



MELTON PARISH COUNCIL

PLA(22)70.01

Draft Planning Documents on Housing in the Countryside
SCLP 5.4 Housing in Clusters (Suffolk Coastal Plan)
WLP8.7 Small residential Developments in the Countryside (Waveney Local Plan)

1. Comments are sought on these proposed Planning guideline documents by 5th August 2022. They aim to give greater clarity and definition around the limited circumstances in which it is permissible to approve housing development in the countryside.
2. Policy SCLP 5.3 sets out the limited circumstances where housing in the countryside would be acceptable including housing development in clusters. The new draft policy 5.4 gives more guidance on when proposals for new dwellings within clusters will be supported. That is a proposal for up to 3 dwellings within a cluster of 5 or more dwellings, or proposals for up to 5 dwellings within a cluster of at least 10, which is well related to a major centre, town, large village or small village.
3. This guidance is important for Melton as there are parts of the village which are outside of the settlement boundary and deemed to be within the countryside and there are existing clusters of housing located there. Examples (not exhaustive) include Upper Melton Terrace on Yarmouth Road and another cluster of houses near the junction of St Audry's Lane and Yarmouth Road. We have had at least one case of a Developer arguing that an application for new housing a hundred yards distant from either of these should be regarded as part of a cluster with one of them. East Suffolk turned down that application.
4. The proposed guidance and illustrations in these new documents makes clear that whilst infilling should be allowed within a continuous frontage between pre-existing buildings, extensions of the built up area into the countryside should not be allowed.
5. Melton Parish Council needs to decide what, if any, representations it should make in regard to the documents and a couple of points have been made to us in connection with them.
6. Firstly it is noted that the definition of a cluster requires a continuous line of existing buildings adjacent to an existing **highway** "Dwellings must be close to an existing highway in order to provide vehicular access. SCC define a highway as any route in which the public has a right of way." It has been suggested by one of our neighbouring councils that this definition of highway is too wide and should be restricted (for the purposes of this guidance) to a "highway that currently provides vehicular access".
7. Secondly a resident of Melton has written to me copying the representations which she has made on these policy documents as follows " **Whilst these two policies are worded quite carefully they still leave an opportunity for developers to create ribbon developments which over time can then extend a small village quite considerably and open up areas which then become vulnerable to major development - which otherwise would never have been considered. The Planning Authority would need to take a "long" view on each application therefore to ensure that this did not happen. Perhaps an additional point in each policy would be that only one of these types of developments could ever happen within each cluster or site**".

8. I am doubtful that the Planning Authority could take a “long view” of a particular planning application in this way or limit the number of applications that might be made in connection with a particular cluster as it is a fundamental of Planning law that people are allowed to make applications for development and each application must be considered on its own merits.

Recommendations

Members are asked to:

- Consider what representations MPC should make in regard to these documents.

Cllr Nigel Brown, Chair Planning and Transport

7th July 2022