

UKSPF in Melton: Evidence findings to support an Investment Plan

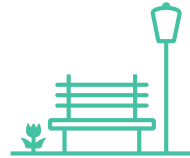
JUNE 2022

Communities and place

Communities and place: key findings



Ageing local population with a higher than average and growing proportion of over 65s and falling proportion of people aged 25-39



Higher scoring on indicators around life satisfaction, living environment, business space, high quality parks and gardens, but could improve other greenspace



Visitor numbers fell -42% 2014-2019, and the tourism sector hasn't grown over 5 years



Fall in funding for arts and development, and drop in number of arts and recreation businesses over 5 years



Low ranking for Melton (214 out of 311) in community assets of all England local authorities



Higher healthy life expectancy, levels of physical activity, and walking and cycling



43% of neighbourhoods have longer journey times to key services (vs. 17% nationally)



Significant gap in full fibre broadband with 2.6% of premises connected vs. 27% nationally

Decline in Tourism and increasing footfall: the evidence

What the evidence says

- Tourism and the visitor economy are vital to Melton's economy. The sector has been negatively impacted by the pandemic, in addition to pre-2020 decline in visitors, but there is an opportunity for growth and diversification. Melton's Destination Management Plan sets the vision of reinventing the market town and improving its vibrancy and footfall through events, leisure, tourism and culture.
- Melton mainly attracts day visitors, with numbers fluctuating seasonally. There is scope to increase the length of visitor stays and create a year-round offer through diversification.
- Melton has good levels of entrepreneurialism and self-employment as well as a good quality of life offer. This creates opportunities to diversify the tourism offer by supporting the growth of a vibrant craft, artisan and creative business community.

Stakeholder priorities

- **Diversifying the offer** beyond food to promote other assets: e.g. heritage offer, hunting, Kings Road; the Cattle Market; self-guided tours of Melton based on history; Melton theatre and the arts and culture offer; feasibility studies to support under utilised spaces i.e. Bell Centre; making use of rustic buildings for creative community markets, community facilities, moveable semi-permanent markets
- **Marketing and promotion:** e.g. Local cultural & heritage events (race, day, concert and cycle events); encourage the use of the #ruralcapitaloffood on social platforms; free leisure access, heritage trails and signage for prominent areas.
- **Public realm improvements:** e.g. reduce graffiti, increase CCTV; improved street scene and maintenance of street furniture.

Policy drivers: Delivery of the Destination Management Plan to improve market town vibrancy and footfall; delivery of the Corporate Strategy to promote the Discover Melton Brand, secure investment in the Food Enterprise Zone, and increase vibrancy, footfall and spend in the town centre.

Decline in Tourism and Visitor Economy

Melton's visitor economy has seen a decline in visitors by -42% from 2014-2019, and stagnation in the food and accommodation sector over recent years. STEAM research for Leicestershire shows a further fall of -17% in visitor numbers during the pandemic 2019-2021, and the number of FTE jobs supporting falling to under 1,000. This is at the same time as a fall in funding for arts and development in the area, and reduction in the number of businesses (-3%) and output (-18%) of arts and recreation businesses at a time of growth nationally. With support, there is an opportunity to revitalise Melton's cultural offer to residents and visitors.

Potential interventions	Potential outcomes
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Regenerating a town square• Public realm improvements• Funding for cultural, heritage and creative events• Funding for maker spaces• Locally-led music and theatre performances, tours, author events and film screenings• Campaigns promoting the local area and its offer to residents and visitors• Feasibility study to bring under-utilised assets back into use	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Rehabilitated land or premises• Public realm improved• Increased visitor numbers• Jobs created• Improved perception and users of facilities/amenities• Increased perception and affordability of events• Increased number of web searches for a place

Growing social capital: the evidence

What the evidence says

- Melton's rurality physically restricts access to services, but with an ageing population accessibility could also be negatively impacted by rising demand and low digital capability amongst the over 65 population.
- The borough has a low ranking in terms of community assets which can further restrict access to service and community support networks. Although health and deprivation trends are positive, with an aging population and rural isolation, strong community infrastructure is important to help manage the specific needs of vulnerable groups. For instance, Melton has a rising number of people with limiting long term illness, and mental health support for the farming community has seen good levels of take-up.
- Melton's recent resident survey found that more could be done to support community activity to improve the local area, including through engagement with the Council.

