



**EXAMINATION – MATTERS AND QUESTIONS
MELTON LOCAL PLAN EXAMINATION
STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF:
DAVIDSONS DEVELOPMENTS LIMITED**

**MATTER 5: Other Housing Allocations (Policy C1 (A) and
Appendix 1) and Reserve Sites (Policy C1 (B) and Appendix
1)**

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MATTER 5: Other Housing Allocations (Policy C1(A0 and Appendix 1) and Reserve Sites (Policy C1(B) and Appendix 1)

5.1 Overall, has the allocation of the sites in Policy (A) been based on a clear, robust process of site assessment and informed by sustainability appraisal? In particular:

i) has an appropriate selection of potential sites been assessed?

ii) has an appropriate methodology been used and has it been applied consistently?

iii) are the reasons for selecting the preferred sites and rejecting the others clear and sufficient? Would any inaccuracies in the assessments significantly undermine the overall conclusions?

iii) has a reasonable balance been struck between the residual requirement figure for each of the settlements in Table 4 and the allocation of sites to meet the residual requirement as closely as possible?

5.1.1 Pegasus Group act on behalf of Davidsons Developments Limited who have land interests at Sandpit Lane, Long Clawson. The site is identified in Policy C1(A) Housing Allocations as LONG4, capable of delivering 55 dwellings. It is also identified under Policy LONG4 Land off Sandpit Lane at Appendix 1 'Site Allocations and Policies' of the Pre-Submission Draft Melton Plan.

5.1.2 The site's allocation for residential development of 55 homes by the Council is fully supported. The site is centrally located within the village, and is within easy reach of the village's services and facilities.

5.1.3 The site is subject of an outline planning application (reference 16/00032/OUT). The outline planning application was considered by Melton's Planning Committee on Monday 4th December 2017, along with three other planning applications for residential developments in Long Clawson.

5.1.4 The application was refused on the basis of conflict with the Long Clawson, Hose and Harby Neighbourhood Plan and what was considered to be substantial harm to adjacent heritage assets.

5.1.5 At the time of the decision, whilst the Examiner's report had been issued, the plan had not progressed to Referendum. To have refused the

application on the basis of the Neighbourhood Plan is considered overly simplistic and incorrect. The Neighbourhood Plan has yet to proceed to referendum. To assume that the Neighbourhood Plan should be attributed substantial weight just because it has been examined and the remaining stage is a local referendum is incorrect. The Referendum is a statutory stage in the process and there can be no certainty as to its outcome. Pending the outcome of the Referendum, the Neighbourhood Plan should not be afforded substantial weight. The Neighbourhood Plan can only have force and meaning when it is endorsed by the local community.

5.1.6 The proposed housing numbers for Long Clawson set out in the Local Plan are supported. Policy SS2 – Development Strategy sets out the Council’s approach to the distribution of development across the Borough. Provision will be made for at least 6,125 homes.

5.1.7 The site can deliver up to 55 dwellings, which together with other proposed allocations provides a total of 141 new dwellings. Whilst this is an overprovision when compared against the residual requirement of 111 dwellings, it is not a significant increase in numbers and the combined proposals do not present any technical issues that cannot be overcome.

5.1.8 In the Council’s Part 2 Service Centres ‘Update to Site Assessments’ 30 May 2017, the sustainability credentials of the site at Sandpit Lane are set out. It notes that the site is within 800m of the village centre, with adopted footways providing opportunities for walking into the centre of Long Clawson. Services and facilities are easily accessible on foot and bicycle. Bus stops are located within 400m of the site. Employment sites that are accessible from the site include Long Clawson Dairy -300m; Crown Business Park – 4.3km; Old Dalby Industrial Estate – 4/5km; Langar – 5.4km and Asfordby Business Park – 6km. Potential significant positive effects were identified for this site in relation to Sustainability Appraisal objectives: 9:social inclusion, 10:social deprivation, 14:health and 15:energy efficiency.

5.1.9 In terms of concerns raised by Members of the Plans Committee in relation to heritage impacts of the proposal, a number of designated heritage assets lie to the north of the site, including the Grade II* listed Manor Farmhouse and St Remigius Church and the Grade II listed Old Vicarage, along with the Long Clawson Conservation Area and the scheduled moated site east of St Remigius Church. These are designated heritage assets as defined by the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework).

