

Melton Borough Local Plan Review

Sustainability Appraisal

Regulation 19
SA Report Non-Technical Summary

January 2025

Quality information

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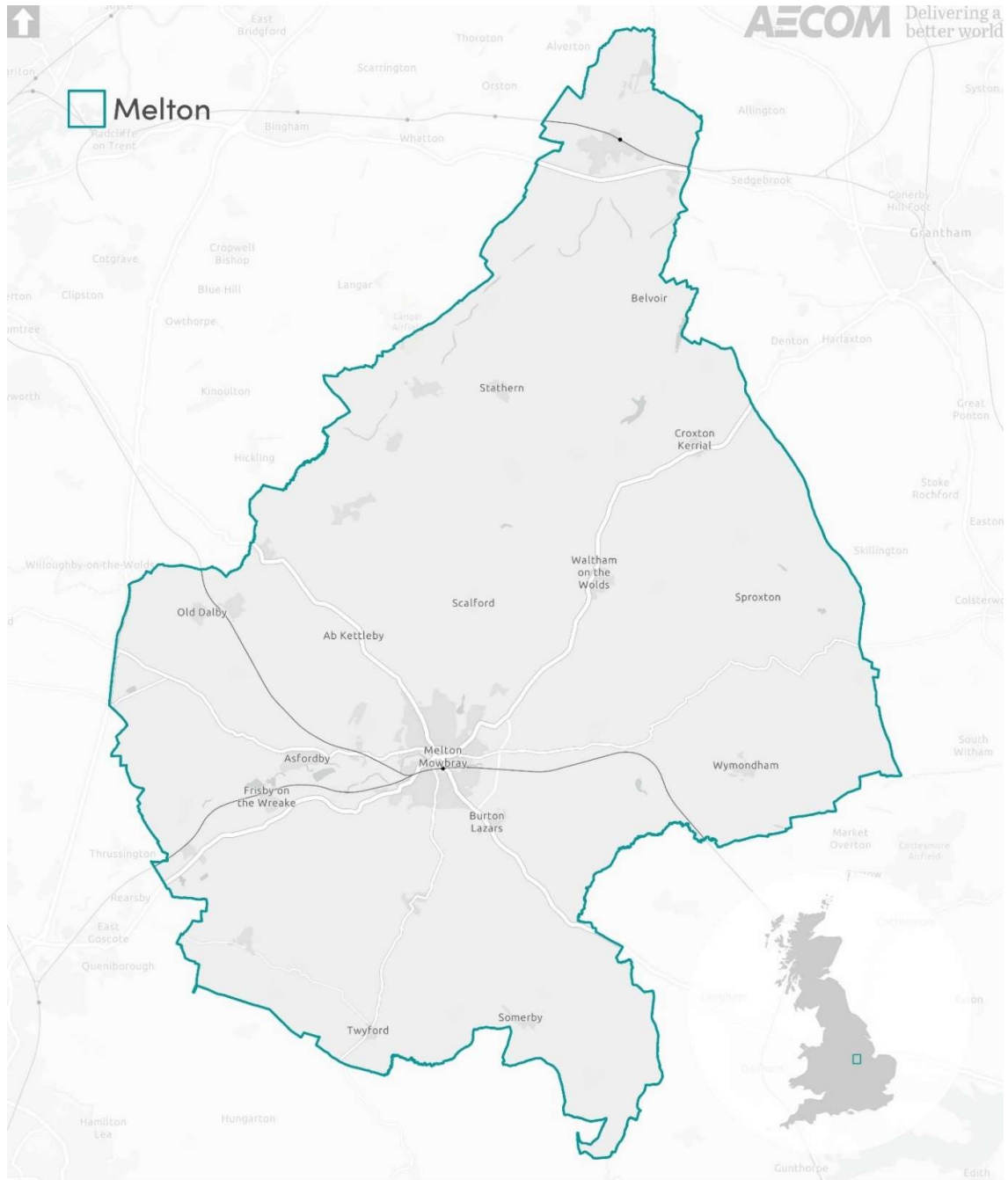
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1. Introduction

