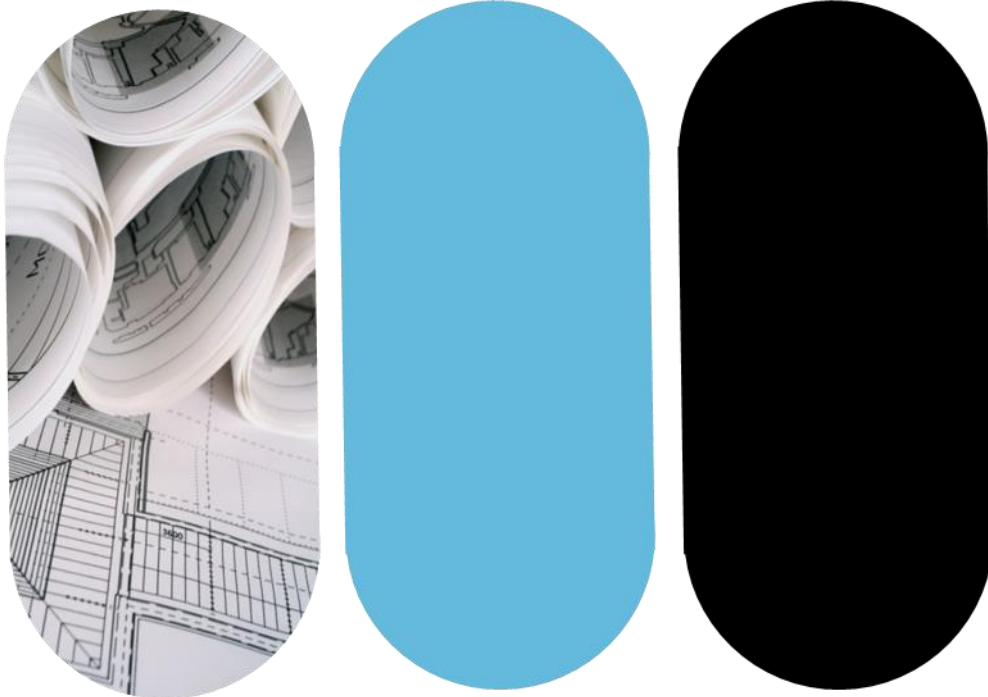


REPRESENTATIONS IN RESPECT OF THE MELTON LOCAL PLAN (PRE SUBMISSION DRAFT) NOVEMBER 2016

On Behalf of Crofts Developments Limited



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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 These representations are made on behalf of Crofts Developments Limited in respect of the Melton Local Plan Pre Submission Draft November 2016 consultation, and specifically in relation to their interest in the preferred housing allocations at Land at Colston Lane, Harby (MBC/16/16).
- 1.2 In summary, these representations seek to wholly support and endorse the classification of Harby as a Service Centre and the inclusion of land of Colston Lane as a preferred site allocation, but they also seek to increase the percentage level of growth intended for the Service Centres/Rural Hubs and re-evaluate the distribution of development between centres.



2. BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

2.1 For a plan to be adopted it must pass an examination and be found to be 'sound'.

2.2 Paragraph 14 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) refers to the presumption in favour of sustainable development and makes specific reference to plan making stating that:

- Local Planning Authorities should positively seek opportunities to meet the development needs of their area;

Local Plans should meet objectively assessed needs, with sufficient flexibility to adapt to rapid change, unless:

- any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole; or
- specific policies in this Framework indicate development should be restricted.

2.3 Paragraphs 154 and 157 of the NPPF identify (amongst other criteria) that Local Plans should be aspirational but realistic and should plan positively for development to meet the objectives, principles and policies of the NPPF.

2.4 Paragraph 182 of the NPPF also sets out that the plans will need to be prepared in accordance with the duty to cooperate, legal and procedural requirements and that they must be 'sound'. There are four tests of 'soundness', which are that each plan must be:

- *Positively prepared* – the plan should be prepared based on a strategy which seeks to meet objectively assessed development and infrastructure requirements, including unmet requirements from neighbouring authorities where it is reasonable to do so and consistent with achieving sustainable development;



- *Justified* – the plan should be the most appropriate strategy, when considered against the reasonable alternatives, based on proportionate evidence;
- *Effective* – the plan should be deliverable over its period and based on effective joint working on cross-boundary strategic priorities;
- *Consistent with national policy* – the plan should enable the delivery of sustainable development in accordance with the policies in the Framework (NPPF).



3. REPRESENTATIONS IN RESPECT OF THE MELTON LOCAL PLAN PRE SUBMISSION DRAFT NOVEMBER 2016 CONSULTATION

3.1 This section of the representations contains our detailed response, prepared on behalf of Crofts Developments Limited, in relation to the Melton Local Plan Pre Submission Draft Plan November 2016 (PSD).

