

FOREWORD

Centrally located and exceptionally well-connected, Melton's heritage in food manufacturing earned it the title of "Rural Capital of Food." This quintessential English town may be a well-kept secret, but the investment case for the borough is compelling.

We are accessible, centrally located in the UK with a new £130 million distributor road investment, making it easier than ever to travel to Melton Mowbray. Melton's strategic position and connections provide access to a skilled workforce, along with six nearby universities, which have contributed to the success of local businesses.

Melton Borough faces an exciting future, but there are challenges to overcome. While employment has traditionally been high, many jobs are in low-skilled, low-paying roles that are vulnerable to economic downturns. We need to work with businesses to understand how to prepare residents for future job opportunities.

To future-proof and diversify Melton's economy, we need to build on its strengths and capitalise on opportunities in growing sectors such as food manufacturing, logistics and professional services.

This strategy builds on Melton Borough Council's Corporate Strategy, a 12-year plan that provides a long-term vision to address the most pressing issues for local businesses and residents.

Created in partnership with the local business community, the corporate strategy provides a long-term perspective that enables Melton Borough to become a place where all businesses and communities thrive. It sets a mandate for sustainable growth, with a greater focus on innovation, allowing businesses to increase their competitiveness and contribute to the prosperity of the Borough.

Developed at a time of significant government funding cuts, which continue to be a pressing issue for local councils across the country, this strategy will forge partnerships with key stakeholders in the private sector, third sector, education, government bodies, and Leicestershire County Council, delivering a collaborative approach supported by many. This partnership will help Melton Borough attract and retain ambitious, innovative, and socially responsible businesses.

We invite your support in helping us build a borough we can all be proud of.

**From Cllr Pip Allnatt, Leader of the Council and
Cllr Margaret Glancy, Deputy Leader of the Council**

BACKGROUND AND EVIDENCE BASE

National Context

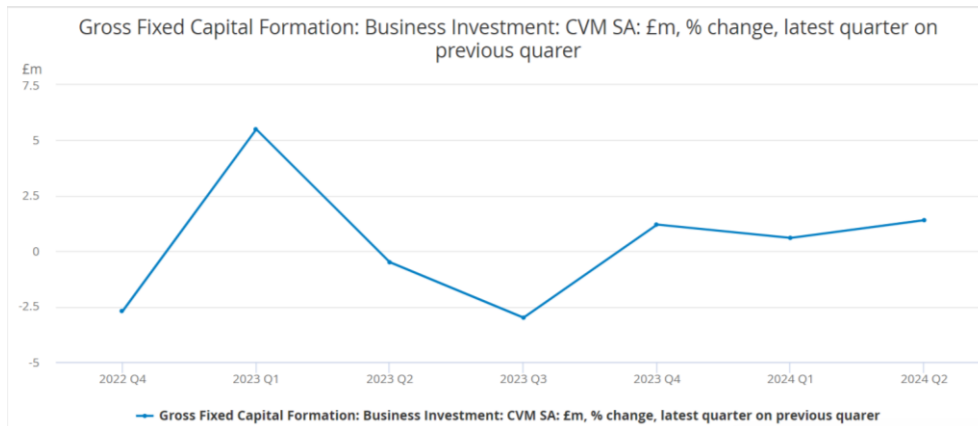
The Strategy has been developed in an environment of economic change. While price inflation levels have declined since their peak in October 2022 (the UK's highest rate in over 40 years), there is a degree of policy uncertainty due to the Labour Party winning a majority in the July 2024 general election.

Business Investment – The UK's business investment experienced a notable increase of 1.4% in Quarter 2 (April to June) 2024, revising upward from an initial estimate of a 0.1% decline. This

growth was driven by investments in buildings and transportation infrastructure, surpassing its previous year's level by 0.2% in the same quarter.

Furthermore, the broader UK whole economy investment, encompassing both business and public sector investment, also saw a positive trend, rising by 0.6% in Quarter 2 2024. Overall, UK whole economy investment exceeded its year-ago level by 0.7%.

Source: [GDP quarterly national accounts time series - Office for National Statistics](#)



Office Market - Changing trends in the use of office space due to the pandemic and increasing utility costs have led UK businesses to adopt real estate strategies that include a greater amount of flexible, serviced, or co-working space. With occupiers increasingly focusing on "best-in-class" Grade A space and the amenity offerings and specifications of buildings rising, prime headline rents across the market increased by an average of 4.5% over the past year, since October 2023.

