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Dear James

**WALTHAM ON THE WOLDS AND THORPE ARNOLD NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN  
2017 – 2036 SUBMISSION VERSION (JULY 2017)  
REPRESENTATIONS ON BEHALF OF JELSON LTD**

GVA is planning advisor to Jelson Limited and is instructed by it to make representations to the Waltham on the Wolds and Thorpe Arnold Neighbourhood Plan 2017 – 2036 Submission Version (July 2017) (hereafter referred to as the 'Neighbourhood Plan' or 'NP').

Our Client has a significant interest in the Neighbourhood Plan (NP) as it controls 12 hectares of land to the north-west of Thorpe Arnold, which it is currently promoting through the Melton Local Plan process as a potential extension to the Melton Mowbray North Sustainable Urban Extension.

The land which Jelson controls is shown edged red on the map attached at appendix I.

**Statutory Context**

In advance of examining the Plan in detail, we must give consideration to the statutory context within which the Plan is made. In accordance with the Localism Act 2011, a Neighbourhood Plan (NP) must meet each of a set of basic conditions before it can be put to a referendum and be made. The basic conditions advise that a Neighbourhood Plan must:

- (a) be in general conformity with the strategic policies in the development plan (i.e. in this case the 1999 Melton Local Plan until it is replaced by the emerging Local Plan);
- (b) contribute to the achievement of sustainable development;
- (c) have regard to national policies and advice such as the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF); and,

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(d) be compatible with European obligations and human rights requirements.

In subsequent sections of this letter, we consider the extent to which these basic conditions have been met by the draft Neighbourhood Plan (NP).

### **General Context**

The NP sets out a strategy to help guide development within the parishes of Waltham on the Wolds and Thorpe Arnold, up to 2036.

Waltham on the Wolds is one of the most sustainable settlements within the Borough of Melton, and is classified as a 'Service Hub' within the emerging Melton Local Plan. It has an excellent range of facilities / services including a primary school and pre-school, a GPs Surgery, a Post Office, a restaurant, hotel, and deli, along with a regular bus service.

Thorpe Arnold is identified as a 'Rural Hub' in the emerging Melton Local Plan. It has no facilities other than a cricket club, and it is therefore generally considered to be an unsuitable location for large scale residential development.

In order to protect the visual and leisure amenity of each settlement's surroundings and to prevent inappropriate development from coming forward in the remainder of the Plan area, the NP proposes to designate Limits to Development for each village (Figures 3 and 4 of the NP). The NP confirms that the revised settlement boundaries will supersede the current village envelope boundaries (from the 1999 Melton Local Plan) and that they have been re-drawn to reflect recent grants of planning permission and / or proposed allocations for residential developments on the fringes of each the settlements. The accompanying policy (Policy S2 of the NP) provides that proposals for development within the Limits to Development will be permitted where they comply with other policies of the NP and design and amenity considerations. It goes on to say that outside the defined limits to development, only development that is essential to the operational requirements of agriculture and forestry, and small-scale development for employment, recreation and tourism will be permitted.

However, the area covered by the Neighbourhood Plan is defined by the Parish boundary (shown at figure 1 of the NP). This extends significantly beyond the proposed settlement boundaries of either Waltham or Thorpe Arnold. In fact, the south western edge of the NP boundary physically abuts the north eastern edge of the Melton urban area. The Borough Council's emerging Local Plan identifies the Melton Mowbray Main Urban Area as the priority location for growth and it is anticipated that it will accommodate something in the order of 65% (circa 4,000 dwellings) of the Borough's overall housing need. Moreover, the Council has identified approximately 100ha of land to the north of Melton Mowbray as a sustainable urban extension (SUE) which will be capable of delivering around 1,700 new homes, leisure facilities and open space. The eastern most part of the SUE sits directly adjacent to the proposed NP boundary.

