

**CABINET – 21 JULY 2026****HARBOROUGH DISTRICT LOCAL PLAN****REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF GROWTH, ENVIRONMENT AND
TRANSPORT****Purpose of the Report**

1. The purpose of this report is to advise the Cabinet of the progress of Harborough District Council's Local Plan and to set out the County Council's position on a proposed Statement of Common Ground (SoCG) on transport matters, ahead of the Examination in Public (EiP) and the initial hearing session, which is scheduled for 12 August 2026.
2. A supplementary report setting out the detail on these matters is currently being prepared and will be circulated to Members and published on the County Council's website as soon as it is available.

Recommendations

3. The Cabinet is asked to note this report and will be asked to consider recommendations set out in the supplementary report.

Reasons for Recommendation

4. The supplementary report will set out an update on Harborough District Council's Local Plan and the County Council's position on a proposed SoCG on transport matters, ahead of the EiP. The SoCG has specifically been requested by the panel of Inspectors examining Harborough District Council's Local Plan.

Policy Framework and Previous Decisions

5. In 2018, the County Council, Leicester City Council, the seven district councils in Leicestershire, and the Leicester and Leicestershire Enterprise Partnership (LLEP), approved the Leicester and Leicestershire Strategic Growth Plan (SGP) which provides the long-term vision for planned growth for the area up to 2050. Both Market Harborough and Lutterworth are identified as being areas for managed growth.
6. In October 2019, the Cabinet approved the response to Harborough District Council's New Local Plan Issues and Options Consultation at Regulation 18 stage, which is the first formal stage of consultation for the Local Plan.

7. The Leicester and Leicestershire Strategic Transport Priorities was approved by the Cabinet on 20 November 2020. This document has a plan period to 2050 and it was developed by the County Council and City Council alongside the SGP to ensure that the long-term development needs and associated transportation requirements are co-ordinated.
8. In 2021, the County Council and its partners (Leicester City Council, the seven district councils and the LLEP), commissioned the Leicester and Leicestershire Housing and Economic Needs Assessment (HENA). The HENA, published in June 2022, provides evidence that across Leicester and Leicestershire, the projected housing need from 2020 to 2036 is 91,400 dwellings and employment land need from 2021 to 2036 is 344 hectares.
9. In December 2021, the County Council became a signatory to a SoCG relating to South Leicestershire Local Plan Making (November 2021), aligning the gathering of evidence and activity in the development of new Local Plans for three districts in the south of the County.
10. In September 2022, the Cabinet approved the County Council becoming a signatory to a SoCG relating to Housing and Employment Land Needs (June 2022), setting out how the City Council's identified unmet needs would be accommodated in the County. Harborough District Council approved the SoCG at its Council meeting in July 2022.
11. In November 2022, the Cabinet received a paper setting out the financial implications for the County Council of delivering sustainable and inclusive growth and the approach and principles that it is proposed the Council would adopt to address and manage these risks.
12. In October 2024, the Cabinet received a paper on the Strategic Planning Issues associated with the emerging Charnwood Local Plan. This included principles for future engagement of the Local Highways Authority in other Local Plan processes in light of the County Council's experience of the Local Plan for Charnwood Borough.
13. In December 2024, the Cabinet report on the Provisional Medium Term Financial Strategy 2025/26 – 2028/29 referred to the importance of Local Plans being prepared with sufficient evidence to secure contributions and delivery for critical infrastructure and that it is necessary for the district councils to work with the County Council to ensure that their Local Plans include policies that balance the need to support delivery of growth with the financial risk to the County Council.
14. In March 2025, the Cabinet received a report on the proposed response, as the views of the County Council, to the Submission Draft (Regulation 19) Harborough Local Plan 2020-2041. The report set out that there were substantive issues associated with the Plan's evidence base and as the Local Transport Authority, the County Council considers that the Plan was failing to meet the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) tests of soundness insofar both its Effectiveness and Consistency with national policy. The report

also set out that a number of policies required updating to reflect required land and monetary contributions to deliver necessary education provision.

15. In September 2025, the Cabinet received a report on Harborough District Council's Local Plan, seeking approval for the County Council to become a signatory to a SoCG with the District Council regarding the two Authorities' 'Duty to Cooperate' on strategic and cross-boundary matters associated with the production of the Local Plan. It focused on the engagement related requirements of the Duty to Cooperate and is produced without prejudice to other matters of detail that the parties may wish to raise during the Local Plan examination.
16. In December 2025, the Cabinet received a report on Strategic Spatial and Transport Planning. This outlined proposals for the preparation of a Spatial Development Strategy and secured approval for the County Council to share initial evidence work, to undertake initial scheme feasibility and development work, outlined how this would be used by the Local Transport Authority to input into strategic planning, including to assist the evolution of Local Plans to the submission stage and in bringing forward strategic sites allocated in those Local Plans.
17. In February 2026, the Cabinet approved the County Council becoming a signatory to a SoCG produced by the Leicester and Leicestershire local authorities relating to housing distribution following the NPPF and new Standard Method published in December 2024. Harborough District Council is yet to become a signatory to this SoCG.

Resource Implications

18. 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.
19. As set out in the report to the Cabinet in December 2025 on Strategic Spatial and Transport Planning, securing the delivery of infrastructure, transport or otherwise (such as education, waste and health), to support the needs of Leicester and Leicestershire's growing population is becoming ever more challenging, particularly where strategic transport and education infrastructure is required to seek to mitigate the cumulative impacts of development sites across a relatively wide area of the County. The County Council seeks to achieve a more coordinated approach to locations for growth and prioritisation of its delivery relative to the prioritisation of investment in the infrastructure and services necessary to support it.
20. As part of seeking to provide necessary infrastructure to support new and existing communities appropriately, the County Council recognises that having up to date Local Plans in place underpinned by appropriate policies and delivery strategies is the most effective way to fund and deliver infrastructure,

maximising the contribution from the development industry and minimising potential negative impacts of unplanned growth.

21. The Director of Corporate Resources and the Chief Legal Officer and Monitoring Officer have been consulted on this report.

Circulation under the Local Issues Alert Procedure

This report will be circulated to all Members.

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