- 1.1 This is a Non-Technical Summary document which summarises the Sustainability Appraisal (SA) for the Regulation 19 version of the Melton Local Plan review. The current Local Plan was adopted in October 2018 and sets out the Borough's spatial strategy in relation to housing and employment growth, with locally specific policies and site allocations which will help to shape the Borough's built environment up to 2036.
- 1.2 Local Plans must be reviewed every five years of the Plans adoption, and therefore, the Council agreed to undertake a review in December 2022.
- 1.3 The review concluded that the development strategy remains appropriate, and the supply of housing is sufficient. However, there is a need to update the Employment Growth Policy to reflect changes in the use class order and the conclusions of a new Employment Land Study. A range of updates may also be required in relation to specific plan policies to ensure that they reflect current legislation, priorities and prevailing economic, social and environmental conditions.
- 1.4 The new Local Plan will guide development from adoption through to 2036. The Plan area is illustrated on Figure 1.1 below and will cover the whole of Melton Borough.

Figure 1.1: The Plan area



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2. Scoping

2.1 A scoping exercise was carried out in order to establish the key sustainability issues and objectives for the plan area. The issues and objectives were collated to establish a framework to provide a consistent and structured approach and methodology to appraise the sustainability effects of the Local Plan and alternatives. The SA framework themes and objectives for the Melton Local Plan review are set out below.



Air Quality

Protect and improve local air quality and reduce the potential for negative effects on human health and the environment.



Biodiversity

Protect, restore and enhance habitats and their connectivity achieving net gains in biodiversity and positive outcomes for health and wellbeing.



Climate Change Resilience

Support Melton's resilience to the potential effects of climate change, particularly flooding.



Climate Change Mitigation

Take proactive measures to help achieve zero carbon targets for Melton.



Economy

Build upon key industries and support growth, timely investment in infrastructure and economic diversification that has tangible benefits to the lives of local residents whilst addressing social inequalities.



Equality and diversity

Support equitable outcomes for all communities by tackling inequalities, embracing diversity and improving accessibility.



Health

Improve generational health and wellbeing and reduce inequalities between residents.



Historic Environment

Conserve and enhance the significance of heritage assets and the contribution made by their settings; whilst supporting engagement and enjoyment of the historic environment.



Housing

Support timely delivery of an appropriate mix of housing types and tenures.



Landscape and townscape

Protect and enhance the character and quality of Melton's landscapes, townscapes and villagescapes?



Soil and land

Protect important soil and mineral resources, promote the effective use and restoration of land and buildings, and sustainably manage waste and minerals.



Transport

Ensure that provision of transport infrastructure reflects local population and demographic needs, promotes sustainable modes of travel, connects new housing to employment, education, health and local services and maximises accessibility for all.



Water

Ensure the sustainable management of water resources, helping to protect and enhance value with regards to the environment, human health and economic growth.

2.2 The SA framework provides a means to ascertain whether and how specific sustainability issues (established through scoping) are being addressed, and to understand the social, economic and environmental implications of options, policies and proposals.

3. Identifying Alternative Growth Options

Introduction

- 3.1 The Council has considered and appraised a range of options throughout the plan-making process. The focus of these options has been on the strategic matters of housing and employment delivery as these are intrinsic to the Plan.