Stakeholder priorities

Addressing under-utilised spaces: e.g. feasibility studies to support under-utilised spaces such as Bell Centre and the surrounding land.

Improving engagement and access to services e.g. developing education and community groups; developing a centralised directory of voluntary groups; funding for local volunteering groups or to develop community involvement in local projects/programmes (AMY).

Enhancing the role of the market: measures to increase footfall and spread out across the town, as well as use common meeting places to improve access to services.

Policy drivers:

- Delivery of the Corporate Strategy to connect with the community including promoting community involvement in decision making, making council meetings more digitally accessible; strengthening work with Parish Councils, establishing a new Deal between the council and communities, maximising the impact of community grants.

Growing social capital

Melton Ranks 214 out of 311 local authorities in England for community assets (with 1 as the top performer). There is an opportunity to support community led groups and initiatives, including to increase cultural events, support creative businesses and improve green spaces. Melton Council's open space audit in 2020 found good access to green spaces and high-quality public parks and gardens. However, other areas of amenity greenspace and allotments could be improved in quality and refreshed due to aging.

UKSPF Indicative projects

- Funding for local volunteering groups, such as youth charities, carers groups or refugee support groups, and training for community group leaders
- Funding for community spaces, such as village halls, libraries or community centres for local civil society and community groups to use.
- Development of new / regeneration of community gardens
- Urban/riparian tree planting and changes to management of green spaces
- Development, restoration or refurbishment of local natural, cultural and heritage assets and sites

UKSPF Outcomes

- Volunteering numbers as a result of support
- Number of new or improved community facilities as a result of support
- Rehabilitated land or premises
- Public realm improved
- Improved perception and users of facilities/amenities

Improving connectivity: the evidence

What the evidence says

- Physical connectivity is a challenge in rural parts of the borough, with more barriers to services. 43% of LSOAs have longer public transport journey times compared with the national average of 17.3%.
- Melton's recent climate change residents survey shows awareness and desire to transition to cleaner modes of travel.
- Melton has a much lower broadband coverage than the England average (2.6% compared to 27%). The percentage change in coverage has also been much lower in Melton with a 2% increase in the last three years in Melton compared to a 21% change in England over the last five years.
- Median download speeds in Mbit/s are lower than the national average, and the five-year growth rate in Melton of 156.3% was below the 168% nationally.

Stakeholder priorities

- **Rural accessibility**, transport and connectivity:
 - Interventions to increase transport options
 - Subsidy of community transport services
- **Reliable broadband** connections and connections to community assets.
- **Improvements to urban cycle and walkways**: cycle and walking in urban areas is perceived to be difficult and discouraged. Clearer layouts of walkways and cycling routes are required and there may be scope to take advantage of MMDR to change Norman Way and increase connectivity between Cattle Market and Town Centre.

Policy Drivers: Corporate Strategy objectives to improve access to customer services through digital enhancements, working with partners to delivery the local transport strategy, protect and enhance the rural environment through the promotion of walking and cycling opportunities.

Improving connectivity

There are barriers to physical access to public services, and barriers to online access across the District. 43% of neighbourhoods in Melton that have longer than average journey times to key services (vs.17% of neighbourhoods nationally). Higher than average transport emissions per capita demonstrate higher reliance on car journeys causing congestion in some places. Only 2.6% of premises have direct access to full fibre broadband (vs. 27% nationally), with slow rollout. These pose risk of isolation for Melton's ageing population, as well as acting as a barrier for young families to live in the area.

UKSPF Indicative projects

- Creation of new foot paths and cycle paths
- Upgrading of existing foot paths and cycle paths
- Support for digital infrastructure for local community facilities

UKSPF Outcomes

- Increased use of cycleways or paths
- Number of premises with improved digital connectivity

NOTE: There is a slight mis-match between UKSPF intervention options and local needs which may warrant making a case for a bespoke intervention to improve accessibility to local services and service centres given Melton's rurality.

