

MEETING OF LOCAL PLAN WORKING GROUP

10th May 2016

Review of the Settlement Roles and Relationships Report

i. Background

- 1.1 The Spatial strategy in the new Melton Local plan provides the direction for growth and change in the Borough over the 20 years to 2036. The spatial strategy focuses the majority of the Borough’s housing and employment development on the town of Melton Mowbray, but recognises the important role of the villages within the Borough to contribute to the delivery of housing and to continue to provide some local development to support the housing and employment needs of the rural parts of the Borough. This development is necessary to support the role of existing villages and to ensure that they continue to function and thrive.
- 1.2 The settlement hierarchy is a tool in grouping together settlements with similar levels of service provision and identifying those settlements which function as a local service centres to a wider rural community. The Settlement Roles and Relationships report was prepared to evidence the approach taken and was written in the context of national planning policy guidance.

2. Responses to the Emerging Options

- 2.1 The Settlement Roles and Relationships Report (April 2015) was used to inform the spatial strategy and pattern of housing distribution included in the Emerging Options draft Local Plan January – April 2016. Responses to this section of the draft Local Plan reveal both support and objection to the approach adopted.

	yes	no	other	Not answered	Total
Do you think the approach to settlement roles and relationships is right?	66	121	54	208	449

Question 1: Do you think the approach to settlement roles and relationships is right?

Total



Question 3: Do you think these villages are Primary Rural Service centres?

	Support	Object	Not answered
Asfordby	94	6	349
Bottesford	90	14	345
Long Clawson	90	120*	234
Waltham on the Wolds	73	26	350
		*To be confirmed	

Question 5: Do you think these villages are Secondary Rural Service Centres?

	Support	Object	Not answered
Asfordby Hill	58	22	369
Croxton Kerrial	51	44	354
Frisby	56	25	368
Somerby	54	30	365
Stathern	56	23	370
Wymondham	57	23	369

2.2 Detailed analysis of the responses made show, however, that where there is objection to the approach it is largely because individual settlements are considered to be wrongly categorised, or because the respondent disagrees with the criteria used or the weighting given to criteria. In particular it is noted that the following villages are referenced a number of times as being wrongly categorised:

- Long Clawson – wrongly categorised as a Primary Rural Service Centre: concerns rose about the capacity of the school, GPs and within the local road network. Limited public transport

and lack of direct access to a main road (A Road), and concerns about flooding have been quoted

- Bottesford
 - Not a primary centres as it has poor public transport connections
 - Should be a “Key Settlement” accommodating more development (one respondent)
- Croxton Kerrial – Wrongly assessed as a secondary rural centre. Inaccurate information (shop has closed and public transport is not regular), and is much smaller in size than other Secondary rural centres
- Frisby on the Wreake - Wrongly assessed as a secondary rural centre. Inaccurate information – pub has closed and does not have an hourly bus service into the village
- Somerby - Wrongly assessed as a secondary rural centre; not post office shop has limited range of goods; no regular bus service and regular power cuts.

2.3 The consultation responses received about the approach and the criteria used are provided at Appendix 1 to this report. The following key points have been drawn out of these comments:

Comment made	Officer response
Weighting given to criteria skews the results – for example the points given to public transport	Agree that the points based system can make big changes when a service is lost. Consideration should be given to removing the weighting or adopting a red, amber, green approach.
Approach should consider transport, access to main roads and public transport that allows you to go to work 24/7	The current approach does consider access to public transport. However this should be reviewed and weighting amended
Capacity of services such as GPs and Schools to absorb growth must be considered	Agree, further consideration should be given to the capacity of existing facilities to accommodate development. This should form part of the assessment of villages
Account should be taken of the current population and number of houses	Current village size is important to consider alongside other factors. It should be noted that changes to the way census data is stored makes this difficult to collect for smaller villages
Should consider clustering of villages and an additional “rural hub” category	“rural hubs” may be a better description of many of the villages currently within the Secondary Rural Centre and Rural Supporter categories
Recognise that villages close to Melton Mowbray and Bottesford are also sustainable because they are close enough to access the services in those locations	Noted – consideration should be given to the role of villages such as Easthorpe with Bottesford and Thorpe Arnold with Melton Mowbray
Bottesford and Asfordby have grown so much that they have already reached the maximum capacity for schools and GPs and Dentists	The capacity of school and GPs should be assessed as part of the review of the settlement hierarchy and ability of villages to take additional development
Public transport to larger villages and towns is irrelevant today as people accept	This is in direct contrast to the earlier comment and to the conclusions of the