Source: Cushman and Wakefield – MarketBeatQ2, [MARKET NAME Office QX 20XX](#)

Industrial: Take-up of industrial properties for business sectors such as manufacturing and logistics in the United Kingdom is currently the lowest quarterly volume since 2020, with volumes impacted by ongoing uncertainty in the UK economy.

Source: Cushman and Wakefield – Industrial MarketBeatQ2 [MARKET NAME Office QX 20XX](#)

Retail: The retail sector in towns and cities continues to recover from the increase in online shopping following the pandemic. In 2023, retail sales volumes in the UK fell by 2.8% year-on-year, the lowest level since 2018. In December 2023, retail sales volumes fell by 3.2%, the largest monthly fall since January 2021.

Source: Office for national Statistics – [Retail sales, Great Britain - Office for National Statistics](#)

MELTON ECONOMIC ASSETS

A comprehensive understanding of Melton Mowbray's economic assets enables us to effectively articulate the Borough's unique investment proposition. This knowledge can be used to tailor inward investment plans to build credibility with key sector businesses and foster cooperation and knowledge sharing among existing Melton businesses.

Location

- Excellent connectivity to major cities like Leicester, Nottingham, and Birmingham.
- Served by the national rail network with London accessible within 90 minutes.
- The Borough has a strong portfolio of prime residential and commercial sites that are immediately available and ready for investment.

Quality of Life

- Attractive rural setting with beautiful countryside, easily accessible to residents and businesses
- Historic market town with a vibrant community.
- Affordable housing options within the borough, with a further 1,300 affordable homes planned by 2036.
- Variety in the visitor offer, including leisure, culture, and arts.

People

- Access to a talent pool of 2.2 million people within a 25-mile radius.
- Access to 6 Universities and over 139,000 students within a 22-mile radius.

Business Environment

- Melton's business base (NOMIS 2023) comprises 2,515 businesses: 2,275 micro businesses, 195 small businesses, 35 medium businesses, and 5 large businesses.
- Renowned as the country's rural capital of food with a strong heritage in food production and the capacity to be a regional, national, and international centre of excellence for food production in the UK.
- £100m+ investment into the Melton Mowbray Distributor Road, completion planned for 2026. Serving north and east of the borough.
- 78% of total employment space is dedicated to factories and warehousing spaces.
- Manufacturing is the largest sector in the Borough's economy, accounting for 23% of jobs and 42% of GVA. Food and drink manufacturing is the key sector, accounting for 78% of total manufacturing output and 33% of the Borough's total economic output.
- A buoyant retail sector with High Street Vacancy rates standing at 4.1%, well below the UK average vacancy rate of 14%.

Green opportunities

The Melton Borough's unique assets create the following opportunities for decarbonisation and sustainable investment:

- Rural high-speed broadband access improvements to empower residents to work remotely.
- Development of a comprehensive electric vehicle infrastructure plan in collaboration with partners, ensuring adequate charging facilities are available at key locations.
- Increase the number of existing homes and buildings achieving a decent standard of thermal efficiency (EPC rating A-C) by 2035.
- Local planning powers to promote low-carbon development that supports biodiversity, active lifestyles, and efficient land use, including brownfield sites. All new developments are designed for net-zero emissions.
- Nature-based solutions to mitigate emissions from urban areas and enhance climate resilience. These measures will help cool urban environments, optimise water resource management, reduce flood risks, sequester carbon, and protect natural habitats.
- Reducing waste sent to landfill and achieving a landfill diversion rate of 95% by 2025, in Collaboration with Leicestershire County Council.

Sources:

State of the Borough Report 2024: [State of the Borough](#)

Nomis: [Labour Market Profile - Nomis - Official Census and Labour Market Statistics](#)

Economic Challenges

44.9% (Nomis, Jul 2023 - Jun 2024) of people in employment within the Borough are working in higher level professions, compared to 47% across the East Midlands. The remaining 55.1% of people in employment are working in occupation groups 4-9, including administrative roles, semi-skilled occupations, and elementary occupations. This trend has not changed significantly over time.

At the time of writing this strategy, Melton Borough is experiencing significant challenges with several larger businesses recently downsizing or closing their operation. Since January 2021, the Borough has seen seven larger businesses closing their premises in Melton. This has resulted in a loss of 606 jobs, a loss of total business rates income of £1.25M per annum and has resulted in an estimated 45.11 hectares of employment space coming onto the market, due to the voids created by the closures.