Supporting local business

Supporting local business: key findings



Productivity is below the national average but increasing at a faster rate suggesting the gap is closing



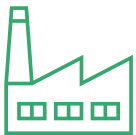
Above average business start-up, 5-year survival rates and self-employment rates



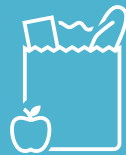
High business death rates and overall declining business base



Low earnings and limited evidence of innovation – fewer innovation jobs, low numbers of patents and declining overall competitiveness



Manufacturing, particularly food and drink remains important to the economy – but employment has been declining



Declining retail sector despite growth nationally and stagnating accommodation and food sector



Higher proportion of part time employment than regionally and nationally



Low levels of population growth and declining number of young people

Creating a vibrant economy: the evidence

What the evidence says

- Productivity across the business base is lower than average but has been growing. Innovation indicators show lower levels of firm innovation, Innovate UK grants, patents, and innovation jobs creation.
- Manufacturing remains an important source of local employment and GVA and with support, may provide further growth and skilled employment opportunities in the future as well as an opportunity to increase innovation levels.
- There is an entrepreneurial culture to build on – Melton has a higher proportion of people who are self-employed than average. But the business base has been declining in recent years. Relatively good start up and survival rates could be built on to support growth and further increasing start up rates.
- Opportunity to link to key subsectors such as the Food Enterprise Zone for next generation food entrepreneurs.

Stakeholder priorities

- **Skills and retention to grow the future workforce:** there are graduate skills gaps which require greater interaction between education and business, the promotion of apprenticeships and STEM subjects, graduate training schemes in specific sectors such as hospitality, and improved career advice and guidance for young people; employment events.
- **Site development and inward investment:** need for a more pro-active approach to find sites and promote them to developers and support delivery of the Inward Investment Prospectus; an Implementation Strategy (investment plans) to bring sites forward; help business to come to Melton through incubators and other space.
- **Business support:** Focused pool with technical expertise to support local businesses; support businesses to recruit for jobs and work with DWP/JCP; support for 'scaling up' businesses; promotion of mentors/coaching/peer networks; Growth Hub business advisors with growth or finance specialism to provide specialist support for encouraging local independents; start-up support and pop-up space; business diversification away from food; leadership and management training to support start-up and growth.

Policy Drivers: Corporate Strategy objectives to regenerate the town centre, encourage inward investment and job creation, including increased investment in the Manufacturing Zone

Creating a vibrant economy and innovation growth

Productivity is below the national average but increasing at a faster rate suggesting the gap is closing. Melton has above average business start-up and 5-year survival rates, and above average levels of self-employment; but high business death rates and a shrinking business base suggesting a need to support early-stage business growth and capitalise on the borough's entrepreneurialism. Melton has lower levels and slower growth in innovation jobs, and low numbers of patents and Innovate UK grants. Overall competitiveness is also decreasing suggesting businesses are not sufficiently attuned to new growth opportunities and the potential of innovation-led growth. Manufacturing continues to be an important source of local employment and is growing faster than the sector nationally in terms of output and number of businesses. However, employment in this sector has been declining suggesting there may be employment vulnerabilities linked to automation.

UKSPF Indicative projects

- Advisory & financial support for pre-starts, new and early-stage businesses/entrepreneurs
- Business accelerator and growth interventions
- Entrepreneur networks and forums
- Coaching and mentoring to support entrepreneurialism
- Support for innovation and diversification in low value-added sectors which remain important to the local economy, including opportunities linked to the food and drink sector
- R&D grants for new product, service and market development
- Advisory support to increase the proportion of innovation active businesses and increase the proportion of businesses adopting new to firm processes and products
- Supporting the manufacturing base to access new markets through innovation and exporting
- Leadership and management training to support industrial digitalisation

UKSPF Outcomes

- Jobs created/safeguarded
- New businesses created
- Increased business sustainability
- Increased number of businesses supported
- No. of businesses introducing new products to the firm
- No. of businesses adopting new to firm technologies or processes
- No. of organisations engaged in new knowledge transfer activity
- No. of premises with improved digital connectivity
- Businesses with improved productivity
- No. of R&D active businesses
- Increase in business investment

Retaining talent and boosting service centres: the evidence

What the evidence says

- Melton's footfall research shows increasing footfall in centres in the first quarter of 2022 compared with 2021. Continuing to grow footfall will be important for visitor and resident local activity recovery from Covid. Melton's markets remain important in driving footfall and tourism.
- Indicators for high street and business space health are positive, with low commercial property vacancy rates. Developing independent business and entrepreneurial support offer with networking and work-space can be an opportunity to develop centres and boost footfall with business activity. This would support the BID's strategy in Melton.
- Attracting young people to live and stay in Melton and the factors that make a place sticky are important for the area's future. There are strengths to build on - Melton scores more highly than average on indicators on life satisfaction, the living environment, and in recovery of local use of retail and recreation spaces since Covid lockdowns.