Housing Delivery

- 3.2 The Plan review concluded that the evidence on housing need supports the view that the Local Plan target and spatial distribution continues to be appropriate. Furthermore, the review concludes that the housing allocations policy is performing well and flexibility is provided through the existing identified supply, allocations and reserve sites. As such, the Council has concluded that there are no reasonable alternatives to test through the Local Plan update in respect of housing strategy, delivery and housing allocations.
- 3.3 During the plan-making process, the Council have considered comments through the issues and options consultation suggesting that further housing allocations should be considered through the Local Plan review. However, the Council has concluded that such issues should be dealt with in a new Local Plan (this approach accords with the transitional arrangements for plan making set out in Annex 1 of the NPPF). The Council have also considered updates to the NPPF, including revisions to the standard methodology calculations. The Council considers that it is appropriate at this time to push ahead with the Local Plan review based on the 2023 update to the NPPF.

Employment Land and Strategy

- 3.4 The Local Plan review identified the need to review employment strategy and site allocations.
- 3.5 The Council has explored a range of individual site options to understand the constraints and opportunities from the 'supply side'. This forms a 'bottom up' understanding of employment land in the borough. The Council has also considered 'top down' strategic factors such as the amount of employment land to plan for and the broad distribution of growth. The site assessment process and the quantum and broad distribution of growth is discussed in Section 4.

Other policy areas

- 3.6 The issues and options consultation presented a series of 'options' for policies that were 'scoped in' to the Local Plan update. Many of these are not options that necessitate appraisal through the SA, as they are 'procedural' in nature and not likely to give rise to significant effects. A summary of these policy options and the reason no alternatives have been appraised are set out in the SA Report in further detail.

