

Notes on 16th December Cabinet Report

NORTH AND EAST MELTON MOWBRAY DISTRIBUTOR ROAD COST IMPLICATIONS

(The 25th November 2022 cabinet report "Managing the Risk relating to the Delivery of Infrastructure to support growth" is of direct relevance to these comments. That notes that the Council proposes to adopt many changes to the way it seeks to fund infrastructure. It is less clear as to whether it is willing to change its approach to seeking alternatives to infrastructure that reduce the need to travel and help mitigate climate change.)

Stated purpose of report

To seek a decision on whether to progress with the next steps in the delivery of the MMDR scheme.

Requires confirmation from DfT of approval of FBC and it is expected that funding will be released in early February 2023. (8)

The implications of any delay or change are not stated.

Land Value Capture

There is a huge difference between the value of typical agricultural land and its value with planning permission for housing. In Leicestershire agricultural land is said to range between £16,000/Ha (poor pasture) and £25,000/Ha (good arable). With residential planning permission the Government (MHCLG) state the value would be £0.95m/Ha in Melton (2019 figure). A growth factor of between 40 and 60. The Blaby and Harborough values are stated to be £2.15m and £2.65m respectively!!

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/land-value-estimates-for-policy-appraisal-2019>

With 30 units per Ha the land value uplift in Melton could exceed £30k per unit. Most of this value is normally captured by land speculators leaving little for necessary, let alone desirable, infrastructure or the facilities needed to make a place attractive. Subsequent viability studies by developers/speculators are often used to show there is insufficient residual value left to provide things like affordable housing or local facilities, even when these had been offered.

The proposal is to prioritise developer funding to delivery of this specific scheme.

Can you confirm the existing developer contribution towards the Distributor Road is only £8,653 per dwelling?

How was this arrived at?

When does this fall due?

Is it index linked? If so, what is it the index linked to?

Can it be index linked retrospectively?

What developer contributions have been received already?

Is there any indication that developers have sought, or are intending to seek, to make contributions earlier than anticipated to minimise liabilities?

Propose to pursue additional funding with MBC, MPs and developers.

This is not new.

What realistic prospect is there of getting sufficient additional funding that would make any significant difference to the current financial situation?

Identify an appropriate package of transport measures. (9)

What other contributions have been sought to mitigate the impact of this development on the surrounding area?

Where are these set out and what are the funding implications?

Said to promote sustainable growth in the Borough and growth in Leicestershire and the East Midlands. (3)

The development does not show any sign of being sustainable in the normal meaning of the word. It is an exaggeration to state that one short road near Melton will have any noticeable effect on the whole county or region.

Claim the road still represents value for money. (4)

"based on current information a decision to proceed with the scheme will provide most benefit for the investment and meet the objectives outlined above."

This has not been demonstrated.

"The County Council's borrowing requirement will increase as a result of the Scheme" (6)

The implications of this are underplayed and appear to be underestimated.

The Cabinet report states the County Council's capital programme needs to be "rationalised" (18).

There is no explanation of how this would be achieved or which schemes have been, or would be, removed.

The MTFs report going to this Cabinet (16/12/2022) Agenda Item 4 (193) states it only shows the short term. To give the full picture this should be extended to show the most important envisaged commitments for a longer period. (194) states there will be an additional revenue cost of £7m per annum.

In (MTFS 171) it states that the Capital Programme "includes some of the infrastructure funding for 2, out of 7 district local Plans". It notes that further plans cannot be added to the programme without appropriate funding.

Which are the two districts?

What is the infrastructure envisaged for those districts and what are the costs?

To put this into context, what is the envisaged infrastructure requirement for the other 5 districts?

District Councils have been encouraged to include and support many projects which envisage funding will be available to mitigate the impact of proposed development.

This is no longer tenable. It therefore casts doubt on the soundness of the Local Plans and whether they have been "positively prepared." This is a matter which should be examined at a Local Plan inquiry.

It notes that resources will be focussed on schools as they are a statutory responsibility. (171)

This obviously has implications for all other areas of the County and potential commitments.

The multiple planning applications for the Melton North and South developments are at various states of approval. Few have been fully approved. Most appear to have outline approval with all matters reserved.

If the County Council decides to not fund the MMDR the developers would not walk away. There is a precedent for this - Terry Yardley Way in Loughborough. The developers had no option but to fund the scheme fully.

Other Points

It is not obvious that there has been any serious consideration of where people would choose to work or how they would travel. There is no evidence of any attempt to balance houses / employment or consider their relationship. In Melton the two housing developments seem extremely likely to depend on very high levels of car use. This mirrors that of most recent developments, even those much closer to a far greater range of facilities.

With the design proposed it is inevitable that this will encourage very high levels of car ownership. This is likely to create an environment where cars dominate the street scene and parked cars are likely to discourage walking and cycling and prevent any bus penetration. This is just not acceptable for developments claiming to be sustainable and which could easily take over 20 years to deliver.

There is no sign of any serious attempt to reduce traffic generated by development or assess how it could be reduced. Very high levels of car use expected. Melton - Nottingham bus has been cut - many other services may be cut too. No commitment to funding bus services.

The MM DR North and East junctions are badly designed. Four of the 6 have five arms. This is demonstrably poor practice on small roundabouts. It appears the MMDR South proposes at least another five small roundabouts although the available lack detail. A route with 11 roundabouts over such a short distance is unlikely to be seen as attractive on a route intended to offer a better alternative for through traffic.

The provision of a shared cycleway / footpath alongside the DDR and around the roundabouts is not at all consistent with Active Travel England requirements or LTN1/20.

There is very little sign of any useful local facilities in either proposed development and experience shows that what is proposed or offered may not be delivered and cannot be guaranteed.

NPPF

The Melton Plan and the Distributor were proposed prior to the current version of National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF 2021)

Most of the changes were minor but planning applications should have regard to the policies. The following are most relevant to this matter. (emphasis added)

73. The supply of large numbers of new homes can often be best achieved through planning for larger scale development, such as new settlements or significant extensions to existing villages and towns, **provided they are well located and designed, and supported by the necessary infrastructure and facilities (including a genuine choice of transport modes).**

Promoting Sustainable Travel

104 Transport issues **should be considered from the earliest stages of plan-making** and development proposals, so that (*inter alia*):

a) the potential impacts of development on transport networks can be addressed;

c) opportunities to promote walking, cycling and public transport use are **identified and pursued**;

105 The planning system should actively manage patterns of growth in support of these objectives. Significant development should be focused on locations which are or **can be made sustainable, through limiting the need to travel and offering a genuine choice of transport modes.**

Conclusion

Much more work needs to be done before a decision is made regarding future progress.