Stakeholder priorities

- Opportunities to exploit the green agenda and climate change.
- Development and promotion of visitor economy, including heritage grants, shop frontage grants, shop frontage restoration scheme to attract inward investors.
- Creative hub, start-up hub, pop-up hubs and start-up funding and advice to create more vibrant centres
- Developing the retail offer to attract and meet the needs of those moving into the area as well as increase footfall

Policy Drivers: Corporate Strategy objectives to deliver sustainable and inclusive growth in Melton, regenerate the town centre and encourage the investment which will create jobs; delivery of Melton's Destination Management Plan

Retaining talent and boosting service centres

Low levels of overall population growth, an ageing population, and a declining number of young people suggests retention and attraction of working age people is required. There may be scope to consider the role of entrepreneurship in broadening local employment options and supporting the retention of young people, as well as linking into skills interventions such as through apprenticeships and pathways to employment. The number of businesses in the retail sector has decreased over the past 5 years compared to an increase nationally, employment has also decreased at a faster rate than nationally. The size of the accommodation and food services sector has stagnated whilst growing nationally. With access to services a significant issue for the Borough with journey times well above the national average there may be a need to support retail/service centres to maintain footfall and vibrancy and to support the delivery of Melton's Destination Management Plan.

UKSPF Indicative projects

- The establishment of new open-air markets / specialist markets and street food outlets creating spaces for visitors and families to connect
- Business support activity for entrepreneurs
- Funding to support the development of new business sites
- Accelerator and incubator provision to support businesses to innovate, scale and reach new investment
- Strengthening local entrepreneurial ecosystems and connecting businesses to wider support on, for example, innovation, trade and skills
- Establishing local peer-to-peer networking/support and learning to improve sharing of best practice
- Development of evidence-based regional entrepreneurial support, led by entrepreneurs, risk capital providers, corporates, academia and government
- Funding to establish a new local business accelerator/growth programme
- Funding to support local business support offers

UKSPF Outcomes

- Jobs created/safeguarded
- New businesses created
- Increased business sustainability
- Increased number of businesses supported
- Increased footfall
- Increased visitor numbers

People and skills

People and skills: key findings



Employment is 5 percentage points below the national average and has declined over the past 5 years



High rate of economic inactivity which reflects an ageing population, however there is also an over-representation of people with long term illness



Decline in the take-up of apprenticeships



Fewer people in the workforce receive job related training than nationally



A lower proportion of employment in high skilled occupations and an over-representation in low skilled, elementary and service occupations



Fewer people qualified at NVQ4+ than nationally and more people qualified at NVQ2 and below



Average earnings below the national average and declining over the past 5 years. Fewer jobs pay above the real living wage than nationally.



6% of 16-24 year olds are NEET compared with 6.4% nationally, with the proportion of NEETS declining over the past 5 years

Supporting people into the labour market: the evidence

What the evidence says

- Employment levels are lower in Melton than nationally and has been in decline over the last five years – contrasting to a national rise. This raises issues around businesses having the staff they need and people leaving the labour market.
- Economic inactivity is higher than average – at a time when there has been a national trend in rising inactivity during and since the pandemic. Over the last five years, inactivity overall has slightly fallen nationally, but has risen by 9% in Melton.
- Economic inactivity in Melton is primarily a result of caring responsibilities and retirement, reflecting Melton's demographics. However, there is a growing proportion of people with limiting long term illnesses.
- Increasing total employment rates will be dependent upon attracting and retaining people of working age. This could include consideration of apprenticeships, the take-up of which has declined over recent years.