Melton Borough's industry profile is characterised by elevated levels of employment in manufacturing, and this sector continues to grow. There is also more employment in accommodation and food services than is typical in the East Midlands. Reliance on traditional industries, combined with low skills levels, has resulted in a non-diverse business base. Diversifying the business base to include high value businesses will help to attract roles that require knowledge intensive roles.

Only 38.4% of working age adults have attained an RQF level 4 qualification or above, 1.8% behind the East Midlands average and 8.9% behind the national average. Attracting high value businesses will result in more highly paid, skilled employment opportunities within the Borough, helping to stimulate higher-level attainment, whilst building aspiration levels amongst Melton residents.

In 2019, Melton Borough Council declared a climate change emergency because of the impacts of climate change on our health, wellbeing and economy experienced locally as well as worldwide. The Council pledged to become a carbon neutral organisation by 2030, with the whole Borough achieving this goal by 2050. The attraction of carbon neutral businesses with robust sustainability policies will help the Council achieve its ambitions for the Borough and its residents.

Average salary rates within the Borough present further challenges. In 2024, the average weekly pay of Melton residents was £628, which is 8% below the East Midlands average and 13% behind the national average. Lower average salaries result in residents having less disposable income, limiting their spending at local businesses. This can hinder the overall economic growth of the area by reducing demand for goods and services. Additionally, lower wages can make it difficult to attract new businesses to the Borough, especially those seeking a skilled workforce. This can limit the diversification of the local economy.

Source: [Labour Market Profile - Nomis - Official Census and Labour Market Statistics](#)

Planning Context – A history of Delivery - An Ambitious Local Plan

The Melton Local Plan, adopted in 2018, set out an ambitious vision for the town and borough, guiding development, and infrastructure investment to 2036. This plan is part way through delivery

and has seen significant element progress with housing delivery numbers at the highest they have ever been in the borough than at any point over the last 25 years.

To date the follow key aspects of the plan have delivered:

- Significant Housing Growth: Delivery of a significant proportion of the planned 6,000 new homes across the borough, representing a 40% increase in housing stock. This is already generating significant growth in the borough
- Infrastructure Investment: By Working with partners MBC has secured significant investment of over £100 million for Melton Mowbray Distributor Road (MMDR) and new education facilities planned to support housing growth.
- Town Centre Revitalisation: The plan aims to support delivery of growth and enhance the town centre's quality, diversity, and vitality by supporting the filling of void units and reducing traffic congestion.
- Economic Growth: Policies for the Location of Retail and Commercial Leisure Development and Public Car Parking Provision positioned to support economic growth and the protection of key retail areas.
- Transport Strategy: The wider Melton Mowbray Transport Strategy, including the MMDR, aims to improve connectivity and reduce traffic congestion.

Source: [Adopted Plan | localplan](#)

Melton Mowbray: A Strategic Location for Investment

The prime location of Melton Borough in the northeast of Leicestershire offers easy access to international airports and major highways making it an attractive investment destination.

Melton Mowbray is set for significant future growth, with a projected 40% expansion of housing over the next 15 years. Key investments, including the £100 million Melton Mowbray Distributor Road and regeneration at Stockyard to create food production facilities and retail units, are driving this growth and positioning Melton as a prime location in the East Midlands.

Renowned for its high-quality food and drink, particularly pork pies and Stilton cheese, Melton Mowbray has earned the title of the Rural Capital of Food. Its strong food heritage and thriving food and drink sector further enhance its appeal.

Investment Vision

A thriving Melton - A dynamic borough where businesses prosper, communities flourish, and opportunities are available to everyone.

Our Investment Values

Genuine Partnership - We are committed to building strong, honest relationships based on trust.

Inclusive and Community-Focused - We are committed to building strong, inclusive communities. We champion the needs of our people and foster a sense of belonging in our town, villages, and rural areas.

Resilient and Adaptable - Well-connected and adaptable. We support our businesses to be strong, sustainable, and future-focused.

Rooted in Tradition, focused on the Future - Our culinary heritage is the foundation upon which we build and support businesses.

Innovative - Building on our strength in manufacturing, we embrace innovation and opportunity.

