

Melton SSN Masterplan Comments

Introduction

This note sets out my views on the Melton SSN Masterplan, and have been produced at the request of Melton BC. They are intended to provide a helpful set of comments, to support the normal and expected process of its evolution.

The views contained within this note are my professional views, and not those of Blaby District Council. They are entirely objective, relate only to the Masterplan, and do not constitute a view on the development (or principle of) itself.

I am happy for this note, and its contents, to be shared as necessary.

In preparing these comments I have taken into account the fact that the Masterplan has been finalised in the context of an extremely demanding timetable; and the progress made in such a short period of time is remarkable and demonstrates the clear commitment to the delivery of this site.

It is also recognised that it remains a work-in-progress; as I would expect to be the case for any Masterplan at this stage of the development site. Masterplanning is an iterative process, and anything otherwise should be viewed with suspicion as this would prevent the natural and normal evolution over time.

General Comments

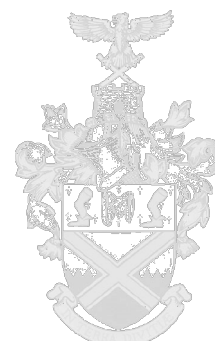
Overall the Masterplan is comprehensive, positive and robust. It has clearly evolved over time, and builds on the policies in the Local Plan. The following high level observations may be useful:

- The document benefits from a clear explanation of its purpose – it could be enhanced by further explanation of where it sits in the usual suite of documents (vision, concept framework, implementation plan etc) – see <https://www.tcpa.org.uk/tcpa-pg-guide-3-masterplanning> - but this isn't considered essential due to the information already contained within it.
- Whilst there is an introduction, it would benefit from more background information. For example, how did the concept of a new neighbourhood in this location come about? Why there? I suspect that a lot of this is covered in the Local Plan though, so this isn't considered essential.



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- The masterplan contains a strong vision, and translates this into a set of key principles, which is very important to ensure that it can translate properly through into planning applications that deliver what is desired/required. As the Masterplan progresses, it would be beneficial to think about how to build on the vision to articulate a place that is truly individual and has a strong USP, for example what will be unique about this new neighbourhood? What will it be like to live there?
- There is a lot contained within the vision section, which inevitably won't all be able to be delivered; and therefore moving forward it will be important to be clear how prioritisation will be applied to avoid difficult viability negotiations. These mechanisms would not however, necessarily be included in a Masterplan.
- The masterplan has evolved from earlier versions to now show a clear preferred option, and explains how this has been arrived at. This is beneficial for evidencing why a particular option is being sought, and ensures a clear and transparent justification for the elements within.
- It is really positive to see design parameters articulated for many of the key sections – ie residential. So often this is left to a later stage, when it is sometimes too late to influence as many other factors have been set.
- A specific section on cycling and walking would be beneficial, given the National profile of this and the fact that this is a genuine SUE providing a unique opportunity to promote non car based transport solutions for connectivity. However it is recognised that there is considerable reference to cycling and walking on several other sections of the Masterplan, which show that it is considered intrinsic and important.
- An important part of planning any new community is consultation, and the document benefits from a specific section on this.
- The 'Delivery' section is clear and provides a good basis for moving forward. The phasing plan is particularly useful, and will help to avoid premature planning applications or proposals which do not fit with the Masterplan.

Section Comments

I have added to the table below, specific comments on the detail, which are intended to be used where helpful. They are for future consideration, and it is not suggested that the Masterplan is not robust as it stands.

Chapter 1	Would be useful to understand any delivery constraints which exist between the t-shaped land, and any other consented land, and the SSN land – ie ransom strips, connectivity barriers, s106 disputes.
	Figure 1.3 – would be helpful to understand the status of the applications listed in each case? Why is the area of the applications different to the SSN boundary?
Chapter 4	Predicted population sizes – it may be helpful to think about basing these on the desired housing mix, which in turn is linked to need.
Chapter 7	This section would usually contain specific detailed references to housing mix, even if just taken from the Local Plan policy at this point – this is always a big sticking point with developers.

Chapter 9	This section would benefit in due course from more information at a strategic level, in terms of the detailed vision for the street hierarchy - for example how the different types of road infrastructure will work together and how it is envisaged that people will primarily move about. This may be premature at this stage of the development though.
Chapter 10	Great to see so much detail and commitment to green infrastructure!
Chapter 12	It would be beneficial to include some information on governance as the plan progresses; for example, is there a project team?

Conclusion

In conclusion, my professional view is that the Masterplan is fit-for-purpose and robust, and provides a strong framework to guide the development forward effectively. It is acknowledged that it will evolve and progress, and that there is no such thing as a 'final version'.

Cat Hartley, Planning & Economic Development Group Manager

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