

Introductory Note: *This is a document that was handed in paper format to John Slater at the public hearing of Frisby's Neighbourhood Plan on 12/12/2017 by the author, a villager by the name of Dr Lesley Twigg. It is an unsolicited critique dating to mid May 2016 of the sustainability survey that had been commissioned from "Your Locale" by Frisby Parish Council (FPC). This document was provided by Dr Twigg in a private capacity to FPC, was noted by them but not taken further at the time. Mr Slater accepted this document as evidence at the hearing and asked that a digital version be placed on the MBC Neighbourhood Plan portal.*

Dear Villager,

As you may know, a sustainability survey was commissioned from "Your Locale" by the Parish Council. This was done to allow a more formal comparison of the advantages and disadvantages of each of the three sites being considered by the village.

At the end of March, part of the NPAC considered the merits of conducting such an assessment prior to our "Site Preference Survey". We decided against it for the following reasons:

1) the estimated time to complete the site assessment was 4 weeks. This would have been way too late for the results to have informed our survey of the village site preference by the MBC's end of May deadline.

2) at the NPAC meeting (end March) when this was proposed, we were informed by "Your Locale" that the results of such a Sustainability site assessment would not be able to overturn those of MBC's own surveys.

3) MBC are in the process of conducting the same type of study (SHLAA) and we felt that a further assessment would be duplication not a good use of public money.

On May 12, "Your Locale" strongly advised the PC that a Sustainability site survey by them was highly advised and that NPAC's surveys of village opinion would not be listened to by MBC without this further evidence. (We have subsequently checked with MBC and this was not in fact the case. They are happy to accept our document as it stands). Therefore, the PC felt obliged to go ahead with the survey, even though there was only 19 days to go before submission of our document to MBC.

The draft survey was discussed at a meeting on 22 May. Everyone present felt that it was so full of factual errors and clearly erroneous conclusions that we could not possibly submit it alongside our own survey documents.

Those of us non PC members of the NPAC wish to set out objectively some of the problems we see in this study.

The author sets out to compare the three sites using criteria set out in the NPPF (National Planning Policy Framework). These include issues such as visual impact assessments, landscape/wildlife/conservation considerations, safe access to and from the sites and access to local services, flood risks (flood zone and surface water flooding), contaminated land, mineral safeguarding and preservation of historical landscapes and buildings. These assessments are carried out by MBC (SHLAA) with the Highways Agency and the Environment Agency.

Sites are considered to be unsuitable (by NPPF) in the following circumstances:

1) Satisfactory vehicular access cannot be provided (there are visual splay distances considered safe for various speed areas).

2) Flood zone 3 (Flood zone 2 not to be used if alternative sites are available—see Sequential test NPPF section 102-104)

3) Directly beneath 400KV (Grid) electric line or high pressure gas pipe.

4) SSI

5) Historic monuments and buildings

6) mineral extraction and safeguarding

7) landfill/hazards

In their study, “Your Locale” used criteria derived from the above considerations and rated each site a red (unsuitable for residential building), amber (problems which can be mitigated or overcome), green (no problems). The number of reds, ambers and greens were added up and used to rank the sites in order and to exclude one or more as unsuitable.

General problems with this approach are

1) that questions asked of each site, whilst based around the NPPF are arbitrary and open to manipulation eg: the same exercise done in Billesdon asked the walking distance from each site to the school (as well as to the shop and bus stop). This was omitted for Frisby and would have been advantageous to one site.

2) None of the criteria were “weighted” so that a red score for having a badger on a site was afforded the same significance as flood risk or dangerous vehicular access. Therefore the simple addition of reds and greens to define site sustainability is clearly flawed.

3) The allocation of red/amber/green to a criterion is often arbitrary. The evaluation of the significance of “views”, “open countryside” hedgerows etc are a matter of opinion and in some instances go against the existing “written statement” of the current MBC Local Plan and the 2015 Influence Study done for MBC.

4) No objective measurements of traffic flow through the village were taken, although judgements were made as to how the traffic to and from each site would impact on the village.

5) No distances for “visual splays” around proposed or possible site entrances were measured (see Highways agency regulations), even though opinion was given that access to the Water Lane site by the railway crossing and a bend in the road to the right up the lane was perfectly safe, whereas access from the long straight section above Great Lane would be dangerous.

6) The presence of a pylon below the Great Lane site earned a red score even though it is at a distance of 120 m beyond the farthest hedge bounding the site. National Grid only object to building directly below pylons and then 7.6m clearance vertically and at angles is required.

7) The rating for flood risk initially put “Cook’s Land” as a red risk even though it is not in a flood zone and has moderate surface water flooding (Environment Agency data). No mention was made of sequential testing for the flood zone 2 land which also (along with the bottom of Water Lane and Wellfield Lane) has the highest possible surface water flooding rating. I note this was addressed in the Billesdon study.

8) Two sites were judged unsuitable due to the topography—slope of the land and the costs to potential developers in rectifying this. This begs the question why one of these sites is fully approved by SHLAA and why planning permission is currently being sought by a developer who is clearly not deterred by this.

9)No question was raised in regard to Mineral Safeguarding. One of the sites has been referred to Leicestershire County Council by MBC (see interim SHLAA) in this regard as it is 100% sand and gravel(British geological survey). If designated in this way, all building would be prohibited.

Serious factual errors in the initial draft were pointed out (and corrected). The Great lane site was said to impinge on the village conservation area and be close to 2 listed buildings. Two sites were said to be used for regular recreation—jogging and dog walking(not corrected). Badgers and foxes were said to inhabit one site, then a second. Much of this type of information is on heresay rather than evidence.

A particularly misleading criterion was the re-drawing of the LTD (limits to development envelope), which is currently the village boundary. This was drawn without input from the PC or NPAC to put two sites outside this boundary (to help protect them from development) and leaving one inside (to be developed). This was not the site ranked highest by the village preference survey.

The final indictment of this study is the unwillingness of the author to allow publication in full including his scoring. If it were to be accepted this sustainability survey would effectively rule out at least one (possibly two) sites where building is perfectly feasible; one of which was chosen by the village. The village residents should at least be given sight of this to draw their own conclusions.