

Town Centre Action Plan and Design Guide

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Lead Member/Relevant Portfolio Holder	Councillor Sharon Butcher , Portfolio Holder for Town Centre, Growth and Prosperity

Corporate Priority:	Theme 3: Tourism and town centre regeneration and vitality
Relevant Ward Member(s):	Cllr Allnatt and Cllr Brown (Egerton) Cllr Atherton and Cllr Butcher (Craven) Cllr Freer and Cllr Thwaites (Warwick)
Date of consultation with Ward Member(s):	21 January 2025 - Town Centre Working Group
Exempt Information:	No

1 Summary

- 1.1 The Melton Mowbray Town Centre Vision document was adopted on 21 September 2022. A programme of activity has been underway to deliver key activities outlined in the Vision. Notably, this has led to the development of the Council's flagship project at the Stockyard, as well as supporting investment into the town centre for three years through the Government's UK Shared Prosperity Funding.
- 1.2 The Council has developed positive partnerships and relationships with stakeholders, which have a meaningful impact on the town. Working in partnership has supported Melton in Bloom secure gold; attracted regional attention through a coordinated promotional campaign with partners at the Place Marketing Organisation (PMO); and resource to ensure markets continue to attract people into the area in partnership with Melton Mowbray Town Estate (MMTE).
- 1.3 To ensure we continue to meet our residents and local economies needs now is an appropriate time to appraise, review and update the Council's priorities in relation to supporting our town centre's future vibrancy. This review will incorporate an appraisal of the activity facilitated through UK Shared Prosperity Funding, it will bring together an

evidence base and facilitate an action plan to ensure delivery is focused on Melton Mowbray being a welcoming centre for residents, businesses and visitors.

- 1.4 The Town Centre Action Plan will support and further a programme of work encompassing the Town Centre Design Guide, partnership working and market development, marketing and promotional activity, Inward Investment opportunities, events and cultural activities, protecting, interpreting and promoting the town's heritage, and connectivity to the Country Park and Pride in Place work with an emphasis on improvement and commitment to support a cleaner, greener borough. The Plan will also be underpinned with data and performance indicators to measure progress and success.

2 Recommendations

That Cabinet:

- 2.1 **Notes the contents of this report and support a review and update to the Town Centre Action Plan for Melton Mowbray.**
- 2.2 **Endorses the Town Centre Design Guide, as outlined in the report, and supports its progression to adoption as a Supplementary Planning Document, following a statutory consultation process.**

3 Reason for Recommendations

- 3.1 Town centre improvement is a key corporate priority and this report brings together a number of important areas of work which seek to both guide and secure funding for regenerating and improving the vitality of the town.
- 3.2 The Stockyard project is scheduled to start construction on site shortly, therefore the Council and its partners are keen to build momentum and continue to attract investment into the town, building upon the good work done to date. Two clear pathways need to be developed further, informing a new Town Centre Action Plan. These are:
- a) Working with the private sector: There have been enquiries from partners and developers to work with the council on delivering improvements to physical assets that will attract more businesses and employment opportunities into the town area. These need to be explored and assessed, potentially undertaking viability assessments to understand if the propositions put forward are realistically achievable and how the council could best support these opportunities in coming forward.
 - b) Seeking external grant funding to deliver projects in the town: there are opportunities available to develop funding applications to support the town centre. Whether it be through protecting our heritage assets or making better use of the cultural assets we have available to support pride in place and attract greater footfall into the town there are opportunities the council should be seeking to explore. Business cases and economic analysis of projects is required before submission of any external applications. It is also likely that in order to be successful a degree of match funding would be required from the Council and its partners.

4 Background

- 4.1 The town centre vision for Melton set out to create a unified vision for the town based on partners and public consultation. This document was adopted on 21 September 2022 and remains relevant to setting out the Council's work programme and areas of focus,

notwithstanding there have been changes as a result of shifting local needs and priorities. It is proposed to review the approved [Vision for the town centre](#), and renew the associated action plan to reflect these changing local needs and the Council's current priorities.