General Level of Growth and Policy SS2

3.2 The overall level of housing and employment growth to be planned for within Melton Borough to 2036 is under review as part of the Housing and Economic Development Needs Assessment for Leicester and Leicestershire. Until the results of this exercise are published, and the Councils (particularly Leicester City) have demonstrated and agreed to accommodate their needs within their administrative area, it is not possible to comment on whether the 6,125 homes proposed for the plan period is robust.

3.3 Notwithstanding this, Policy SS2 identifies that provision will be made for at least 6,125 homes between 2011 and 2036, and also references that at least 3,980 of these homes are to be built in the Melton Mowbray Main Urban Area (MMUA). However, this flexible approach is not reflected throughout the policy with reference to a proposed rigid percentage of growth to be allocated to MMUA (65%) and the Service Centres and Rural Hubs (SCRHs) (35%) and the reference to “remaining need (1,822) on a proportionate basis” in relation to the specific allocation for SCRHs.

3.4 With reference to paragraph 182 of the NPPF, the Local Planning Authority (LPA) should be demonstrating synergy between each aspect of the policy approach and, above all, consistency with the overarching presumption in favour of sustainable development identified in Policy SS1 and the NPPF. To propose such a rigid percentage breakdown and remaining need figure of 1,822 for the SCRHs is contradictory to the



flexibility provided in the phrase “at least” when referring to the overall provision of homes and the number that will be directed to the MMUA. This is not in accordance with paragraph 14 of the NPPF and such inflexibility in their approach to development in the SCRHs does not provide the “sufficient flexibility to adapt to rapid change”.

3.5 Rather, the LPA should provide more flexibility for development to be delivered across the Borough if required. It is not disputed that most development should be directed to the MMUA using phraseology such as “at least” but this approach also needs to be reflected throughout the policy. “At least” should also be noted for the housing target for the SCRHs and the references to percentage growth should equally reflect this approach by stating “circa 65% and 35%” rather than a definitive split.

3.6 Notwithstanding the above, it is submitted that the SCRHs should be allocated more growth in any event. Notwithstanding the above, it is submitted that the SCRHs should be allocated more growth in any event. The NPPF states, that “*to promote sustainable development in rural areas, housing should be located where it will enhance or maintain the vitality of rural communities*” (paragraph 55). The Planning Practice Guidance provides further guidance on this issue, stating:

“A thriving rural community in a living, working countryside depends, in part, on retaining local services and community facilities such as schools, local shops, cultural venues, public houses and places of worship. Rural housing is essential to ensure viable use of these local facilities” (Rural Housing: Paragraph: 001 Reference ID: 50-001-20140306)

Rural housing is therefore best directed to settlements where it can help sustain and enhance facilities and services. That is not to say that development in the lower order settlements should be completely restricted (also in line with national guidance), but the Council should consider redirecting rural growth to the more sustainable rural settlements, where it can be demonstrated that growth can be sustainably accommodated.



- 3.7 Moreover, there are various references in section 2.3 of the PSD to the importance of supporting business development in rural areas. Specifically paragraphs 2.3.1 and 2.3.3 highlight the importance of business start ups in rural parts of the Borough where there is a growing trend for home working. It is also importantly acknowledged in paragraph 4.2.3 that a positive approach will be taken to the rural economy and states that,

“Plan policies should support the long term sustainability of the Borough’s villages, building on and furthering the attractiveness of the Borough for homeworking and small business start-ups...”

Providing a higher proportion of homes in the SCRHs will provide the support needed to allow this sector to further expand and secure the long term sustainability of these businesses.

- 3.8 Put simply, the SCRHs should be allocated a larger proportion of dwellings in order to support business development in the rural areas. This would wholly accord with the strategic housing objective of the PSD in developing a housing stock to provide for the future aspirations for the local economy.

The Proportionate Approach to Distribution of Housing

- 3.9 It is noted that the approach to development has been based on settlement size and population numbers rather than on sustainability credentials and land availability. It is submitted that the current approach is flawed as does not allow for higher levels of development in the most appropriate and sustainable locations.

- 3.10 Rather, the distribution of housing should be allocated based on levels of sustainability and the capacity of SCRHs to accommodate further development. A key soundness test of Local Plans is that they must be justified (NPPF, paragraph 182), meaning they must be based upon **appropriate** and **proportionate** evidence.



