

To: Melton Borough Council

CC Bottesford Parish Council

Bottesford forum

Councillors P Chandler and D Wright

Subject; Melton Draft Plan – Bottesford Parish (residential)

Thank you for the comprehensive draft that I have not read in full as yet so I contain myself to local Parish issues (Residential).

1. The extent of such 'planning' by district councils is often misunderstood by the public as including services such as roads, education, health and leisure when the 'plans' are mainly about allocating building targets and could at times be referred to as 'plonks'. Definition, *to set down heavily or carelessly*.
2. Nationally, with the exception of identified growth 'villages' with multi authority support, such as the opening of stations to assist London connections, crudely, from my sample research, the extent of population growth at 2.3 persons per planned domestic home is about 9% to 18%. The population growth over 20 years at 427 homes for Bottesford with a current population of 3,500 is 28%.
3. Over recent times there seems to have been some changes in allocated sites, removals and additions that are rightly not explained in the Draft Plan, this is not fully understood by me. Following a freedom of Information request I did receive a paper from the Council stating there had been a process but not the detailed working papers I really wanted. In respect of MBC/152/15, 84 houses off Normanton Lane only recently the Melton Times reported a Councillor's concern with traffic safety in the area at a planning meeting that approved 2 garden in-fill houses nearby.
4. In principle numbers are not a concern for me it is how people of the future move about safely in vehicles, cycles, on foot and the overall sustainability issues. Will the people of the future consider the settlement well planned? At present the centre of Bottesford is considered by many from a mess to unsafe, particularly on cycle or foot and I think needs addressing now. I know there has been talk locally by the Neighbourhood planning team of a principle of slow growth so the parish can adjust. I believe that Bottesford cannot cope with more building unless road, footpath, parking etc is built into the plan now.

I have serious concern over the allocation of a further 427 houses without infrastructure planning now. Melton Borough Council (MBC) is the 4th smallest district council, only the quirk that is Rutland, one in Dorset, Scilly isles and City of London are smaller in population. At present MBC is soon to lose £900k of central government funding, unitary authority discussions may gather pace. Leicestershire County Council (LCC) is reportedly £50m underfunded and there is money being allocated to develop a case for road developments in Melton. This is understandable given the number of homes planned for Melton.

If support funding to cope with 427 homes over 20 years is not obtained now from the totality of council and Schedule 106 tax I have little confidence that a Parish so far from

Leicester would be considered in future years for funding when competing with other growth villages/towns in other boroughs. With only approximately £35,000 increase in precept with 'small town' responsibilities, I suggest the Parish and MBC councils need to think carefully on this.

When MBC were deliberating on the removal of village envelopes and first thoughts on allocations of new homes the Melton Times reported the Chair of the Melton plan Group, who is one of our two local MBC Councillors, as stating some places don't have the infrastructure for developments.

If Rushcliffe villages such as Keyworth and Cotgrave need support with roads and parking etc during the implementation of building growth I have reasonable faith in Rushcliffe Borough and Nottinghamshire County Councils providing support. I don't have the same optimism for Bottesford.

MBC and LCC should provide the same support to Bottesford pro-rata as that which is either explicit or implicit within the Draft Plan for Melton. This includes revenue services, simple example, dog warden. My crude calculations indicate the Parish should be receiving some proportionate services now, dog warden pro rata to Melton population, one day a month. It should not be a case of planning buildings but walking away from responsibility to provide services.

5. I am not clear on the relationship between the sites proposed for building in the Draft Plan and the Bottesford Neighbourhood Plan. Nationally I am aware of challenges and the quashing of some plans and realisation of the support volunteers may need, also issues when completing neighbourhood plans before the local plan is agreed. As a principle my default position is to be wary of the range and depth of skills and experiences that can be provided by small public sector organisations. It came as no surprise to see Rutland Council, a Welland partner of MBC, lost £1.88m of Schedule 106 money because of an 'omission'. I am sceptical of the ability of MBC employed staff to support planning of this scale.

I have been informed by the MBC Planning Department that the Neighbourhood Plan (NP) needs to agree to the Local Plan housing totals and show general compliance with the local plan policies. I don't know if the methodologies and policies are the same and the same or different sites have been chosen?

I think a number of parishioners are not clear on the status of the NP, which seems to have taken a long time to sort. From my 2014/15 awareness it seemed that over 20 people were officially on the working group (more of a working mob!) and I considered good preparatory information that needed further work was to be rushed to conclusion, consultants were being used too early in the process, meetings painfully long, chronology of events did not fit with my understanding of project stages. Most significantly, locations already recorded as potential were added to by inviting interested parties to suggest new locations. I would have had a small group consulting widely but some meetings in private and working out the logistics and modelling of an increased population moving by vehicles, cycle and foot in and out of the village etc to identify the best locations for significant new developments.

Asking who wants to have land built on doesn't seem sensible without having a model of a theoretical ideal didn't make sense to me.

The Neighbourhood Plan is marked 'RED' high risk by me. Recently Keyworth Parish council rejected the sites proposed after 4 years by their NP team and are forming a sub-committee to decide.

Prior to the NP process the Planning Inspector over turned a full planning refusal off Belvoir Road, Bottesford on land I understand had outline planning permission. Having read the Inspector's Report I could not understand why the application had been refused because the development was not in fitting with the area.

I know I am not alone in considering the criteria that formed the NP consultation questionnaire to be shallow and lacking in transparency. I did not validate the questionnaire by completing and may challenge the local criteria and consultation process when the draft NP is available for consultation.

The criteria seemed to me to reflect Group discussion to the exclusion of issues raised by the public at initial events? There was no prioritising/weighting of importance by respondents, this contrasting with random example questionnaires and good practice seen on the internet. I would have weighted village traffic/congestion high and the question on 'hard edges on the approach' as low priority.

Interestingly when approaching Bottesford from the West many people from nearby villages already have commented to me on the dense urban feel that comes into view, the Grantham road building may increase the 'hard edge' view as will the 84 houses to be seen when approaching Bottesford from Normanton?

The lack of robust NP criteria, seemingly loose MBC LP criteria could allow successful challenges by developers on sites excluded so the Parish could have more houses than the 427 proposed. It could be Planning Inspector and Barratts 2 MBC and local objectors 0.

6. Bottesford is the work horse of the area and rightly marked for some development. I support minimal growth for the hamlets in the parish and smaller neighbouring villages.

I will need to see traffic modelling, calming plans and relating funding before I could support a further 427 houses in the parish. Also, it is likely Bottesford falls short of current guidance on the safe movement of children around the community and availability of play areas. I would wish to see the latest guidance applied.

If I have time to digest the Draft Plan in full I may write again on industrial/business plans.

Don Pritchett

Bottesford