



MELTON PARISH COUNCIL

Mr Stephen Baker
Chief Executive
East Suffolk Council
East Suffolk House
Station Road
Melton
Woodbridge
IP12 1RT

2nd March 2022

Dear Mr Baker

I am writing on behalf of Melton Parish Council to ask your advice on a matter about which we are unsure how to proceed.

Our February meeting of Finance, Employment & Risk Management (FERM) Committee reviewed data showing that Melton had generated CIL totalling £3.1m, of which £0.155m had been used by ESC for administration. The District share of CIL is £2.320m and the Melton Neighbourhood share is £0.625m.

At Melton we are working enthusiastically and diligently to use our Neighbourhood CIL to help mitigate the impacts of development and improve facilities for our growing population – notably, with the provision of additional road crossings on the road between Melton and Woodbridge, investing to improve the recently divested woodland estate, the replacement of the 70 year-old pavilion on the Melton recreation field and several other schemes. Melton's list of completed, committed and possible projects exceeds the amount of CIL received. Our CIL projects have evolved from public consultation and are tightly managed, with the programme monitoring reports being a matter of public record and audit. Melton's Neighbourhood CIL has provided the wherewithal to improve the lot of the community and without it I can't imagine how we could deal with some of the challenges and expectations that accompany a rapidly growing population.

Of the District CIL, £1.016m has been spent in areas "local" to Melton on: the Foxhall recycling site (£0.794m); Jetty Lane Project feasibility study (£0.189m); the St John's Street Surgery improvements (£0.030m); Ufford recreation ground car-park resurfacing (£0.003m); Melton (£zero).

We understand perfectly that the spending of District CIL is strategic and not related to its place of origin. However, the “local” spend items to-date appear removed from the most significant infrastructure issues that impact adversely on Melton residents. Not only are these infrastructure issues beyond the scope and financial capacity of the Parish Council, they don’t appear to have resource allocations anywhere else.

The FERM Committee’s discussion focussed on how we might work within ESC’s CIL strategy to gain wider support for the larger-scale infrastructure needs of Melton. The committee agreed two actions. The first was to contact ESC’s Infrastructure Delivery Manager and query why the Jetty Lane Project feasibility study was approved when the guidance says that feasibility studies should not be CIL-able. The reason we queried it related to our wish to possibly finance a feasibility study from CIL; something we previously thought was out of the question. We received a very helpful response from Infrastructure Delivery Manager, confirming that a feasibility study could be financed from CIL if it related to a scheme that was in our Neighbourhood Plan (which it is). The second action was for me to contact ESC for advice on District CIL funding for the infrastructure needs of Melton - hence this letter.

The infrastructure investment I am referring to would ameliorate the appalling traffic congestion through the centre of Melton village; the latter has become an infamous traffic bottleneck within the A1152 corridor, with its accompanying pollution and risks of accident and injury. This is Melton’s biggest infrastructure problem and it has been brought into even sharper focus by the likely impact of Sizewell C. The Parish Council is deeply concerned at the impact of traffic congestion on the safety and well-being of its residents, particularly the children who attend Melton Primary School. We are also concerned at the divisive and negative impact on community life of the huge wall of traffic that cuts through the middle of the village. As a council, we have a responsibility to speak out on this subject and, for the Melton community, doing nothing is not an option.

Every person I have spoken to on this matter has personal experience of the traffic problem in Melton and expects it to worsen, with or without Sizewell C. The organic growth of population and business activity on either side of the Wilford Bridge will continue to increase traffic volumes through Melton. Sizewell C would seriously exacerbate this already difficult situation by reducing capacity at Melton’s A12 junction with the A1152 and encouraging the use of well-known rat-runs, most of which converge at the A1152’s Wilford Bridge crossing. Over the length of the A1152 through Melton village, we expect Sizewell C to deliver a quantum increase in HGV and other traffic volumes, congestion, pollution and risk of accidents particularly at the “pinch points” of the A12 roundabout; the Bredfield Road junction with Woods Lane, the traffic lights by Melton Primary School; the Melton Station level crossing; and the Wilford Bridge roundabout.

The Bentwaters Business Park is another part of the traffic equation. It is a dynamic and successful commercial centre on the Deben Peninsula that has contributed to

the traffic on the A1152 through Melton. You may be aware that Melton has joined with a group of concerned Parishes along the A1152, in discussion with Highways and ESC, about the levels of traffic to and from the Business Park. Sizewell C will generate even more HGV and other traffic from Bentwaters Business Park when it is used to provide various services to the construction project, including off-site offices and stores. We also expect there to be Sizewell C-related business growth elsewhere on the Deben Peninsula.

The Parish Council's response to the Sizewell C planning application sums up our position. In making our representations to EDF, the Planning Inspectorate and the Secretary of State for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy we have suggested the following infrastructure improvements to the A1152 to mitigate EDF's road proposals:

- explore radical options that would reduce the volume of traffic carried by the A1152 over the Wilford Bridge and through Melton;
- the dog-legged corner on the A1152 at the Melton Station level crossing** is dangerous for road users and pedestrians alike and should be upgraded and straightened out;
- improve the A1152's design at the Melton crossroads traffic lights (next to our Primary School) to relieve the serious traffic congestion at that junction;
- improve the A1152's physical condition.

***The Melton Neighbourhood Plan mentions that to enable appropriate access for the housing development on land off Wilford Bridge Road, one solution might be a "road re-alignment over the level crossing to lengthen the bend". Though it now appears unlikely that any housing development would fund the A1152 re-alignment, it remains a vital infrastructure project in need of support.*

The Parish Council also strongly supports a 30mph speed limit on the A1152 between the Wilford Bridge roundabout and the level crossing.

While the adverse impact of traffic is very acute in Melton, it also affects other nearby communities (in varying degrees) especially those adjacent to the A1152. The extent of the A1152 traffic congestion must also be costly and disruptive for Suffolk's business community. In short, this isn't solely a problem for Melton – the adverse impact is sub-regional.

On reading ESC's "CIL Spending Strategy" document, I have noted ESC's revised approach to CIL spending and the new criteria for defining "essential infrastructure" with reference to the Local Plan or Neighbourhood Plan. It seems to me that the A1152's infrastructure needs have a strategic rather than simply a Melton dimension and are consistent with the CIL criteria for "Essential Infrastructure".

In summary, the A1152 is our top infrastructure concern and I suspect it is also for many nearby parishes and businesses. Melton Parish Council believes there is a

strong case for a funded infrastructure project to address the strategic deficiencies of the A1152.

I therefore ask for your advice on how the infrastructure needs of the A1152 could be incorporated into the forward programme for funding from District CIL and other sources of finance.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Bill Banks', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Bill Banks
Chair of Finance, Employment & Risk Management Committee
Melton Parish Council

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