

RURAL ECONOMIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

16 NOVEMBER 2011

REPORT OF HEAD OF COMMUNITIES & NEIGHBOURHOODS

MELTON GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE STRATEGY REVISED MELTON BOROUGH BIODIVERSITY & GEODIVERSITY STUDY MELTON OPEN SPACE, SPORT & RECREATION STUDY

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The report seeks Committee approval of the Melton Green Infrastructure Strategy and also reports the Revised Melton Borough Biodiversity and Geodiversity Study and the Melton Open Space, Sport & Recreation Study.

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 **That the Melton Green Infrastructure Strategy (Appendix A) be approved and the priorities set out at paragraph 3.6 be noted;**
- 2.2 **That the Revised Melton Borough Biodiversity & Geodiversity Study (Appendix B) & Melton Open Space, Sport & Recreation Study (Appendix C) be noted.**

3.0 Key Issues

- 3.1 Planning Policy Statement 12 states that the Core Strategy should be founded on a robust and credible evidence base. The evidence base should be relevant to the place in question and contain include evidence that the choices made by the plan are backed up by the background facts. This requirement is also reflected in the draft National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) which states that planning policies should be based upon adequate, up-to-date and relevant evidence about the economic, social and environmental characteristics and prospects of the area.

Melton Green Infrastructure Strategy

- 3.2 Green infrastructure is firmly embedded in the national and local planning policy framework and as such must be considered an essential part of planning and development control. PPS12 requires Core Strategies to be supported by evidence of what physical, social and green infrastructure is needed to enable the amount of development proposed for an area to be accommodated. The draft NPPF continues this emphasis on green infrastructure requiring local authorities to plan positively for the creation, protection, enhancement and management of green infrastructure.
- 3.3 In 2009 a sub-regional Green Infrastructure Strategy was produced which included strategic green infrastructure (GI) within Melton as part of a wider sub-regional network. The Melton Green Infrastructure Strategy builds on this work and provides more detail, particularly to inform our spatial planning processes and the development of planning policy.

- 3.4 The Melton GI Strategy examines existing GI assets showing the quality, accessibility and environmental character of the plan area. It also includes a needs assessment which considers how the green infrastructure of an area currently meets the needs of the community. Specific green infrastructure needs and deficits are identified and through this the Strategy maps propose Green Infrastructure throughout the Borough.
- 3.5 This work has enabled the GI Strategy to set out a series of recommended policies for the Melton Core Strategy focussed around the retention and improvement of green infrastructure and the assets identified.
- 3.6 The GI Strategy also includes a number of green infrastructure initiatives which would improve the green infrastructure network around the Borough. These have been prioritised in terms of deliverability and it is intended that the Melton Core Strategy should focus upon the enhancement of:-
- River Wreake Strategic River Corridor
 - Jubilee Way
 - Melton Country Park
 - SUE Green Corridor
 - Grantham Canal
 - The Wolds Escarpment
 - Burrough on the Hill Country Park
 - Newark to Market Harborough Disused Railway Line
- 3.7 The Green Infrastructure Strategy is attached at Appendix A.

Revised Melton Borough Biodiversity & Geodiversity Study

- 3.8 The Melton Biodiversity & Geodiversity Study was originally published in 2006. PPS12 requires the Core Strategy to be as up to date as practical having regard to what may have changed since the supporting evidence was collected. This position is also reflected in the draft NPPF which requires an up-to-date evidence base to be present to inform planning policy. It goes on to state that this should enable local planning authorities to preserve and enhance the natural environment. To ensure this requirement was met given the date of the last study an update of the 2006 Melton Biodiversity & Geodiversity Study was prepared for 2011.
- 3.9 The 2011 Study has been carried out in line with PPS 9: Biodiversity and Geological Conservation which sets out planning policies for the protection of biodiversity and geological conservation. These aims continue to be reflected in the draft NPPF which seeks to minimise impacts on biodiversity and geodiversity.
- 3.10 The Biodiversity and Geodiversity Study informs planning policy and development control decisions by indicating the location of important sites of biodiversity and geodiversity resources within the Borough. It also identifies opportunities to conserve and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity resources.
- 3.11 Alongside the Borough wide information the Study also provides more detailed information on 11 search areas which encircle the outskirts of Melton Mowbray. A more comprehensive examination of the main biodiversity and geodiversity resources present in these areas is provided along with an

impact assessment. The impact assessment provides the constraints and opportunities associated with any potential development proposals within each search area.

