

**CABINET – 28 OCTOBER 2025****MELTON SOUTH SUSTAINABLE NEIGHBOURHOOD STATEMENT
OF COMMON GROUND****REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE AND THE DIRECTOR OF
ENVIRONMENT AND TRANSPORT****PART A****Purpose of the Report**

1. The purpose of this report is to seek approval for the County Council to become a signatory to a Melton South Sustainable Neighbourhood Statement of Common Ground.
2. The Statement of Common Ground relates to the Melton South Sustainable Neighbourhood, and Southern Melton Mowbray Distributor Road and has been prepared jointly by the County Council, Melton Borough Council, Davidsons Developments Limited and Bloor Homes ('the parties'), to support the Melton Local Plan Partial Update examination. The Statement is currently being drafted and will be the subject of a supplementary report to this meeting.
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 Local Plan Partial Update Duty to Cooperate.

Recommendations

4. It is recommended that the County Council becomes a signatory to a Melton South Sustainable Neighbourhood Statement of Common Ground subject to the actions and principles set out in Part B of this report.

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) seeks to set out the ongoing commitment of the parties towards the joint working and delivery of the Melton South Sustainable Neighbourhood and Southern Melton Mowbray Distributor Road.

Timetable for Decisions (including Scrutiny)

6. The SoCG will need to be approved by the relevant parties to support the Melton Local Plan Partial Update examination.
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 October 2023 the Cabinet considered a report on the latest position in relation to the Melton Mowbray Distributor Road South project. The Cabinet confirmed the County Council's ongoing commitment to Melton BC's existing Local Plan strategy but noted that the County Council was unable to draw down any further grant monies from the Housing Infrastructure Fund and was unable to proceed at present with the contribution of the Melton Mowbray Distributor Road South.
9. 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.
10. 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

11. There are no resource implications arising directly 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.
12. 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. The Council recognised that planned growth reduces the potential risks and costs associated with speculative development and therefore is supportive of the strategic approach to site allocation set out in the SoCG.
13. 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

14. 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.

Officers to Contact

Zafar Saleem
Assistant Chief Executive
Tel: 0116 305 4952 Email: zafar.saleem@leics.gov.uk

Ann Carruthers
Director, Environment and Transport
Tel: 0116305 7000 Email: ann.carruthers@leics.gov.uk

Janna Walker
Assistant Director Development and Growth
Tel: 0116 3050785 Email: janna.walker@leics.gov.uk

Julie Thomas
Head of Planning and Historic and Natural Environment
Tel: 0116 305 5667 Email: julie.thomas@leics.gov.uk

PART B

Background

15. The current Melton Local Plan was adopted by the Borough Council in October 2018 and covers the Plan period 2011 to 2036. The County Council continues to work with Melton BC to deliver the proposal in this adopted Plan, in particular the key infrastructure which the County Council is responsible for. This includes the Melton Mowbray Distributor Road.
16. Melton BC is in the process of undertaking a Partial Update of its Local Plan to ensure the effectiveness of the policies is maintained and to reflect the changes to national planning guidance. The County Council 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.

Duty to Cooperate

17. As part of the Local Plan process, both Melton BC and the County Council need to demonstrate the Duty to Cooperate (DtC). This 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 National Planning Policy Framework (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'.
18. 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, the 'Local Plan Partial Update Duty to Cooperate'. This focuses on the engagement related requirements on the duty and is produced without prejudice to other matters of detail that the parties may wish to raise during the Local Plan Examination.

Melton South Sustainable Neighbourhood Statement of Common Ground

19. This report and the recommendations are to address a further SoCG on the Melton South Sustainable Neighbourhood (MSSN). It reflects the work undertaken by Melton BC, the County Council, Davidsons Developments Limited and Bloor Homes (as promoters for the South Sustainable Neighbourhood) ('the parties') with regards this strategic allocation and the associated infrastructure, Melton Mowbray Distributor Road South. This SoCG will inform the Examination of the Local Plan Partial Update, specifically the changes to Policies SS4 (Melton South Sustainable Neighbourhood) and IN1 (Melton Mowbray Transport Strategy).
20. The Local Plan strategy identifies two 'Sustainable Neighbourhoods', one to the north and one to the south of the town. The Melton North and Melton South

Sustainable Neighbourhoods make a substantial contribution to meeting the borough's needs for development up to 2036 and beyond.