In its current form, the NP fails to properly take account the geographical relationship between the Plan boundary and the Melton urban area / the proposed North of Melton SUE, nor does it contain any analysis of whether there might be a need for some of Melton's future development needs to be accommodated within the NP boundary (i.e. on land controlled by our Client). With this in mind, Jelson would be keen to meet with the Neighbourhood Planning Group (NPG) to discuss how it's site might come forward in the future, in the event that there is a need for Melton to accommodate more development than the emerging Local Plan currently anticipates. We go on to look at Melton Borough's housing needs and our Client's site in more detail below.

### **Housing Policies – Evidence Base**

Guidance contained in the NPPG provides that Neighbourhood Plans should be based upon proportionate, robust evidence that supports the choices made and the approach taken. This evidence should be drawn upon to explain succinctly the intention and rationale of the policies in the draft plan.

Moreover, where Neighbourhood Plans contain policies relevant to the supply of housing, these policies should take account of the latest and most up-to-date evidence on housing need. In this regard, guidance published by Planning Aid on 'how to gather and use evidence' makes clear that in order for neighbourhoods to understand how much housing is likely to be needed in the Plan area, they should use an objective assessment of housing need.

The Plan indicates that NPG has used the housing requirements from the emerging Melton Local Plan to determine the future housing needs for Waltham and Thorpe Arnold. This housing requirement for the Borough is set within **Policy SS2** of the Local Plan (Development Strategy). The Council is asserting that its FOAN for housing for the period to 2036 is 6,125 dwellings (or 245 dwellings per annum).

### **Policy H1 – Housing Requirement**

In the representations that made to the NPG on response to the consultation on its Pre-submission version of the NP (May 2017) we set out our Client's observations on the new evidence of housing need (HEDNA 2017) and how this might change the housing requirement for Asfordby. In summary, we drew the NPGs attention to the fact that,

- HEDNA is, at the current time, only evidence and is yet to be the subject of any independent testing or endorsement;
- HEDNA is an evidence base to establish the OAN, not a housing target for individual authorities; and
- Authorities must take the evidence in HEDNA to determine its own housing target (ie, carry out a policy-on assessment).

As you are aware, in Melton, HEDNA was accompanied by a separate study, also prepared by GL Hearn called '*Towards a Housing Requirement for Melton Borough*'. This report was also published in January 2017 and looked at how the HEDNA OAN figure of 170dpa could be advanced into a housing target requirement for Melton. The study examined various factors including economic growth, the balance between homes and jobs, and the delivery of affordable housing.

The report concludes that there is;

***"a clear justification for planning for between 5,700 – 7,000 dwellings over the 2011 – 2036 period"***. This equates to between **230 – 280 dwellings per annum**.

Further to this, and in the light of Cushman and Wakefield having undertaken a viability assessment of the Plan, the Borough Council instructed GL Hearn to undertake further work to considered whether it would be necessary for it to change any of the recommendations of its '*Towards a Housing Requirement for Melton*' report.

Following the publication of the '*Revised Local Plan and Community Infrastructure Levy Viability Study*' (May 2017).

An addendum to the report, was published in June 2017. This report indicated that, on the basis of the latest available evidence on the Council's expected affordable housing delivery, "*around 330 dwellings per annum would be required to deliver the Council's affordable housing requirement (70 dpa) in full*". However, GL Hearn ultimately concluded that it would be unrealistically ambitious to expect the market to sustain higher housing delivery in Melton Borough than was envisaged in the Pre-Submission Melton Local Plan (i.e. 245 dpa).

It concluded that the January 2017 figures remain valid, in that there remains a requirement for the Council to deliver between 5,750 – 7,000 new homes (230-280 dpa) over the Plan period.

In our representations to the Focussed Changes to the Melton Local Plan (August 2017) we have expressed our Client's very serious concerns about the implications that an under-delivery of affordable housing would have within the Borough and the Council's failure to take forward either of the options that the Towards a Housing Requirement for Melton suggests could be used to address the under-delivery, namely:

- a) increase the overall housing provision in the local plan, in order to boost delivery of affordable housing; and / or,
- b) promote an alternative spatial strategy which sees a greater proportion of sites for housing allocated in areas where viability is stronger.