- 3.12 The Revised Biodiversity & Geodiversity Study is attached at appendix B.

Melton Open Space, Sport & Recreation Study

- 3.12 The Melton Open Space, Sport and Recreation Study was originally published in 2006. Since the completion of the 2006 study, new open space and sports standards were introduced in 2008. To keep our evidence base up-to-date, in line with Government guidance an update of the original study was prepared in 2011.

- 3.13 National planning policy, contained within PPG 17: Planning for Open Space, Sport & Recreation and its companion guide, require local authorities to ensure accessible, high quality open spaces, sport and recreation facilities; a balance between new provision and the enhancement of existing provision; and, certainty as to the requirements and expectations for this provision. A similar policy direction is also contained within the draft NPPF which emphasises that access to good quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and recreation can make an important contribution to the health and well-being of communities.

- 3.14 The Melton Study was undertaken in line with PPG17 guidance and provides audit based assessments of indoor sports provision; open space provision; and, playing pitch provision. This information is then utilised to provide policy direction for the provision and improvement of open space, sport and recreation across the Borough through a framework strategy and action plan.

- 3.15 The study also utilises the audits to provide standards for open space, sport and recreation provision in Melton using national standards where applicable. These targets can then be utilised to inform planning policy and development control decisions.

- 3.16 The Open Space, Sport & Recreation Study is attached at Appendix C.

4.0 POLICY AND CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The evidence studies quantitatively and qualitatively assess existing green infrastructure; biodiversity & geodiversity assets; and, open space, sport & recreation provision within the Borough. The studies set out deficits and opportunities which will inform the development of planning policy, and development management decisions.

- 4.2 For a Core Strategy to be 'sound' at examination it should be justified, effective and consistent with national policy. To achieve this, the Melton Core Strategy must be founded on a robust and credible evidence base of which these studies form part.

5.0 FINANCIAL AND OTHER RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

5.1 The three studies rely on expert input not available within the authority. As a result the preparation of the studies has been provided for within the Melton Local Development Framework budget.

6.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS/POWERS

6.1 Planning Policy Statement 12 requires local planning authorities to prepare an evidence base to support the Core Strategy.

7.0 COMMUNITY SAFETY

7.1 There are no direct links to Community Safety.

8.0 EQUALITIES

8.1 The evidence base studies aim to ensure that a wide range of facilities are provided throughout the Borough and are available and accessible to all.

9.0 RISKS

9.1 The risks associated with this report are shown in the table below:

Probability



Very High A				
High B				
Significant C				
Low D				
Very Low E				1
Almost Impossible F				
	IV Neg- ligible	III Marg- inal	II Critical	I Catast- rophic

Impact

Risk No.	Description
1	Evidence Studies are not robust or credible as required by Planning Policy Statement 12
2	
3	
4	
5	

10.0 CLIMATE CHANGE

10.1 All three studies contribute evidence towards a policy set which has the potential to help discharge part of our legal duty to prepare for and limit the

impact of Climate Change as part of the Melton Local Development Framework.

11.0 **CONSULTATION**

11.1 The evidence base studies underwent consultation with a range of relevant statutory and non-statutory stakeholders and have utilised a range of information sources.

12.0 **WARDS AFFECTED**

12.1 The evidence studies are Borough wide incorporating all communities.

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Date:	28 October 2011
Appendices:	Appendix A – Melton Green Infrastructure Strategy – To Follow Appendix B – Revised Melton Borough Biodiversity & Geodiversity Study Appendix C – Melton Open Space, Sport & Recreation Strategy