Matter 2: Overall Spatial Strategy

Representation by Burton & Dalby Parish Council

Reference: 155/139

2.1.i - The Vision and Strategic Objectives

1. Vision and Objectives: In considering Matter 2.1.i the Parish Council revisited the Plan's vision and strategic objectives. Having attended most of the Reference Group meetings and taken part in all the consultations we were perplexed to find that between January 2016 (Emerging Options) and November 2016 (Pre Submission Draft) the vision and objectives for Melton Borough had been markedly changed. Whilst the revised vision becomes more positive towards development and infrastructure the vision for the borough's landscape has a less positive thrust, referring to successful integration but not to positive improvement to the landscape and character. Balance is no longer evident in the vision.

2. The earlier vision and strategic priorities had been in existence in several documents and broadly agreed since 2014. The Emerging Options (Draft Plan) stated that 82% of respondents had commented on the vision supporting it. We think it is therefore unreasonable that the 'golden thread running through the plan' should have a radical shift in emphasis at such a late stage and without consultation.

3. Apportionment of Growth: During the parish council's involvement with the plan-making process we observed that the apportionment of new dwellings between town and villages changed from a 70% : 30% to 65% : 35% respectively, without any clear indication of the reason. We think this balance is wrong and may have arisen from an expectation that completions would be more rapidly delivered in villages than in the town.

4. Within the plan period 1,822 dwellings must be accommodated in the borough's villages. A growth rate of over one third in such a short time is disproportionate for many villages that have evolved gradually over hundreds of years. This is not compatible with the aspiration expressed in the Plan's vision that "The strong historic and landscape character of the Borough will be as apparent and cherished as ever, and new development will be notable for the success with which it has been reflective of that character and integrated into its setting".

5. Total Housing Figure: The figure of 6,125 completions by 2036 is aspirational and, in the opinion of the Parish Council, is not deliverable. It is driven by an ambition to provide major infrastructure (MMDR) using money raised through developer contributions and business rates. Rather than contributing to the borough's "strong rural economy" the residents would have to travel to employment in other parts of the region. Indeed, the new vision includes a completely new theme - the ease of movement to and from Leicester, Loughborough, Nottingham and Grantham. This is not consistent with "a more sustainable pattern and form than currently exists" and is contrary to the government's policy to reduce the need to travel by car.

6. Settlement Hierarchy: The settlement hierarchy is not consistent with NPPF in which the concept of settlements supporting each other is concerned with the retention of services in rural areas. In practice most of the villages in the borough are dependent on Melton Mowbray itself for their services and where services are available in the borough's rural settlements they are scattered. One settlement may have a particular provision and another village a different one.

7. The Borough Council abandoned its own Settlement Roles and Relationships Report which identified factors favourable to sustainable development in favour of only four arbitrary factors that are not criteria against which to judge sustainability. These also make no distinction between Service Centres and Rural Hubs.

Matter 2.1.iii - Table 4

8. Table 4 is not at all clear and there is no explanation of what the term 'proportionate' means or how the figures were arrived at. We do not understand why one Rural Hub has a different percentage of housing to another. Is this a percentage of the existing population (in at least one case incorrect) or of something else? It appears that the allocation of housing land in rural settlements outside Melton Mowbray was a desk-based mathematical exercise, reliant on maps and exhibiting little knowledge of the borough or consideration of the individual character or capacity of the settlements or their relationship to each other.