things which we would wish to see retained in the Local Plan, these sites would remain undeliverable. This is consistent with the views we have expressed on other questions.

9th January 2015