- 5.1.10 The planning application was accompanied by a detailed Heritage Assessment and Archaeological Assessment and Geophysical Survey Report prepared by Trigpoint Conservation and Planning. A further report on heritage prepared jointly by Pegasus and Trigpoint Conservation was submitted in response to local resident comments. The reports considered the impact on designated heritage assets within the visual envelope of the proposed development and included the results of geophysical archaeological investigation. The Heritage Assessment submitted as part of the application concluded that the proposed development will not harm the setting or overall significance of the Old Vicarage, the neighbouring scheduled monument or the character or appearance of the existing Conservation Area. The report accepted that the proposed development will have some impact on the setting of Manor Farmhouse and St Remigius' Church resulting in a limited degree of harm falling within the less than substantial threshold referred to in the Framework.
- 5.1.11 In response to this Assessment and the development proposals as a whole, the consultation response issued by Historic England concluded that the proposals will *"...diminish the appreciation and understanding of the rural context of the highly graded assets – in particular the Grade II* listed Church, Manor Farmhouse and Conservation Area"* and that *"the proposal will be harmful to the significance of designated heritage assets commensurate with less than substantial harm as identified by the NPPF"*.
- 5.1.12 The consultation response does not conclude that the harm identified would be substantial.
- 5.1.13 There is no evidence therefore to support the contention by Members of the Planning Committee that the harm to heritage assets in this case would be substantial.
- 5.1.14 Where there is less than substantial harm to heritage assets, para 134 of the Framework requires the decision maker to undertake a balancing exercise between harm to a heritage asset and public benefits. The construction of new homes is a national priority and the benefits to the local economy of the new development have been clearly stated in terms of supporting local employment, local businesses and to the community as a whole. These benefits carry significant weight and are a material consideration in the determination of the planning application.

5.1.15 It is considered that the wide range of public benefits associated with the proposed development outweigh the less than substantial harm to the nearby heritage assets that would result.

5.1.16 The Clawson, Hose and Harby Neighbourhood Plan seeks to plan for a lower level of housing delivery in the parish when compared with the proposals set out in the Submission Draft Local Plan. The Neighbourhood plan seeks to justify this lower provision based on the Leicester and Leicestershire Housing and Economic Development Needs Assessment (HEDNA), 2017.

5.1.17 It is considered that this approach is not in general conformity with strategic policies of the local plan and fails to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development.

5.1.18 The Focused Changes do not propose any changes to the submission version of the plan in relation to the housing land requirement. The Council's Focused Change FC1.1 clearly sets out the reasons why the proposed housing requirement for the Borough should remain unchanged at 245 dwellings a year.

5.1.19 Reports commissioned by the Council, including the Towards a Housing Requirement For Melton report, January 2017 and Addendum, July 2017, set out the clear economic and social benefits of delivering housing provision above the objectively assessed housing need (OAN). These benefits include;

- positively supporting sustainable growth in the Borough's economy and aligning with the evidence in the Employment land study – requiring between 230 and 274 dwellings per annum;
- boosting significantly the supply of housing, with positive impacts in terms of both improving overall housing affordability and meeting the need for affordable homes in the Borough.

5.1.20 The justification for the level of housing provision proposed in the Submission Draft Local Plan is therefore considered to be robust.

5.1.21 The Council's assessment of the proposed allocation site at Sandpit Lane is set out in the Service Centre Update Site Assessment, May 2017 (MBC/HA1b – site reference LONG4 (MBC/168/15)). This concludes that the site is reasonably well related to the existing built-up area of the village and is close to employment opportunities and local facilities. The

assessment notes that no significant technical objections have been raised to the proposal. Possible impacts on heritage assets and landscape would need to be considered in the design, scale and layout of any scheme put forward. The Council's assessment of the site is robust and is supported by the technical evidence prepared in support of the planning application for the site.

5.1.22 Having considered representations on the Submission Draft Local Plan, Melton Borough Council, confirmed the allocation of the land at Sandpit Lane in its Focused Changes. The continued allocation of the site through the Local Plan is supported.

5.2 Overall, will the allocations provide sufficient flexibility to help deliver the spatial strategy?

5.2.1 It is important that the plan provides sufficient flexibility to ensure that the housing requirement over the plan period is met. In separate submissions, Davidsons has argued for the need to include additional suitable reserve sites. The land at Sandpit Lane is a suitable and deliverable allocation which will help contribute to meeting the housing requirement for the Borough.

5.3 Are the specific policy requirements for the site allocations in Appendix 1 justified and effective? Together with the plan policies as a whole, is there reasonable assurance that the development of the allocations will be sustainable and in accordance with national planning policy?

5.3.1 It is considered that the policy requirements for the site allocations in Appendix 1 are justified and effective. The submitted planning application proposals conforms fully with the policy requirements, making necessary contributions to education facilities, providing adequate drainage facilities and the submission of a heritage assessment.

5.4 Is the identification of 'reserve' sites in Policy C1(B) appropriate in principle?

5.4.1 No comments.

5.5 Has the basis for their identification been robust? Is there clear justification for the identification of the individual sites as reserve sites?

5.5.1 No comments.

5.6 Are the policy criteria of Policy C1(B) justified and effective? How will criteria iii) and iv) be assessed?

5.6.1 No comments.