- 3.11 In this respect, a review of the Settlement Roles and Responsibilities Report (SRRR) identifies that some villages are substantially less sustainable than others, yet they have been allocated relatively high numbers of dwellings due to higher population levels. This is especially evident in SCRHS such as Wymondham, Croxton Kerrial and Asfordby Hill which are to receive 6.1%, 5.1% and 5.7% of proposed development respectively but only fulfil 6, 7 and 8 of the 43 categories of the SRRR respectively when assessing the sustainability of each village. In comparison, Harby, for instance, is to receive only 8.9% of the proposed development but fulfils 15 of the 43 categories in the SRRR.
- 3.12 In relation to capacity to accommodate further development, it is noted that the tables at Policy C1 (A) of the PSD identify a capacity of 405 dwellings in Bottesford but it is proposed to allocate 427 dwellings at this location. Again, in the case of Wymondham there is capacity for 63 dwellings but it is proposed to allocate 68 dwellings to this village. Whilst settlements such Harby have a capacity to accommodate 115 dwellings but it is proposed to allocate a mere 99 dwellings to this centre.
- 3.13 Put simply, this approach to the distribution of housing is clearly flawed and could lead to the plan being found unsound. Local Plans need to be effective in order to meet the soundness tests at paragraph 182 of the NPPF. This means that Plans should be **deliverable** over the plan period, and in accordance with NPPF paragraph 47, need to identify a supply of deliverable and developable sites for housing. Overestimating housing number and deliverable or developable sites means the Local Plan is in danger of being considered unsound. Fundamentally, this approach will lead to issues when dwellings are delivered as villages could become akin to housing estates with unsustainable patterns of travel to other villages for services and facilities rather than being self sufficient villages in their own right. In addition, allocating more development to villages with less land capacity could lead to a shortfall in development, especially if developers seek to provide low density schemes on those allocated sites to assimilate with the character of surroundings.
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The Preferred/Reserve Sites for Allocation

- 3.14 In respect of the proposed site allocations, we wholly support and endorse the inclusion of land at Colston Lane as proposed allocations HAR4 and HAR5 in the PSD.
- 3.15 The site is being promoted by Crofts Developments Limited and therefore should thus be considered deliverable in the context of footnote 11 to paragraph 49 of the NPPF. A planning application for the development of the site has been submitted and is being considered by Melton Borough Councils Development Management team.

The Site and Surroundings

- 3.16 The site at 3.5 hectares is part brownfield, part greenfield and currently comprises two field compartments and includes a number of agricultural outbuildings and hardstanding in the south-eastern part of the site. Its position between the edge of Harby and the former Millway Dairy means the visual impact of the proposals is considered to be limited. The location which is shown on the Site Location Plan at **Appendix 1** of these representations.
- 3.17 The site is well connected to the village which in itself is wholly sustainable and has a number of local facilities including a village shop and post office; petrol station; garage services; tea shop; public house; primary school, crèche; village hall; and a church. It also has good access to public transport, given its rural location.
- 3.18 Vehicular access currently exists from two points on Colston Lane. Tree and hedgerow cover is largely restricted to field boundaries, although there are some trees present in the centre of the smaller field compartment. There is a pond in the south-western part of the site. An overhead electricity line cross a small part of the western part of the site. The site itself is relatively flat, dropping a metre from the south east to the north east. The site is situated in Flood Zone 1.



Proposed Development

- 3.19 An indicative Masterplan of the proposal is provided as part of these representations at **Appendix 2**. The proposal identifies development of the site to provide a low density scheme of up to 50 dwellings together with associated site infrastructure, open space and a high level of landscaping.
- 3.20 A new vehicular access to the site would be provided and would also provide a new access to the existing Garden Studio fronting Colton Lane. The two existing accesses would be stopped up. A second vehicular access point will also be provided for agricultural access to the open land northwest of the site.
- 3.21 Trees and hedgerows would be retained as far as possible and losses would be mitigated against with new planting. Surface water attenuation would be provided in the form of an attenuation pond to the northwest area of the site.
- 3.22 Given the surrounding land uses, the proposals are considered to be well contained visually, as the site is contained and viewed within the context of existing built development. Put simply, the overall affect of the proposed development is that in visual terms, it would provide a logical addition of much needed homes without great affect on the wider countryside.
- 3.23 The site is considered to be situated in a sustainable location on the north-western edge of Harby, a village which incorporates a number of local amenities and is currently served by two bus routes that offer connection to neighbouring towns including Melton Mowbray and Grantham. In conjunction with the development proposals, a new footway will be installed along the northern side of Colston Lane, which will connect with existing pedestrian infrastructure to the south of the site. This new footway will ensure future residents have the opportunity to access the existing facilities in Harby by non-motorised modes.



- 3.24 In addition, offsite highways works in the form of a 2 metre wide footway along the north-eastern side of Colston Lane, linking the site access to the existing footway to the south-east, would be delivered as part of the proposals.
- 3.25 The proposal would make provision for policy compliant levels of affordable housing to assist meeting the needs of local people in the area. This is especially important in the context of paragraph 2.2.4 (which identifies that delivery of affordable homes has been challenging in recent years with no affordable homes being delivered in 2013/14), strategic housing objective 1 and section 5.8 of the PSD.
- 3.26 In summary, it is considered that HAR4 and HAR5 are deliverable now and we fully support and endorse the continued inclusion of the site as a preferred allocation for development in the Melton Local Plan.
- 3.27 A planning application has been submitted for the proposed development of the site and a full suite of technical reports has been submitted as part of the application.