21. The two allocated Sustainable Neighbourhoods include provision for a Melton Mowbray Distributor Road (MMDR) to relieve traffic congestion in the town centre. The MMDR forms a key component of the essential infrastructure which underpins the spatial strategy of the adopted Local Plan, to provide for a greater scale of future growth in Melton Mowbray and the wider borough and to enable and support the regeneration of the town centre as a tourism and leisure destination.
22. The County Council has worked closely with Melton BC to determine the route of the outer distributor road and to secure public funding, alongside developer contributions, to support the delivery of the road. The full distributor road will connect Nottingham Road to the northwest of the town to Burton Road to the southeast (North and East Melton Mowbray Distributor Road, NEMMDR) round to Leicester Road to the southwest of Melton Mowbray (Southern Melton Mowbray Distributor Road, S-MMDR).
23. The County Council successfully secured government funding for the North and East Melton Mowbray Distributor Road and is currently delivering the scheme using the Large Local Majors funding from central government funding combined with its own contribution and funding from the Leicester and Leicestershire Local Enterprise Partnership and developer contributions. Work started in 2023 and is expected to be complete by Spring 2026.
24. The County Council was also successful in securing funding from Homes England for the South Melton Mowbray Distributor Road. However rising costs meant that it was not possible for the Council to meet the funding conditions and there has been a need to explore alternative approaches to the delivery of this section of the distributor road and the South Sustainable Neighbourhood. There has been particularly close working over the last 12 months to ensure it can come forward as a sustainable neighbourhood, containing the key services and facilities desired. This has included reviewing the masterplan proposals for the sustainable neighbourhood that were developed in support of the Housing Infrastructure Fund application.
25. Education and health officers are comfortable with the proposed amendments for this strategic allocation.
26. In respect of highways and transport considerations the County Council has formally committed to phased delivery of the MMDRS, subject to no funding for the scheme being required from the County Council. The latest transport evidence work demonstrates that phased delivery is possible in practical terms and further details on the phasing strategy and funding mechanisms are expected to be developed through further joint working and form part of appropriate planning applications. For example land will need to be safeguarded for full road construction in the current planning applications submitted by Bloor and Davidsons for the MSSN allocation. Positive resolution to planning applications prior to the Local Plan Examination next summer,

which should provide the best evidence of the soundness of the plan and officers have challenged the developers to seek to work towards this.

27. Officers will continue to input into the Local Plan Partial Update to safeguard the County Council's position regarding the future delivery of the MMDRS. This will include relevant Local Plan policies relating to the Southern Sustainable Neighbourhood.

Next Steps

28. Officers will be guided by the following principles in seeking to agree a SoCG;
 - Continued support for delivery of growth through the MSSN
 - Maintaining a policy basis within the Local Plan for delivery of sustainable growth with appropriate infrastructure including school provision and the MMDR S
 - Recognition of the need to phase the delivery of infrastructure with reference to site viability and cash flow considerations
 - Continued joint working between all parties to secure delivery of the MSSN
29. Subject to agreement the parties will continue to work together to deliver the site, using the agreed principles set out in the SoCG to inform joint masterplanning, phasing and delivery work to support the delivery of the Melton South Sustainable Neighbourhood within and beyond the plan period. This will include a senior level meeting with Melton Borough Council officers in finalising the SoCG.

Equality Implications

30. There are no equality implications arising from the recommendations in this report.

Human Rights Implications

31. There are no human rights implications arising from the recommendations in this report.

Environmental Implications

32. 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.
33. 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

34. 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 24 October 2023: Melton Mowbray Distributor Road South
<https://bit.ly/42RW5LO>

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>

This page is intentionally left blank