4. Employment Options

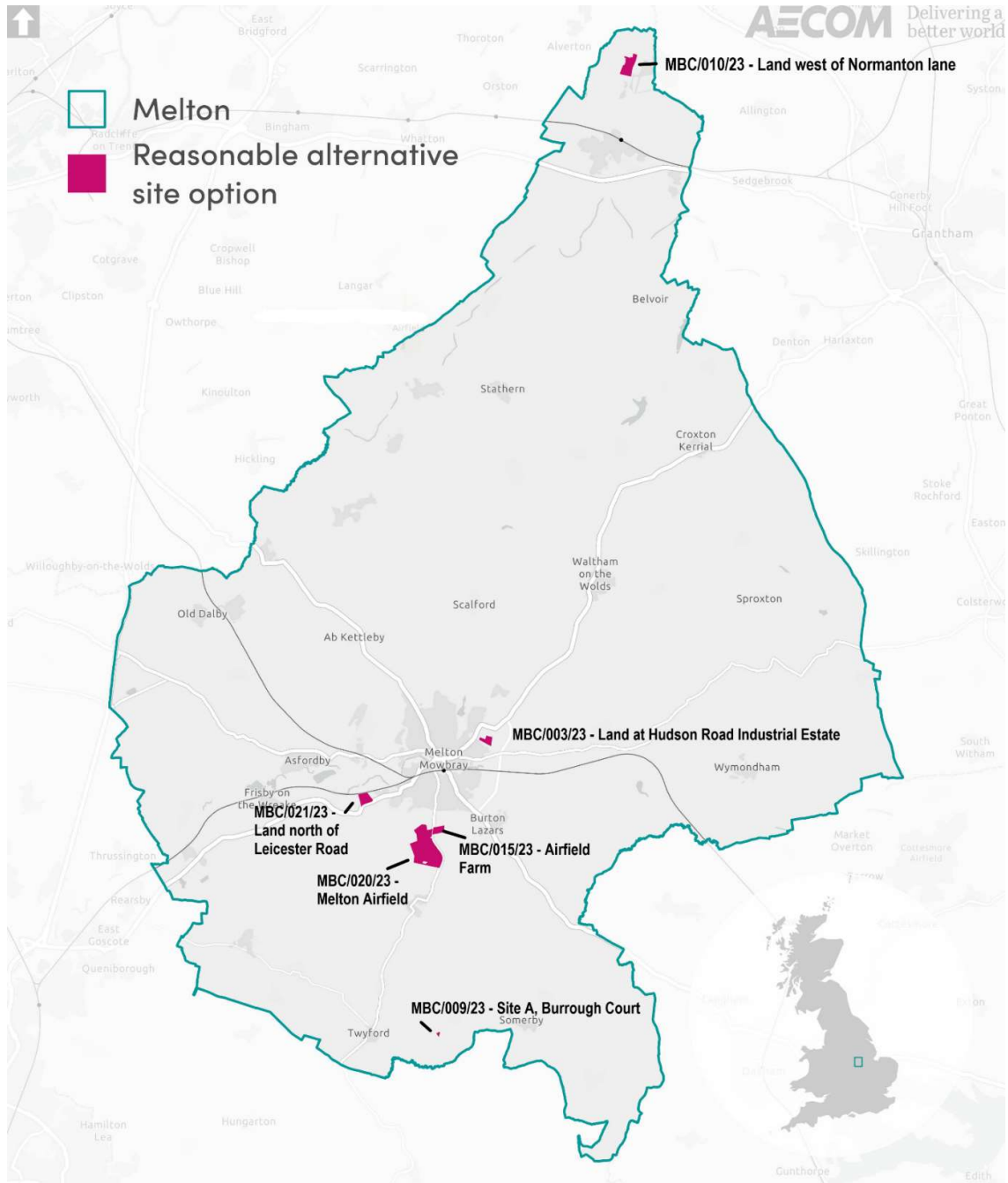
Introduction

- 4.1 The Local Plan review concluded that the employment policy and growth strategy should be updated and to explore whether further allocations are necessary to meet identified needs.

Site Options for Employment

- 4.2 In June/July 2023, Melton Borough Council carried out a 'Call for Sites' to identify additional employment land in the borough. A total of 22 potential sites were identified through this process.
- 4.3 The Council applied a site sifting methodology to determine which of these sites would be reasonable options for allocation through the Local Plan review. The Strategic Economic Land Availability Assessment was published in April 2024 and recommended that 19 sites could potentially be suitable for allocation. The Employment Land Study (June 2024) appraised the sites with an objective range of 'A+' to 'E'. The study recommended that six sites scoring A+ to B- would be strong candidates for allocation in the Local Plan.
- 4.4 The six sites were considered to be reasonable alternatives for the purposes of the SA. The sites are illustrated in Figure 4.1 and include:
- MBC/003/23 - Land at Hudson Road Industrial Estate, Melton Mowbray
 - MBC/009/23 - Site A, Burrough Court, Burrough on the Hill
 - MBC/010/23 - Land west of Normanton lane, north of Normanton
 - MBC/015/23 - Airfield Farm, Dalby Road, Melton Mowbray
 - MBC/020/23 - Melton Airfield, Dalby Road, Melton Mowbray
 - MBC/021/23 - Land north of Leicester Road, Melton Mowbray

Figure 4.1: The Reasonable Alternative Site Options



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4.5 The outcomes of the employment site options appraisal are set out in Table 4.1. Sites MBC/009/23, MBC/015/23 and MBC/020/23 were identified to not have any significant constraints.