that they have to travel for everything and public transport is so poor you cannot rely on it	reference groups about access to public transport. However the reality of service provision in the rural areas does mean that public transport should be less important in the assessment
People don't shop in village shops anymore – they rely on online shopping	Noted. The reference groups also indicated that a village shop might not be so important in the role of villages, however they are important for those without transport and in areas without superfast broadband
Secondary Rural Service Centres and Rural Settlements should be combined as there is little difference in the facilities and size of them	Agree, the difference between the two categories is limited as is the difference between the lower Rural Supporters and the Rural Settlements – combining these categories and reassessing those within each should be considered
Larger villages should be enlarged further to make best use of their facilities and to protect the character of the smaller rural villages	This is the basic principle of the approach – where more development is focussed on Melton Mowbray and the PRSCs – however there is still the need to accommodate small scale development in smaller settlements to ensure that they survive and have a mixed community
The approach is sound but need to be able to re-assess services as they are added or lost	Agree
Need development in all villages to maintain the services they have. Smaller villages should not be ignored	Small villages have not been ignored, and the current approach does allow small scale development in all villages - however this is not specifically set out in terms of numbers and no allocations were proposed. This should be reconsidered in light of the site assessment work
Should not use historic building rates to determine new development rates – some smaller settlements might be able to be developed into service centres	Agree that historic build rates shouldn't always be continued. Need to recognise the ability of a place to support development
Should not fossilise settlements – the plan does not "...allow for communities to change roles through appropriate and proportionate development"	Agree, there may be opportunities for villages to change roles through careful development which brings with it additional or improved services and facilities.
Allocations should be made in all settlements regardless of their size or role, but the number of houses should reflect the size of the village now and the ability of its infrastructure to cope.	Noted. This should be considered in light of the site assessment work
Housing should be spread more evenly across rural areas but limited to small sites of 10 or less houses	Noted. This should be considered in light of the site assessment work

3. Reference Group and Parish Council /Neighbourhood Plan Forum

- 3.1 During March a Reference Group meeting and a Parish Council and Neighbourhood Plan group Meeting were held to provide input into the review of the Settlement Roles and Relationships report. These meetings demonstrated just how difficult it will be to gain a consensus on the most appropriate way forward. A number of exercises were devised to get groups at each session to have an input into what criteria should be used to assess the role of villages and to consider the way these might be weighted. Consideration was also given to how many categories might be most appropriate.
- 3.2 At these meetings there was a feeling that the actual approach might not actually be wrong, although there was some who thought that there are too many categories and the difference between some villages within each category was negligible and that 'location specific' factors (such as infrastructure constraints, site availability etc) also has a significant bearing.
- 3.3 There was, however, a clear feeling that some of the assessment of the services within the villages was incorrect in some locations and this had led to some villages being wrongly included as Secondary Rural Service Centres. This comment has been reflected in the consultation responses – particularly with regard to the loss of a shop in Croxton Kerrial, and the pub in Frisby on the Wreake.
- 3.4 Although no general consensus was reached about assessment criteria or weighting there were some common themes about the importance of the following services which are considered important for living in a village.

Essential / important	Facility	Comment
I	Good public transport access (regular services to key centres on a 24/7 basis)	Must recognise in rural context there will be a dependence on car journeys and public transport will never be 24/7 (not even in London)
E	Access to employment opportunities	Opportunity to work locally is important – whether this is part time or full time in the village shop, pub, school or in a business
E	Primary School	Subject to concerns about capacity and ability to expand
I	Convenience shop	Important for those without transport, the elderly and young families
E	Broadband	Increasingly important to enable sustainable living (eg home working, online shopping etc)
I	GP with dispensing service	Important but not essential - many communities have a community transport system to take people to nearest GPs
E	Community building	Essential to maintaining a “community” but needs to be suitable size and quality for the size of the village.

3.5 The Reference Group members and Parish Councils were also asked to complete a new survey of village facilities within their area. The responses to this survey, together with those provided in October have been captured on a revised Village Facilities Matrix (included at Appendix 2). Where no new information was provided our old information has been retained, however rather than applying a score to this information the table recognises the presence of each facility with a tick – this means that if there is more than 1 of the same facility – there will be a single tick on the table. This process removes any weighting ascribed in the previous approach. The table shows the new information in date marked lines.

4. Reviewing the approach

4.1 Drawing the consultation information together it is proposed that the following changes are made to the approach to the assessment of settlements:

a) Number of categories reduced to four as follows:

- **Melton Mowbray** (urban area);
- **Service Centres** (villages that act as a local service centre in the rural area. It has the essential services and facilities (Primary school, employment, community building and regular public transport to nearby towns) as well as a number of other important and desirable services such that it is capable of serving basic day to day needs of the residents living in the village and those living in nearby settlements.) These villages should have all four of the Essential criteria and a good range of important and other facilities.
- **Rural Hubs** (A village or a group of villages which share a range of essential and important local services which serve the basic needs of people living within it and nearby settlements, which can be accessed by cycling and walking. Residents will generally travel to nearby towns and cities to meet their retail, leisure and employment needs but enjoy a tranquil environment). These villages will have 3 out of the 4 essential criteria and a range of other facilities or easy access to other facilities within nearby settlements forming a cluster or hub of village facilities
- **Rural settlements** (Small villages or hamlets that have little or no local services, where residents are entirely dependant upon travelling to a nearby settlement or town or city for work, recreation and service provision.)