Contrary to what is suggested by the NPG in its response to the representations it has received to the Pre-submission version of the NP, this clearly suggests that the housing requirement figure for Melton is likely to be set at a figure much higher than the 245 currently set out in the emerging Local Plan.

### **Land under the ownership of Jelson Limited**

In its representations to the emerging Local Plan, Jelson is encouraging the Council to extend the proposed Melton Mowbray North Sustainable Urban Extension and allocate a greater number of dwellings in this location, by including within the allocation, 12ha of land that it owns to the East of Melton Spinney Road. The site could accommodate something in the order of 360 dwellings and including this land, along with a wider parcel of land to the east (between Melton Spinney and the A607) in the SUE, would provide an opportunity to extend the link road (being delivered by the SUE) to meet the A607. It would, in our view, also allow for an increase in housing numbers which would provide the Plan with greater flexibility.

Whilst we appreciate that there is no apparent Neighbourhood Plan case to be made for allocating the Jelson land for development given it has no physical relationship with either Thorpe Arnold or Waltham on the Wolds, we do believe that there is a compelling case for including a review policy / reserve allocation within the NP which would enable the NPG to allocate this land for development should the need arise for the future needs of Melton Mowbray to be met within the NP area (through the allocation of additional land adjacent to the SUE).

We have enclosed a context plan (appendix II) which shows the relationship between the proposed Melton North Sustainable Urban Extension (outlined in yellow) and Jelson's landholding to the east of Melton Spinney Road (shown in red). The plan shows that the vast majority of Jelson's land is located within the NP Area (outlined in pink).

It is clear, in our view, that Jelson's land represents a logical extension to the SUE and will deliver housing to meet the needs of Melton Mowbray, without impacting adversely on the overarching aims and objectives of the NP (i.e. development taking place within TA and WoTW).

### **Impact upon other draft NDP Policies**

#### Policy ENV5: Area of Separation

We note that the NPG is proposing to allocate an 'Area of Separation' to the west of Thorpe Arnold, which would maintain the current physical and visual separation between the settlements of Thorpe Arnold and Melton Mowbray. Policy EN5 seeks to prevent development coming forward within this area which would result in the coalescence of the two settlements. In our view, the development of Jelson's land for housing would not be in conflict with the overarching objective of this policy which is to maintain separation between Thorpe Arnold and Melton Mowbray. this policy. The context plan, referred to above, demonstrates that the development of Jelson's land would not impact upon the Area of Separation (shown in green).

Policy ENV12: Protection of Important View

Similarly, the development of Jelson's site would not conflict with the draft policy ENV12, which aims to protect important views into and out of the settlements. Figures 15 and 16 show the site does not form part of those areas which are considered to have important views across the Parish.

**Summary**

To provide the much needed flexibility to the Plan and ensure it presents sustainable development and makes provisions which are compatible with the overall strategy and local priorities, the NP should, in our view, be amended to;

- fully take into account the geographical relationship between the Plan boundary and the Melton urban area / the proposed North of Melton SUE;
- include on analysis of whether there might be a need for some of Melton's future development needs to be accommodated on land that falls within the NP boundary;
- address the up-to-date housing need which has been identified at the Borough wide level by HEDNA and the additional 'Towards a Housing Requirement for Melton' work undertaken by GL Hearn ; and
- consider the case for including a review policy / reserve allocation within the NP which would enable the NPG to allocate this land for development, should a requirement arise whereby the future needs of Melton Mowbray have to be met within the NP area (through the allocation of additional land adjacent to the SUE).

In order to meet the basic conditions, further detailed analysis needs to be undertaken by the NPG to provide reasoned justification for the strategy proposed.

With regard to Jelson's landholding off Melton Spinney Road, we would encourage the Parish Council to review the options identified above. We would be happy to discuss this matter further and can be contacted using the details provided below.

We would be grateful to receive confirmation of receipt of this letter and thereafter be kept fully informed of the progress of the Neighbourhood Plan.