Consultation and Roundtable Discussions

In development of this Inward Investment Strategy, Melton Borough Council hosted a series of roundtable discussions to foster collaboration between public and private sector partners. Attended by managing directors, business owners, and senior leaders in the property sector, these sessions provided a platform for open and honest discussions, aimed at identifying opportunities, addressing challenges, and driving positive change for businesses and residents.

Key Objectives of the sessions:

- Encouraging cross-sector dialogue to identify synergies and innovative solutions.
- Listening to industry feedback and addressing concerns to inform the Inward Investment Strategy.
- Showcasing Melton's dedication to supporting business growth and development.
- Implementing actionable strategies to improve the investment business environment.

Key findings from the sessions were categorised into four key themes:

<p>COLLABORATION</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• A strong emphasis on positioning Melton as a highly competitive location for businesses.• Leveraging strong relationships with local businesses, the private sector, third sector, education, government bodies, and Leicestershire County Council is essential for addressing business challenges and fostering retention.• A collaborative approach is crucial to the success of the inward investment strategy.	<p>AUTHENTICALLY MELTON</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Identify and revitalise historic buildings to create new, vibrant spaces for businesses, housing, or community use.• Develop strategies to preserve and promote the town's heritage, enhancing its cultural identity and attracting visitors.• Invest in the development of the town's waterways and green spaces, creating recreational opportunities and enhancing the overall aesthetic appeal.• Promote the borough's picturesque countryside as a destination for outdoor activities, agritourism, and wellness experiences.• Organise high-profile events that highlight the town's unique character and attract visitors.• Use local and national media to amplify the impact of events and generate positive publicity.
<p>ENABLERS FOR GROWTH</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Prioritise planning services as a strategic lever to facilitate investment and development within the borough.• Increase business-to-business networking and active participation in investment events to elevate Melton's investment profile.• Use the borough's strategic location, including the new distributor road and rail connections, as a key selling point for businesses.• Position Melton as a logistics hub, leveraging infrastructure improvements to attract businesses in this sector.• Positioned for substantial growth, with a projected 40% increase in population due to planned housing developments. This presents a significant opportunity to attract investment by highlighting the future demand for housing and access to a growing local labour force.• To further enhance the borough's attractiveness, it is crucial to streamline the planning process. By actively involving planning services in the investment process, the borough can expedite project timelines and reduce bureaucratic hurdles. This approach will significantly improve the ease of delivery for businesses, making the area more appealing to potential investors.	<p>EXTERNAL PROMOTION</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Businesses recognise the importance of the tourism economy and the work of Discover Melton. This presents an opportunity to build upon and grow the brand.• When marketing the area for investment, it is crucial to consider the internal audience. Feedback suggests that increasing civic pride will encourage residents and businesses to speak positively about the area.• More business-to-business communication would benefit the area. Sometimes, messaging from the public sector can be less effective than businesses communicating directly with each other.• The departure of businesses from Melton has had a negative impact on the area. Attendees suggested that celebrating the achievements of existing businesses and highlighting new ones could help to counterbalance this negative news.

Our Approach

This diagram illustrates the interconnectedness between investment activity and Melton Borough Council's strategic drivers:



 **eam Melton**

Melton's Key Investment Aims

I. RAISE AWARENESS OF THE MELTON BOROUGH AS AN INVESTMENT LOCATION AND IMPROVE PERCEPTIONS OF OUR TOWN CENTRE.

Skills availability, quality of life, connectivity, and access to development land are all factors in an investor's decision-making process. The Strategy will promote Melton Borough with the following messages:

- An area willing and able to explore new ways of working to ensure businesses survive and grow.
- Businesses will find value for money and economic opportunity in the Melton Borough. While we might not be the obvious choice, those seeking return on investment will find that Melton is the perfect choice.
- Capitalise on connectivity. Melton is connected in every sense of the word, with the MMDR offering increased access to three major UK motorways, placing it within proximity to 95% of the UK's population.
- Access to 6 universities, 139,000 graduates, and a 2.2m talent pool within a 25-mile commute.
- Developer confidence. A buoyant food manufacturing sector has stimulated investor confidence, with further opportunities in logistics thanks to the Melton Mowbray Distributor Road and infrastructure improvements.
- Discover Melton. The Melton Borough offers an excellent quality of life for employees with affordable housing, vibrant urban centres, green spaces, and leading tourism attractions.
- Melton's world-class food manufacturing heritage has helped to put the Borough on the map, and this food innovation provides an ideal environment for businesses looking to start up.

