

**Matter 8**

- 1.1 It appears that MBC are worried that 'out-of-town' retail units will have a detrimental effect on the town centre. The problem is that due to poor planning, the town centre is not able to expand as it is totally surrounded by housing. MBC continues to allow potential retail sites to be converted to apartments (e.g. The George Hotel, the old Court Rooms). The recently newly built MBC Offices on Parkside next to the railway station are actually on land set aside for retail development. There is no room for the town centre to expand and so inevitably new retail sites will be outside of the town centre boundary.
- 1.2 If the two SNs do get the go-ahead, they will both be sufficiently away from the town centre to require their own local retail area, particularly the MNSN as large parts of the north of the town are not covered by local bus services or the bus stops are well in excess of a 400 metres' walk away.
- 1.3 MBC claims to want to promote tourism, rural businesses etc. in the borough of Melton and yet they often refuse planning permission in the borough, as to grant planning permission would mean encouraging the use of the car. It is inevitable that, in a rural location such as Melton borough, there is insufficient public transport and the country roads are potentially hazardous for cyclists and pedestrians. It follows then that the car is the only viable and safe form of transport and should be accepted as such. Few villages are self-sustaining and it is a way of life for villagers to travel by car to larger centres for shopping, schooling, health services, and work.
- 1.4 As an example of MBC's attitude to rural development, a Planning Committee meeting on 9th November 2017 turned down a planning application (17/00836/FUL) for a Rabbit and Guinea Pig Hotel in a rural location between Waltham and Eastwell. The business which currently operates in Stonesby wished to extend and diversify and the application included a dwelling on the site plus other buildings for the hotel etc. Despite the councillor who proposed the approval of the application citing that this was a way of encouraging rural enterprise, the Committee voted to refuse the application on the grounds that: *"In the opinion of the Local Planning Authority the proposal would, if approved, result in the erection of a residential dwelling in an unsustainable location. The development is in an unsustainable village 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, contrary to the advice contained in NPPF in promoting sustainable development. It is considered that there is insufficient reason to depart from the guidance given in the NPPF on sustainable development in this location and would therefore be contrary to the "core planning principles contained" within Paragraph 17 of the NPPF."* This is nonsense when one takes into account that the application is for a Rabbit and Guinea Pig Hotel.
- 1.5 MBC needs to accept that in order to encourage and maintain a healthy and vibrant life style in villages, a certain amount of housing for all age groups should be accepted along with, where possible, development of rural businesses. There needs to be an acceptance on the part of the council that the car is often the only viable form of transport (as is the case in parts of the town even now), as public transport is irregular, unreliable, and in some areas non-existent.