Yours sincerely



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For and on behalf of GVA Grimley Limited

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## Appendix I - Map Showing Land in Jelson's Control

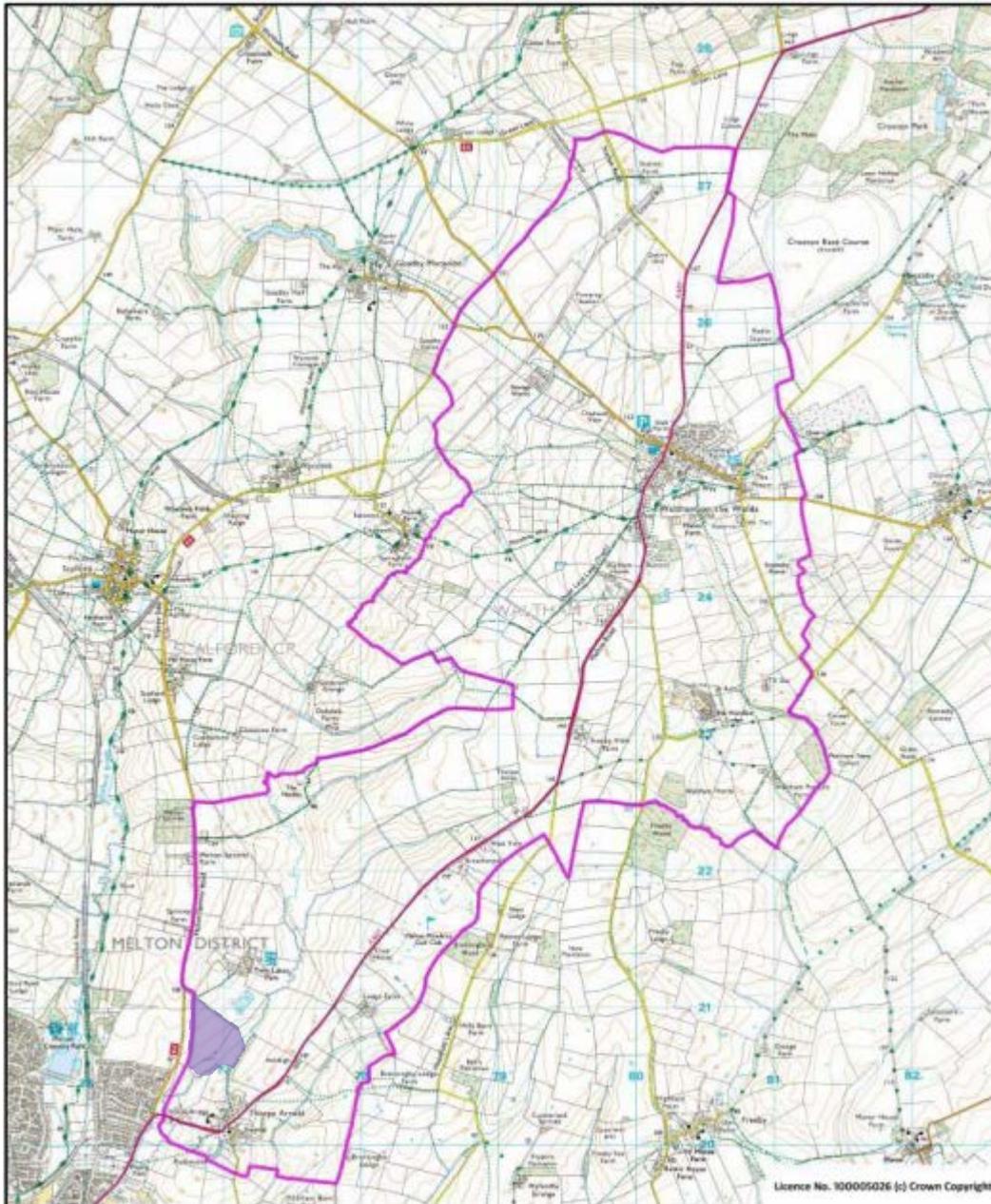