Through strategic partnerships with the Melton Mowbray Business Improvement District, Invest In Leicester, the Melton Town Centre Board, and key stakeholders, the identified advantages will be communicated to target businesses, fostering a more appealing investment climate. This collaborative approach enhances business retention, encourage reinvestment and attract new investment from existing businesses within the borough.

II. WORK PROACTIVELY TO ATTRACT INWARD INVESTMENT FROM BUSINESSES AT THE FOREFRONT OF REINVENTING MELTON'S TRADITIONAL INDUSTRIES.

By strategically highlighting Melton's proven track record of fostering business growth within these key sectors, the Strategy will actively target UK and Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) to attract high-quality, sustainable jobs. Furthermore, the Strategy will explore opportunities within key European markets, with a particular focus on neighbouring countries, France, and Germany, two of Europe's largest food producing countries. In collaboration with partners such as Invest in Leicester and the Department for Business and Trade, a thorough assessment will be conducted, evaluate the potential benefits of cultivating relationships with emerging markets across Europe.

Food & Drink Manufacturing and Key Stats

- The Leicestershire Region has high concentrations of food and drink manufacturing (8% of employment compared to 6.8% nationally)
- There are 3,865 food and drink manufacturing businesses in the Leicestershire Region, employing 43,900 people.
- 86% of businesses within the sector are micro businesses.
- Manufacturing generates £1.2bn of GVA and 7.5% of Leicestershire's turnover.
- The sector has the potential to deliver 2,700 jobs by 2030.

Food & Drink Manufacturing - Melton's Attractiveness

- Food and drink manufacturing is the key sector accounting for 78% of total manufacturing output and 33% of the Borough's total economic output.
- Manufacturing employs 3,306 people in the Melton Borough, 13% of working age adults.
- Stockyard will create a centre of excellence around food and drink production.
- Recognised in food manufacturing as 'Rural Capital of Food.'

III. PROACTIVELY SEEK INWARD INVESTMENT FROM MELTON'S EMERGING AND SUPPORTING SECTORS.

Creating localised clusters that bring together existing expertise, innovative companies, and sector networks, Melton Borough will attract businesses seeking to invest in high-growth sectors. This strategy will not only create the skilled jobs of the future but also empower traditional industries to embrace sustainable and digitally driven practices. This approach will position Melton as an attractive investment destination for both domestic and international companies.

Advanced Logistics & Distribution Key Stats

- The Leicestershire Region employs 38,000 people in the Advanced Logistics and Distribution Sector (6.9% of employment compared to 6.5% nationally)
- There are 3,835 advanced logistics & distribution businesses in the Leicestershire Region (7.7% compared to 6.1% nationally)
- Advanced Logistics & Distribution generates £1.68bn of GVA and 6.9% of Leicestershire's turnover.
- The sector has the potential to deliver £440m of growth by 2030.

Advanced Logistics & Distribution - Melton's Attractiveness

- Unrivalled connectivity to the UK and beyond with close access to three major motorways.
- Competitive land values and improved interconnectivity thanks to the Melton Mowbray Distributor Road.
- Region with access to a rich talent pool in logistics and distribution.
- Regional access to the Centre for Logistics, Education and Research (CLEAR).
- Affordability and availability of space within a strategic Midlands location.

Professional and Financial Services Key Stats

- The Leicestershire Region employs 78,900 individuals in the Professional and Financial Services sector, accounting for 14.4% of total employment.
- There are 12,845 businesses operating within this sector, representing 25.8% of the region's business landscape.
- The sector generates £3.6 billion in Gross Value Added (GVA) and contributes 14.6% to Leicestershire's overall turnover.
- By 2030, the sector has the potential to unlock £650 million in growth and create 5,000 new jobs.

Professional and Financial Services - Melton's Attractiveness

- Three regional universities offering a range of undergraduate courses in finance and accounting, including specialisations in economics, business management, and banking.
- With a projected 40% increase in population due to planned housing developments. This presents a significant opportunity to access to a growing local labour force.
- Opportunities to build upon existing flexible office accommodation within the town centre of Melton to mitigate reduced footfall from former retail unit vacancies.
- Pera Business Centre, providing services office space is seeing significant growth in the area.

