

7 Jan 2018/JKH

Melton Plan Examination (20111-2036) : Matters and Questions for the Exa

Dear Inspector Travers,

Further to an email from Ian Kemp at 2.17 on Nov 17 2017, I write to express my grave concern regarding the soundness and legal compliance of the Plan. Like a lot of honest hard working residents, I have submitted detailed documents to the planning department. Many have been ignored or filed away so deep that the representations of ordinary people are being overlooked, specifically related to projected housing numbers.

I suppose with MBC being the 10th smallest council in England, I should not be surprised and the fact that many of the staff are not fully qualified (or part time) or sufficient weight given to responses. I will give examples in the following matters. I am a qualified conservation architect who has sat on Conservation Area Advisory Committees for a number of years. I have resided the last 12 years in Somerby, one of the 70 villages odd in the Borough.

Matter 1 : Legal requirement and Duty to Co-Operate

1.1 I have no evidence of Community Involvement to comment. However, having attended planning forums in the village and attended several planning meetings open to the public, found lack of willingness of planning officers to engage or consult fully. Both myself and other residents have undertaken important research, archaeology findings and filled in survey forms only to find the information is being ignored.

As a matter of course, any letters or emails or responses, I would have expected a reply from MBC to some degree stating who is dealing with the matter and timescale, so continued time wasting is reduced or at least statutory dates are achieved. The Plan needs to state what a reasonable response time is. Typical planning applications in our village for housing is now taking 18 to 24 months to get to committee. This is hardly reasonable!

1.2 The Habitats Regulation Assessment and Sustainability Appraisal

I will not comment on HRA.

The SA however is a 306 page document covering many other subjects other than sustainability. I would suggest this needs breaking down under the correct headings. For example :

1.3 "Objectives" : Qu 3 states "reduce the need to travel by car and improve access to public transport". I see no suggestions how this is to be achieved. For example if new houses are being built in small villages how can they manage without 2 or 3 cars per dwelling?

In the legislative framework, there are references to European Directives, all of which will now be defunct. In 2.3 suggests that the LA undertakes an Environmental Assessment on a complex matrix but does not define for what type of development or size they apply to.

The contents of the SA are very laudable, but how are they going to be measured in proportion to assessing any future planning applications?

A more bizarre statement in 5.66 says that there are 44 Conservation Areas with management plans, when in reality none of these Conservation Area boundaries have been reviewed for over 30 years! Bearing in mind it is a legal requirement to review the boundaries and MBC do not have a qualified Conservation officer, it is hard to believe they are legally compliant!

1.3 Does the plan as whole accord with S19 (1A) of the Act

I am not sure which Act you refer to. Please advise so that I can respond.

1.4 Engagement

My view is that MBC have not engaged constructively or incorporated relevant information too late in the process arguing they will be unable to change the final written document. Lack of qualified staff at MBC is the problem here.

1.5 Neighbourhood Plans

The inconsistencies are with emerging new sites for housing which had not previously considered. As a result, a large number of sites put forward have not been properly examined. In the case of Somerby (and several other villages) the proposed submission policies map are out of date. At least one has been rejected at outline planning committee and due to go to appeal in Feb 2018 by Public Hearing. Sites SOM1 and SOM2 were never suitable sites for high density housing within a small village.

I would suggest inconsistencies need to be reviewed on a regular basis to keep local residents informed how the policy/ plan is to address sites which were put forward in haste.