Table 4.1: Site Appraisal Matrix

Sourced from the Site Selection Study
Supplementary criteria

	003/23	009/23	010/23	015/23	020/23	021/23
Environmental health (air quality)	Red	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green
Air quality management areas	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green
Natural environment	Green	Green	Green	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow
Proximity to SPA, SAC, RAMSAR	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green
Proximity to SSSI, NNR	Yellow	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green
Proximity to LNR	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green
Trees and hedgerows	Yellow	Yellow	Red	Yellow	Yellow	Red
Flooding water quality and drainage	Red	Yellow	Green	Green	Green	Yellow
Overlap with Flood Zone 2	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green
Overlap with Flood Zone 3	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green
Market fit	Green	Yellow	Red	Green	Green	Green
Proximity to existing employment uses	Green	Green	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Green
Viability, land ownership, infrastructure	Red	Green	Yellow	Green	Yellow	Green
Workforce within 2000m	Green	Red	Red	Green	Green	Green
Workforce within 3000m	Green	Red	Yellow	Green	Green	Green
Workforce within 5000m	Green	Red	Green	Green	Green	Yellow
Neighbourhood Plans	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green
Multiple deprivation	Grey	Grey	Grey	Grey	Grey	Grey
Environmental health (noise, odour)	Green	Green	Yellow	Yellow	Green	Green
Open space and public rights of way	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Yellow
Walking distance to public rights of way	Green	Yellow	Red	Red	Green	Green
Historic environment	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Red
Landscape, topography, visual impact	Red	Green	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow
Existing use	Red	Red	Red	Yellow	Yellow	Red
Contamination, minerals, waste and stability	Yellow	Green	Green	Green	Green	Yellow
Agricultural land classification	Yellow	Green	Red	Red	Red	Red
Transport and access	Red	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow
Relationship with host settlement	Green	Red	Red	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow
Walking distance to active bus stop	Green	Red	Red	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow
Distance to rail station	Green	Red	Green	Green	Green	Yellow
Proximity to source protection zones	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green

Employment Growth Options

4.6 Taking into account the quantity of development and the pool of site options available, the Council identified three reasonable alternative options for employment growth:

- Reasonable Alternative 1: Strategic Growth Scenario 1: Align with the Plan period
- Reasonable Alternative 2: Strategic Growth Scenario 2: Longer term provision up to 2050 with a focus on Melton Mowbray
- Reasonable Alternative 3: Strategic Growth Scenario 2: Longer term provision up to 2050 with a focus on 'rural locations'

4.7 The Council considered the following approaches, but ultimately determined that these are unreasonable alternatives for employment growth:

- Spread provision across a greater number of site allocations
- Widen the pot of sites to include C and D category sites

4.8 For each reasonable alternative, an appraisal has been undertaken against the SA Framework. Table 4.2 presents a visual summary of the appraisal findings for each of the reasonable alternatives.

Table 4.2: Employment Growth Options Summary of Effects

Major positive	✓✓✓
Moderate positive	✓✓
Minor positive	✓
Neutral	-
Minor negative	×
Moderate negative	××
Major negative	×××
Uncertainty	?

SA Topic	RA 1 <i>Lower growth</i>	RA 2 <i>Higher growth, Melton Mowbray focused</i>	RA 3 <i>High growth, Rural areas focused</i>
Air Quality	-	×	×
Biodiversity	-	-	-
Climate change resilience	-	-	-
Climate change mitigation	-	×	×
Economy	✓	✓✓✓	✓✓
Equality and diversity	✓	✓✓	✓
Health	✓	✓	✓
Historic Environment	-	-	-
Housing	-	-	-
Landscape	-	×	×
Soil and land	-	×	×
Transport	-	-	×
Water	-	-	-

4.9 The reasonable alternatives were also ranked to identify which option performs best against each SA topic.

Table 4.3: Employment Growth Options Summary of Ranking

SA Objective	RA 1 <i>Lower growth</i>	RA 2 <i>Higher growth, Melton Mowbray</i>	RA 3 <i>High growth, Rural areas focused</i>
Air Quality	1	2	2
Biodiversity	1	2	2
Climate change resilience	1	2	2
Climate change mitigation	1	2	2
Economy	3	1	2
Equality and diversity	2	1	2
Health	2	1	3
Historic Environment	1	1	1
Housing	1	1	1
Landscape	1	2	2
Soil and land	1	3	2
Transport	1	2	3
Water	1	1	2

