

**CABINET – 28 OCTOBER 2025****MELTON LOCAL PLAN PARTIAL UPDATE DUTY TO COOPERATE
STATEMENT OF COMMON GROUND****REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE****PART A****Purpose of the Report**

1. The purpose of this report is to advise the Cabinet on the progress of Melton Borough Council's Local Plan and to seek approval for the County Council to become a signatory to a Statement of Common Ground with Melton Borough Council (Melton BC) regarding the two Authorities' 'Duty to Cooperate'.
2. The Statement of Common Ground (appended to this report) confirms that Melton BC and the County Council have effectively cooperated ahead of the examination of the Melton Local Plan Partial Update. Specifically, it confirms the consensus for the Melton Local Plan Partial Update period to mirror the period in the adopted Local Plan to 2036 and to confirm Melton BC's commitment to start a new Local Plan immediately after the adoption of the Local Plan Partial Update.
3. The agenda for this Cabinet meeting also includes a report recommending that the Council becomes a signatory to a separate Statement of Common Ground with Melton BC, concerning the Melton South Sustainable Neighbourhood.

Recommendations

4. It is recommended that the County Council becomes a signatory to the Melton Local Plan Partial Update Statement of Common Ground.

Reasons for Recommendation

5. The Duty to Cooperate (DtC) is a legal duty for local planning authorities, county councils and relevant bodies to 'engage constructively, actively and on an ongoing basis in any process' including the preparation of development plan documents. This Statement of Common Ground (SoCG) has been jointly produced by Melton BC and the County Council to confirm that the parties have effectively and regularly cooperated to address matters associated with the production of the Melton Local Plan Partial Update.

Timetable for Decisions (including Scrutiny)

6. The SoCG will need to be approved by both Leicestershire County Council and Melton BC to support the submission of the Melton Local Plan Partial Update.
7. Melton BC is aiming for the submission of the Local Plan Partial Update by the end of 2025 and seeks to have this SoCG formally signed ahead of its Council meeting in November 2025.

Policy Framework and Previous Decisions

8. In December 2023 the Cabinet approved the response to the Melton Local Plan Update Issues and Options Consultation. This was a Regulation 18 consultation, the first formal stage of consultation for the Local Plan.
9. In February 2025 the Cabinet approved the response to the Pre-Submission Local Plan Update consultation. This was a Regulation 19 consultation which represents the final stage of public consultation before a plan is formally submitted and allows for representations on the plan's soundness and legal compliance.

Resource Implications

10. There are no resource implications arising from the recommendation in this report. The County Council has committed significant resources to engaging in, and supporting, a collaborative approach to strategic planning in order to facilitate the delivery of growth within the County and to mitigate the negative impacts of development, to the extent that it is reasonably possible to do.
11. The County Council continues to seek to provide support for a Local Plan that provides as robust as possible policy platform for securing the provision of infrastructure and services required to support its successful delivery.
12. The Director of Corporate Resources and the Director of Law and Governance have been consulted on this report.

Circulation under the Local Issues Alert Procedure

13. This report will be circulated to members representing the Melton area – Mr. A. Innes CC, Mrs. K. Knight CC, Mr. B. Lovegrove CC and Mr. J. Orson CC.

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PART B

Background

14. The current Melton Local Plan was adopted by the Borough Council in October 2018 and covers the Plan period 2011 to 2036. It is a legal requirement that Councils review their Local Plan within five years of adoption, to decide whether the plan needs to be updated, either in whole or in part.
15. The outcomes of a five-year review of the Melton Local Plan were considered by Melton BC at its meeting on 28 September 2023. The review concluded that a partial update was required as most of the development management style policies required revision, whilst the Plan's overall strategic policies relating to the spatial strategy, housing targets and allocations continued to be appropriate and did not need an update.
16. The County Council has since submitted responses to Melton BC's Regulation 18 Issues and Options consultation in December 2023, and Regulation 19 Pre-submission draft consultation in February 2025.
17. The Council's substantive response to the Pre-submission consultation was considered and approved by the Cabinet in February 2025 and the main comments are summarised as follows:
 - This is a partial (not full) review and the fundamentals of the development (spatial) strategy, plan period and housing allocations remain unchanged.
 - Strong justification is given to maintaining the plan period to 2036 with a view to undertaking a full review with an extended plan period. The recognition of the need to embark on a full review quickly following adoption of this partial review is supported.
 - The proposed revised policies reflect the Education infrastructure being planned for in Melton.
 - The Local Transport Authority (LTA) has no fundamental issues to raise in respect of the partial review.

Duty to Cooperate

18. The Duty to Cooperate (DtC) is a legal duty for local planning authorities, county councils and relevant bodies to 'engage constructively, actively and on an ongoing basis in any process' including the preparation of development plan documents. To demonstrate effective and on-going joint working, the NPPF recommends that authorities 'prepare and maintain one or more statements of common ground, documenting the cross-boundary matters being addressed and progress in cooperating to address these'. As stated in Part A of this report, this SoCG has been jointly produced with Melton BC.
19. The SoCG notes the consensus for the Melton Local Plan Partial Update period to mirror the period in the adopted Local Plan to 2036 and confirms Melton BC's commitment to start a new Local Plan immediately after the adoption of the Local Plan Partial Update.

20. This SoCG is produced without prejudice to other matters of detail that the parties may wish to raise during the Local Plan examination, including the matters around the Melton South Sustainable Neighbourhood and associated Statement of Common Ground which are the subject of a separate report to this Cabinet meeting.

Next Steps

21. The County Council and Melton BC will continue to engage as the plan progress towards an anticipated submission of the Local Plan Partial Update later in 2025 and subsequent examination in 2026.

Equality Implications

22. There are no equality implications arising from this report.

Human Rights Implications

23. There are no human rights implications arising from this report.

Environmental Implications

24. The County Council will continue to work closely with Melton BC and other partners to minimise the impact of the planned growth on the environmental assets of Leicester and Leicestershire.
25. The impact upon the environment is a key consideration in all planning decisions made within the context of an approved or emerging Local Plan, and the County Council will seek to ensure that opportunities are taken to enhance the environment through biodiversity net gain and sustainable forms of development.

Partnership Working and Associated Issues

26. The County Council works closely with the Leicester and Leicestershire Strategic Planning Partnership, which includes Melton BC, the other six district councils in Leicestershire, Leicester City Council and the Leicester and Leicestershire Business and Skills Partnership.

Background Papers

Report to the Cabinet on 19 December 2023: Response to Melton Borough Council's Local Plan Partial Update – Issues and Options Consultation - <https://bit.ly/4a51P7j>

Report to the Cabinet on 7 February 2025: Response to Melton Local Plan Partial Review Regulation 19 Pre-Submission Consultation Draft - <https://bit.ly/4mq5JMG>

Appendix

Melton Local Plan Partial Update Statement of Common Ground between Melton Borough Council and Leicestershire County Council