IV. IDENTIFY INWARD INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITIES THAT WILL SUPPORT THE REPURPOSING OF MELTON'S TOWN CENTRE

By recognising the challenges facing urban centres, this strategy aims to capitalise on inward investment opportunities to revitalise Melton town centre. The strategy will embrace the Borough's aims to re-purpose these areas whilst still retaining the 'authentically Melton' approach to support the experience of visitors to the Borough; whilst increasing footfall, for the benefit of sectors such as retail,

The 2022 Town Centre Vision outlines a series of development projects that, with appropriate funding and partnerships, can be accelerated. By leveraging inward investment and developer expertise, we can unlock the potential of these projects, transforming Melton into a thriving destination.

V. PROVIDE INDIGENOUS, FOREIGN DIRECT INVESTMENT BUSINESSES AND INVESTORS WITH TAILORED ACCOUNT MANAGEMENT SUPPORT THROUGHOUT, INCLUDING AFTERCARE

Manage all local, national, and international inquiries from outside the borough in a responsive, timely, and professional manner, ensuring that all potential companies and significant investors receive high-quality support tailored to their needs.

The support level a business will receive will be defined using a three-stage system to allow prioritisation and focus on securing investment from companies in target sectors and markets. The aim of the strategy is to support 'ease of delivery' for investment, making Melton the talked-about area among property professionals who recognise Melton's ambition and open-for-business approach. The strategy will empower key local authority services such as Economic Growth and Planning services to play an active role in the account management process.

Tier 1	<p>Significant Impact on the Melton Economy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High-quality investor/company and industry leader based within priority sectors with clear investment plans and timeframe. • FDI from identified markets and Inward Investment looking to export. • Potential to create good-quality jobs: decent pay, secure contracts, and opportunities to upskill.
Tier 2	<p>Medium Impact on Jobs & Skills</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investor/company is based in a priority sector with less clear plans or timeframe. • More limited job creation potential. • FDI from identified or emerging markets or UK investment from a target sector.
Tier 3	<p>Limited Impact on Jobs & Skills</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Company/organisation not in a priority sector and with unclear long-term plans. • Limited benefit to the jobs market. • UK or FDI not from an identified target sector or market.

Significant Impact Businesses	Medium Impact Businesses	Limited Impact Businesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assign a dedicated officer to provide tailored support and facilitate a smooth transition through internal services such as planning, licensing, and economic growth. • Facilitate introductions to key regional and local authorities to secure support and influence. • Optimise the use of Melton Borough Council's Strategic Levers such as business rate powers. • Provide a comprehensive soft landing support package for new investors. • Introduce to Invest in Leicester to facilitate connections to support organisations like the Department for Business and Trade, Leicester and Leicestershire Business and Skills Partnership to explore funding opportunities and support skills planning, upskilling, recruitment, and apprenticeship levy transfer. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assign a dedicated officer to manage relationships and track progress. • Facilitate introductions to regional and local authorities. • Refer businesses to broader regional support programs. • Introduce to Invest in Leicester to explore funding opportunities and support skills planning, upskilling, recruitment, and apprenticeship levy transfer. • Provide post-investment support to foster growth. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offer site selection services through the Invest In Leicester website. • Encourage businesses to use local support services for recruitment and upskilling.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide an aftercare programme to foster continued growth and access to additional support. 		
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VI. WORK WITH PLANNERS TO ENSURE THAT THERE IS A STRATEGIC APPROACH TO THE ALLOCATION OF LAND, WHICH SUPPORTS OUR VISION

Melton’s Local Plan has allocated sufficient land to support our ambition to encourage investment and clustering, which will diversify Melton’s business base in line with our vision. The Local Plan provides a framework for future developments, with a general scope for potential land use.

By actively collaborating with agents and landowners to masterplan sites, uncovering the challenges and potential opportunities, this inward investment strategy aims to speed up the delivery of investment from businesses seeking to innovate and create skilled jobs.

VII. CONTINUALLY DEVELOP AND IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF OUR DATA AND INSIGHT, USING THIS INTELLIGENCE TO IDENTIFY TRENDS AND TARGET INWARD INVESTMENT.

Collect the right information at the right time to better understand local business activity and Melton's key assets. This will allow us to formulate effective messages to promote the Borough as an investment location.

Identify local, national, and international trends to recognise and develop opportunities to attract inward investment. Use data and insight to measure the impact of inward investment activity within the Borough.