Summary of the Preferred Approach

- 4.10 The Councils preferred approach aligns most closely with RA2. However, the proposed approach is a 'hybrid' strategy, which takes account of individual site conditions.
- 4.11 The Council proposes to allocate three sites and review one of the two existing allocations.
- 4.12 The site boundary of the exiting allocation at Leicester Road has been amended to align it with the planning application (reduction from 20ha to 10ha).
- 4.13 A small allocation is proposed in Burrough on the Hill (MBC/009/23), as this site scores well in the site selection study and will help contribute to rural economic growth. However, this site is not large enough to meet identified needs, so additional sites are proposed in Melton Mowbray (Airfield Farm and Melton Airfield). The proposed allocations will exceed identified needs, but this will provide flexibility and a proactive approach to growth post 2036, giving greater certainty to the market in advance of the next Local Plan.
- 4.14 Given that the Melton Airfield farm is much larger than required, it is suggested that the boundary is changed to make this more reasonable for allocation as part of the Plan review. The promoter of the site is willing to alter the boundary and this would align with the Employment Land Study recommendations.

5. Appraisal of the Draft Plan

- 5.1 The appraisal process considered the Plan ‘as a whole’ (i.e. the proposed strategy including the site allocations and all of the supporting policies that will shape future development). The summary of the effects of the draft Plan appraisal are set out below.

Major positive		Minor negative	
Moderate positive		Moderate negative	
Minor positive		Major negative	
Neutral		Uncertainty	?



Air Quality

The increase in employment land will lead to additional vehicular movements, which could lead to some negative effects on air quality in the short term. However, the effects are unlikely to be significantly negative given that baseline levels of air quality are good and the scale of growth is modest.

In the longer term, public transport access and active travel is likely to be improved for the Melton Mowbray sites and there is expected to be an overall reduction in emissions from vehicles. The Plan update is also expected to contribute to an overall reduction in emissions from transport in the longer term, and an increase in green infrastructure, both of which should help to offset any increase in employment growth.

Overall, **neutral effects** are predicted.



Biodiversity

The allocated sites for employment growth are not significantly constrained from a biodiversity perspective, but there are some priority habitats nearby or potentially protected species present. Whilst the plan requires impacts to be avoided and mitigated (and compensated for if necessary), there is some uncertainty about negative effects arising.

It is expected that any effects would be minor though, and ultimately, there will be a need to achieve net gain.

Other Plan updates provide a clearer and stronger strategy with regards to biodiversity protection, enhancement and expansion, as well as specific measures that should help to encourage wildlife movement and improved quality of water-based and urban environments. This should serve to have **moderate positive effects** on biodiversity overall.



Climate Change Resilience

The Plan takes a more proactive approach to the consideration of climate change resilience, and recognises the importance of green infrastructure, biodiversity and the design of new development to ensure that Melton adapts to climate change and becomes more resilient. In this respect, **minor positive effects** are predicted.

The allocated sites are not significantly constrained by flood risk from rivers, but there is some limited potential for surface water impacts and there will be a loss of greenfield land. It is expected that appropriate drainage solutions would be secured though, so neutral effects are predicted.



Climate Change Mitigation

The Plan update is likely to have mixed impacts with regards to climate change mitigation, ultimately leading to **neutral effects**.

On one hand, an increase in employment land provision will increase emissions associated with construction and traffic. However, these are short term impacts. Other plan policies require higher standards of sustainable design in new development, which should lead to a decrease in emissions from the built environment, including at the employment site allocations and new homes.



Economy

The allocation of suitable land for employment will support investment in the borough, particularly in Melton Mowbray, which is the key centre of economic activity. This should lead to jobs that are mostly taken up by local residents.

The Plan Update also takes a more proactive approach to sustainable design and the 'green economy', which will be more attractive to investors and employees. There are also likely to be some minor enhancements in relation to infrastructure that is beneficial for businesses and local communities.

Overall, a **major positive effect** is predicted.



Equality and diversity

The Plan is not likely to have disproportionate negative effects on any group with protected characteristics, or on any particular communities.

The most notable effects will arise in Melton Mowbray, with the new employment allocations providing job opportunities that could be accessed by deprived communities.