Stakeholder priorities

- **Raising aspirations:** Encouraging young entrepreneurs; better careers advice and guidance to elevate people's perception of what is possible and build enthusiasm; use of Prince's Trust and other providers
- **Develop employment skills:** e.g. work ethic, work expectations, work readiness and mentoring support, online training
- **Connecting people to employment:** e.g. employment events, careers advice, job matching, skills assessments, sector-based work academies, utilise DWP and Access All Areas.
- **Policy drivers:** Corporate Strategy to deliver sustainable and inclusive growth in Melton

Supporting people into the labour market

The employment rate is 5 percentage points below the national average and declined by 7.9% over the past five years compared with a 0.9% increase nationally. Although unemployment is in line with national trends, Melton has a higher rate of economic inactivity. Economic inactivity has increased by 9% over the past 5 years but declined nationally. Melton has made good progress in supporting those furthest from the labour market however there remain vulnerabilities given the impact of Brexit, Covid and rising inflation, particularly on the agriculture and food sector.

The borough also has a higher proportion of people with limiting long term illnesses that are economically inactive and may face additional barriers to re-entering the labour market. In line with the borough's inclusive growth objectives, therefore, there is a need to continue to support inclusive growth and build on the successes of interventions such as Me and My Learning at Phoenix House.

UKSPF Indicative projects

- Basic skills provision delivered in alternative/accessible settings
- Supported employment provision and placements for individuals with health and disability needs
- Support for people with similar health barriers to share personal experiences
- Counselling and advice services to help individuals with transition to work

UKSPF Outcomes

- Increased employment
- No. people in education/training
- No. of people in employment following support
- No. of economically inactive individuals engaged in mainstream skills, education and training
- Increased number of people with basic skills
- Fewer people facing structural barriers into employment and skills
- No. of people gaining qualifications and skills

Improving skills and earnings: the evidence

What the evidence says

- In a recent council survey of businesses, 70% of respondents struggled to meet their skills needs during the pandemic, and 40% see sustained shortages.
- Skills in the adult population are lower than average with a smaller proportion of people qualified to NVQ level 4+ than nationally.
- Qualification levels are more commonly up to level 2 than nationally, suggesting barriers to achieving level 3.
- A higher proportion of the workforce is employed in elementary occupations than nationally, but also more in senior positions. People are less likely to be employed in caring and leisure, and professional occupations.
- Median earnings are significantly lower in Melton (£21,358 vs £31,285) and a higher percentage of jobs earnings below the real living wage in Melton. Median earnings have fallen by 12.9% which is greater than the fall of 11% in England.
- In-work training levels are similar to average, so there is an opportunity to support businesses to increase training for their staff.

Stakeholder priorities

- **Business engagement:** challenge local businesses to do their bit e.g. business mentoring scheme, the provision of job-related training; access to graduate schemes and workforce development provision
- **Develop skills and training provision:** e.g. sponsor of high-level apprenticeships/training on the job training over a 3-year period into key professions, develop provision offer at Brooksby Melton College and expanding industries college; supporting core skills; and funding for higher skills training.
- **Policy drivers:** Corporate Strategy to deliver sustainable and inclusive growth in Melton

Improving skills and earnings

Average earnings are below the national average and have declined over the past 5 years. This is due to a lower proportion of employment in high skilled occupations and over-representation in low skilled elementary and customer service occupations. The borough's skills profile supports this with fewer people qualified at NVQ4+ and a higher proportion of people qualified at NVQ2 and below. Furthermore, over the past 5 years the gap with national trends has widened. A smaller proportion of the local workforce receive job related training than nationally. The findings suggest there is a need to work with employers to encourage upskilling and investment in workforce development, ideally linked to interventions to raise the quality of local employment opportunities which will attract and retain skilled labour.

UKSPF Indicative projects

- Local skills provision to support people to progress in work and supplement local adult skills provision.
- Targeted interventions to drive innovation and upskilling within the borough's food and drink manufacturing industry
- Support for high level apprenticeship opportunities
- Enhance links between business and education provides to create pathways into local employment
- Enhanced the career advice to young people to raise aspirations
- Further developing partnership working with local HE/FE providers to create placements for students and graduates to meet the future needs of the Food Enterprise Zone
- Developing a community digital skills pathway programme
- Increased number of people developing their skills to deliver local environmental priorities. Relevant courses could include environmental conservation, Agriculture, Land Management and Production T Levels

UKSPF Outcomes

- Increased employment
- Increase in businesses accessing the skills and talent they need
- Higher skill levels
- Higher earnings
- Increased training