

## **MEL9 Community Facilities on Melton Playing Fields**

Melton Parish Council is to be commended on fulfilling their role as an imaginative, innovative and forward thinking public body. However, with respect to the above policy, the proposals – which have moved on since the publication of the pre-submission NP – give cause for concern in terms the consultation process, location, scale, function, facilities, finance, management and staffing.

1a. *Consultation process.* Accepting that MPC do need to be pro-active in their planning, it seems that very little, if any, market research has been done on matters such as actual facilities needed *before* a brief was given to the architect.

1b. Following feedback from the first NP, MPC noted an action point to review the scale of ambition for MEL9 for the subsequent pre-submission document. This has not been done.

2a. *Location.* Although it is understandable that MPC would wish to build on land they own, a two-story building and – most significantly – a largely expanded car park will take up a large footprint and intrude on a very desirable and much valued green space.

2b The current architect's plans would impact on the football pitches and also on the regular charity car boot space. The implications of this need careful consideration if existing revenue and facilities are to be lost.

3. *Scale.* This large build will raise issues of noise and disruption for local residents (especially if it is to be hired out for evening events) and traffic mgt.

4. *Function.* What is referred to in terminology and therefore public perception, is a 'village hall'; the proposal is actually a large events and conference centre. Of those who did overtly support the idea of a village hall or refurbished pavilion in their response to the first NP, no one expressed the desire for a 150-seater hall and 2/3 meeting rooms.

5a *Finance.* If it is to proceed, such a project needs to do so with optimism but with care. However, a public consultation meeting in February 2017 did not inspire confidence that the financial aspects of the proposal had been carefully thought through in principle. Acknowledging that until a full (preferably outsourced) Business Plan and Risk Assessment are undertaken it is difficult to estimate actual figures, financial matters in general need to be more clear in order to serve as a basis for a public response to the proposal for such a large-scale 'village hall'.

5b. If it is to proceed, it is more than likely that grants will be obtained, but with the Community Infrastructure Levy regulations in a state of flux, if no funding is found the worst case scenario is that the interest only on a full Public Works loan of £1.2m would be approx £600,000 over 30 years. Is this a wise use of Parish/public funds?

6. *Management and Staffing.* In order to generate sufficient revenue, there will be a significant amount of staff time needed eg events management and bookings; general management; caretaking; cleaning; maintenance; staffing to keep the facilities open. These will obviously need to be realistically costed and figures presented in a Business Plan. But, is this a good use of Parish funds?

In summary, it would seem that (i) the proposal has been taken (with amendments) to an expensive feasibility stage without sufficient market research (ii) such a large building/car park would intrude significantly and to the detriment of the much valued green space of Melton Playing Fields (iii) a consultation process is being undertaken without sufficient information, which cannot at this stage be specific but must have more substance, particularly on revenue sources and running costs, and so that informed decisions can be made by the public and by the full MPC itself. Therefore, as the ambition of MEL9 is over-reaching and fraught with difficulties, I would support this policy being deleted from the Neighbourhood Plan.

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2.3.17