Other Plan policies are likely to have positive effects on development more generally by improving space standards and living environments. This is likely to have benefits for elderly and disabled people (which are protected characteristics).

In combination, **moderate positive effects** are predicted.



Health

The allocation of additional employment land to support jobs growth will bring positive effects as employment is a wider determinant of health. The majority of additional floor space is proposed at Melton Mowbray, which correlates with areas of greater deprivation (though the borough as a whole has relatively low levels of deprivation). The release of the sites for employment are unlikely to have significant negative effects in terms of health and wellbeing as the sites are not valuable with regards to recreation and unlikely to bring about amenity issues for nearby communities.

Other Plan policies are likely to have positive effects on development more generally by improving space standards, enhancing green infrastructure and seeking to achieve healthy neighbourhoods. Overall, the policies are predicted to work together to achieve **moderate positive effects** on health outcomes.



Historic Environment

Overall, it is considered that the Plan update is likely to have a **neutral effect** in terms of the historic environment. The site allocations are not constrained by heritage assets and development is unlikely to significantly alter the historic environment. There are some minor changes to plan policies that reference the need to consider heritage in relation to SUDs and design more generally, but these are unlikely to have a significant effect.



Housing

The Plan updates are unlikely to have any significant effects upon housing delivery, but the quality of new homes should be improved (given changes relating to space standards, affordability and self / custom build housing). There is also a commitment to commencing a new local plan and an early plan review, which present opportunities to address any changes in housing need.

These are **minor positive effects**.



Landscape and townscape

The Plan is predicted to have **minor negative effects** on landscape as a result of the new site allocations. Whilst the sites are not significantly constrained and there will be a need to implement appropriate mitigation, it is likely that residual effects will remain given that there will be change in land use and the sites are adjacent to each other. However, the Plan seeks to implement enhancements to green and blue infrastructure, which ought to minimise effects and lead to some positive effects throughout the borough.



Soil and land

The Plan update is likely to have mixed effects. On one hand there will be a permanent loss of agricultural land/ greenfield land, but the Plan is also more proactive in relation to green infrastructure enhancement (which could have some indirect benefit for soil).

On balance, **minor negative effects** are predicted, owing to the loss of agricultural land which is categorised as best and most versatile (or is likely to be).



Transport

The Local Plan update is predicted to have minor positive effects overall. On one hand it is likely that additional employment land will be located in areas that encourage car trips (at least in the short term), but the effects are unlikely to be significantly negative. Conversely, the Plan takes a more proactive approach to supporting sustainable modes of travel more generally, and this is likely to have positive implications for development across the borough.

Overall, **minor positive effects** are concluded.



Water

The employment land allocations are not likely to lead to water pollution or negative effects on resource use.

Several policies have been updated to ensure that water efficiency is improved for new developments, whilst a range of policies should also have indirect positive effects on water quality through an enhancement of green and blue infrastructure.

Overall, **potential moderate positive effects** are concluded.

- 5.2 The Plan Update is predicted to have mostly positive effects across the SA Framework. The effects of greatest significance relate to the economy, driven mostly by the allocation of enough land to meet identified needs and provide longer term flexibility. A number of policy changes are also likely to support enhancements to the environment, infrastructure and resilience of Melton to climate change, which will help to ensure that it remains able to support economic growth in a sustainable way.
- 5.3 The Plan is also likely to have significant positive effects on health and equality by providing land to support jobs growth in locations that are accessible to communities. The Plan also seeks to improve standards for new homes and is predicted to lead to enhancements in green infrastructure, which are also positive for health and wellbeing.
- 5.4 The sites allocated for employment land are not sensitive in terms of heritage, and there are limited other changes to the Plan in this respect. Therefore, neutral effects are predicted for the historic environment.
- 5.5 Though there is an increase in employment land and likely transport related emissions, it is expected that the quality of development will offset this increase, and so neutral effects in terms of air quality and climate change mitigation are predicted. In the longer term, positive effects on transport could arise due to a stronger emphasis on sustainable travel.
- 5.6 The only negative effects predicted relate to landscape and townscape and soil and land. These relate to the change of use of land outside of the urban area from greenfield to employment land. Though the sites are not very sensitive to change, and appropriate mitigation will be required, residual negative effects are unavoidable. Given the low magnitude of effects and the sensitivity of the receptors, only minor negative effects are predicted.