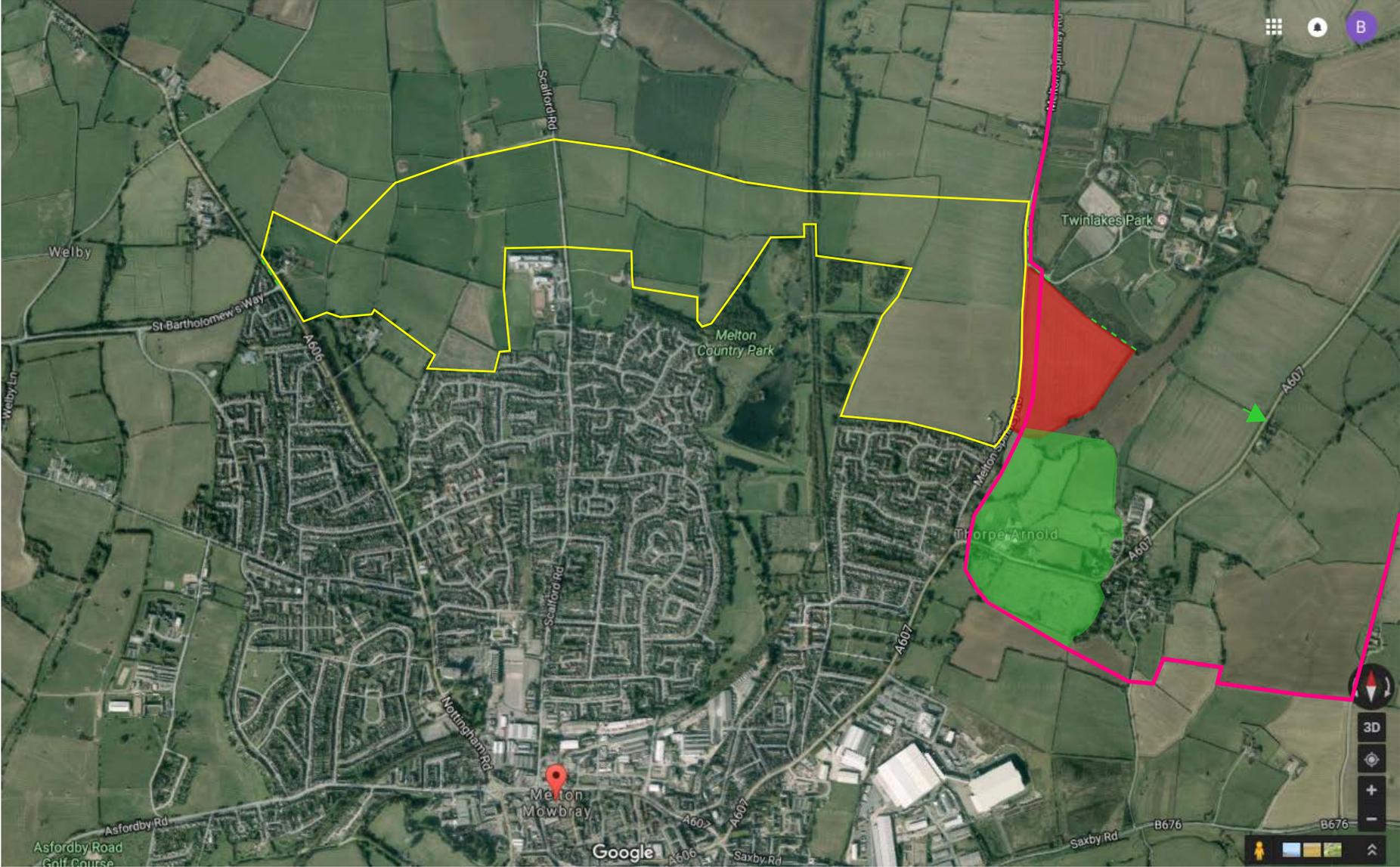


Figure 1: Parish Boundary & Neighbourhood Plan Area

# Appendix II - Context Plan



 Melton North Sustainable Urban Extension  
 Land owned by Jelson

 WOTWATA Neighbourhood Plan Boundary  
 Draft Policy ENV5 - Area of Separation