4.2 Applying this methodology to the updated facilities matrix (see Appendix 3) would result in an increased number of “service centre” villages and four “Rural Hubs” as set out below. Do these villages “feel” right?

Service Centre	Rural Hub
Bottesford (17/10/2015)	Frisby on the Wreake.(16/10/2015)
Asfordby (05/10/15)	Kirby Bellars (16/10/2015)
Long Clawson (14/10/2015)	Buckminster
Waltham	Asfordby Hill
Somerby (13/10/2015)	
Stathern (01/10/15)	
Croxton Kerrial (29/10/2015)	
Scalford (26/10/2015)	

Harby (14/10/2015)	
Hose	
Wymondham (29/11/2015)	
Old Dalby (10/10/15)	

The following villages would fall into the category of Rural Settlement:

Ab Kettleby (15/10/15)	Freeby	Ragdale
Asfordby Valley	Gaddesby	Redmile (13/10/2015)
Ashby Folville	Garthorpe	Rotherby (21/10/2015)
Barkestone le Vale (11/11/15)	Goadby Marwood (26/10/2015)	Saltby
Barsby	Great Dalby	Saxby
Belvoir	Grimston (20/10/2015)	Saxelby (20/10/2015)
Bescaby	Harston	Sewstern
Branston	Hoby (21/10/2015)	Shoby (20/10/2015)
Brentingby	Holwell	Six Hills (10/10/15)
Brooksby (21/10/2015)	John O'Gaunt (26/10/2015)	Sproxton
Burrough on the Hill (13/10/15)	Knipton	Stapleford
Burton Lazars	Knossington (26/10/2015)	Stonesby
Chadwell	Leesthorpe (13/10/15)	Thorpe Arnold
Cold Overton	Little Dalby	Thorpe Satchville (26/10/2015)
Coston	Muston (17/10/2015)	Twyford (26/10/2015)
Easthorpe (17/10/2015)	Nether Broughton (10/10/15)	Wartnaby (15/10/15)
Eastwell (26/10/2015)	Normanton (17/10/2015)	Welby
Eaton (26/10/2015)	Pickwell (13/10/2015)	Wycomb
Edmonthorpe	Plungar (11/11/15)	Wyfordby
Eye Kettleby	Queensway	

The role and function of a village is important however **it must be recognised that the role of a settlement alone should not determine whether additional housing development is directed to that village in the form of allocations.** Some villages may fulfil the role of a service centre but due to environmental, infrastructure or physical constraints it may not be possible for that village to accommodate development now, however a change in circumstance or provision of improved infrastructure may mean that at some stage later in the plan period development may be acceptable.

- b) Having assessed the “role” of each village in terms of the services and facilities within them it is important to apply more detailed information about each village to consider whether it can accommodate new development and if so how much development might be appropriate and when.

To do this the following additional assessments should be applied:

- The capacity of each of the essential services and existing infrastructure to support new development. This work should also identify the potential to improve the capacity of each service and how an improvement might be supported by development
 - Significant physical and environmental constraints which effect each village – for example extent of Flood Zone 3, heritage assets and Landscape character zones
 - What sites are available and suitable for development within the village including the re-assessment of all sites submitted through the SHLAA in each village to give an indication of the potential capacity and ability to accommodate new housing development in each village, **and their deliverability** particularly in the early horizons (next 5 years).
 - The relative merits o sites where there is a surplus, within the terms set out above (for the purposes of selecting ‘preferred’ and ‘reserve’ sites).
 - Sustainability Appraisal of the assessment of villages and their capacity to absorb new development
- c) Drawing this information together will provide a more detailed and sophisticated assessment of the existing role and function of our villages, whilst making a realistic assessment of how, when and where the housing requirement can be delivered to ensure we provide a robust housing trajectory of delivery. The re-assessment of sites together with an understanding of the capacity of existing services to accommodate new development should provide an indication of how the rural requirement (of at least 2140 homes, representing 35% of the Borough’s requirement) assuming that the housing distribution remains as 65/35.

This process will also provide an opportunity to identify where additional reserve housing sites might be suitable in the event of the Inspector requiring additional sites to be included in the Local Plan or there being extental factors that influence the overall need (e.g. see Item 6, section 2 of this agenda). Consideration will also need to be given to what is a realistic level of housing delivery expected in the smaller villages with no or very limited services. The Emerging Options plan includes a policy which allows for infill development in such villages for schemes of 3 or less homes and an assumption is built into the plan that these villages will contribute more than 300 homes in this way during the plan period. This assumption will need to be evidenced to demonstrate that it is realistic and achievable.

The Working Group is asked to consider the proposed approach to refining the Spatial Strategy, housing distribution and assessment of sites set out above before additional resources are committed to implementation the assessments involved and concluding what pattern and distribution of development to be included in the Local Plan and how this will be delivered through site allocations.

It is expected that the site assessment work will be undertaken during May and early June with a view to reporting this, together with the Spatial strategy to working group and Full Council in July.