6. Mitigation and Monitoring






Mitigation

- 6.1 The sustainability appraisal (SA) of the Melton Local Plan review has been an iterative process, in which proposals for mitigation and enhancement have been considered.
- 6.2 The following recommendations have been made in relation to the draft Local Plan:
- It is recommended that native and climate resilient species are promoted and that invasive / non-native species are avoided unless it can be proven they are appropriate.
 - To support people who have the poorest access to greenspace it is recommended that a standard is included to promote good access from the 'doorstep'
 - It is recommended that explicit mention is given to the need for dementia friendly design, as this will further strengthen the focus on pedestrian links, well designed buildings and public open spaces.
 - Policy EC5 refers to the need for developments to make adequate provision for car parking. It is recommended that the policy is expanded to include provision for other forms of movement such as wheeling and walking.
 - It is recommended that the highest viable standards of energy and resource efficiency are required for new strategic employment sites, as these will form an important part of the longer term supply for Melton.

Monitoring

- 6.3 It is important to monitor the predicted effects in a sustainability appraisal as it provides a check on the accuracy of predicted effects and allow for unforeseen effects to be identified. Identifying a framework of monitoring measures is a requirement of the SEA Regulations. At this stage, a range of indicators have been drafted and these will be finalised once the Local Plan is adopted.
- 6.4 The draft monitoring measures are set out in Table 6.1 below.

Table 6.1: Proposed Monitoring Measures

SA Objective	Proposed Monitoring Measures
 <p>Biodiversity Moderate positive effects are predicted as the Plan takes a proactive approach to biodiversity protection and enhancement.</p>	<p>% net gain delivered overall.</p> <p>% developments requiring a minimum of 10% net gain that are delivered on site.</p>
 <p>Economy Major positive effects are predicted due to the provision of employment land and improvements to the quality of developments.</p>	<p>Employment land completions.</p> <p>Planning applications on site allocations.</p>
 <p>Equality and diversity The Plan will have moderate positive effects by improving space standards and living environments and job opportunities for communities in need.</p>	<p>% of new homes built to the appropriate space standards.</p> <p>Levels of multiple deprivation.</p> <p>Employment rates.</p>
 <p>Health The Plan will have moderate positive effects on health by increasing jobs, enhancing green infrastructure and seeking to achieve healthy neighbourhoods.</p>	<p>% of new homes built to the appropriate space standards.</p> <p>All major (and other relevant type/location) development to provide screening statement.</p>
 <p>Water Moderate positive effects are predicted as the Plan will improve water efficiency in new developments and water quality through environmental enhancements.</p>	<p>% of major housing developments achieving 110 litres per person per day standard.</p> <p>% of residential applications permitted with an Energy and Sustainability Statement</p> <p>Water quality monitoring.</p>

7. Next Steps

- 7.1 The SA Report and this Non-Technical Summary of the SA Report has been prepared to accompany the Pre-Submission version of the Local Plan. The report draws together all the SA outputs that have been prepared to date.
- 7.2 The final Plan will be 'Submitted' for Examination in Public (EiP). The Council will also submit a summary of issues raised (if any) through representations at the Publication stage so that these can be considered by the Government appointed Planning Inspector who will oversee the EiP. At the end of the EiP, the Inspector will judge whether or not the Plan is 'sound'.
- 7.3 Further SA work may be required to support the plan-making process as it moves through Examination (for example the preparation of SA Addendums to deal with changes / modifications).

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