- 4.2 Since the Vision document was adopted, significant work has been delivered in achieving the desired outcomes, including the award of Levelling Up Funding to enable the exciting development at the Stockyard. This is a project that will deliver £12m investment into a new destination offer, providing a multifunctional space for markets and events as well as permanent units for food producers to build upon existing key tenants, including Round Corner Brewery (RCB) and The Smokehouse. Planning Permission has been granted (subject to S106) and works are due to commence in the summer of 2025.
- 4.3 The Council is committed to guaranteeing the town centre is best placed to benefit from additional footfall and significant investment from the Stockyard. Delivery of a comprehensive programme of work has been made possible with officer time, existing Council budgets and capital and revenue funding from the UKSPF programme. This programme of work has consisted of, but is not limited to, the following:
- a) Development of a town centre design guide – (ongoing, referenced below in section 5.2)
 - b) An appraisal of the current market led by MMTE – (market appraisal has been completed, delivery of action plan now required)
 - c) Working with Melton Business Improvement District, Melton in Bloom and Melton Mowbray Town Estate to support improved cleaning and greening, through the provision of a town centre operative. This work helped to secure a gold award at this year's in bloom event (ongoing work is supporting cleanliness in the town).
 - d) Contribution to town specific tourism campaigns in partnership with the countywide Place Marketing Organisation and Local Visitor Economy Partnership (LVEP).
 - e) New approach and arrangements for delivery of the Christmas light switch on event in 2025 – (these will continue for 2026).
 - f) Inward Investment round tables that have increased awareness and interest in development opportunities in Melton Town Centre, and a new Inward Investment Strategy.
 - g) Submission of a funding bid with MMTE and the BID to the Nature Towns and Cities Fund (HM Government).
 - h) Review of car parking arrangements within the town centre.
- 4.4 The Council and its partners are aware of the need to continue to work together to deliver improvements to the town centre. This needs to consider the changing local need of our residents and businesses in the area and external factors, well documented through the Government's High Streets Task Force. Therefore, it is an opportune time to bring existing programmes together and review, renew and reaffirm our commitments to the town centre and articulate how we deliver meaningful change and track progress. Based on this assessment it is advised that the council updates the existing action plan, taking into account current priorities, changing demands and needs and emerging trends.

4.5 **Baselining and Measuring Performance**

- 4.6 The Plan will be evidence led and include metrics against which success will be evaluated, which will be included within the quarterly update on performance, encompassing the 'Tourism and Town Centre Regeneration and Vitality' corporate theme. Metrics include vacancy rates, footfall, visits to the Discover Melton website, and food businesses compliant with inspection. There has been a positive upward trend in the last 7 months in footfall – from September 2024 to March 2025 compared to the same period in the previous year (September 23 to March 2024) there was a 16% increase. The vacancy rate in January 2025 was 10.6 and in February 9.5, although the actual figure is 8.6 because some empty units are leased but not yet trading. In addition, the Council receives annual tourism data on the number of visitors and the value to the economy. There has been a positive upward trend reported on economic impact for 2023 with spend in the sector increased for a second consecutive year, +22.03%, 31.1% above the pre Covid benchmark of 2019. Visitor numbers, whilst +4.99% up from 2022, are now only 7.5% below the pre Covid benchmark of 2019 and visitors staying is 12% above 2019 figure, indicating a recovery of the staying visitor sector. The data for 2024 will be available by June 2025.
- 4.7 Following a decision by Cabinet on 12 March 2025 an allocation of £71,996 from UK Shared Prosperity Funding will deliver capital improvements focused on the town centre, complimenting the 'pride in place' initiative for the financial year 25/26.

5 **Main Considerations**

- 5.1 A series of projects and programmes have had a meaningful impact on the viability and vitality of the town, evidenced through monitoring of UKSPF and an annual town centre perception survey. Some of these projects are nearing completion whilst others are in their infancy. The refreshed vision and updated action plan will align to the Council's corporate priorities and be informed by data and intelligence, which will enable performance to be monitored and evaluated. Key priority areas currently under consideration and any future requirements are identified as follows:
- 5.2 **Town Centre Design Guide:** This piece of work was funded through UKSPF and provides a uniform design guide across the town to make a visually impactful and aesthetically pleasing first impression for residents and visitors. It will also ensure a consistent approach between the Stockyard's development – as a flagship project for Melton – and its connectivity to the wider town. This document considers improvements to key gateways into the town, primary and secondary schemes for infrastructure ranging from improvements to public realm to shop fronts. Stakeholders, including MMTE, BID and Highway authority, have been consulted during the development of this piece of work to confirm the support of all those with a vested interest in the town centre and takes into account their future plans. The development of the draft Design Guide has been informed by the Council's town centre working group and has been led by a group of officers consisting from the assets, regeneration and planning teams. A draft of this document is attached at Appendix A and once adopted will be utilised to inform the council's approach to town centre infrastructure:
- a) It has been recommended by planning colleagues that the design guide is adopted as an SPD (Supplementary Planning Document). This is a statutory process, which adds weight to the design guide, ensuring compliance and uniformity. The additional benefit

is to have a robust approach to protect and preserve the character of the heritage conservation area, which is currently at risk.

- b) Following Cabinet support of the design guide document, the Planning team can progress with adopting the design guide as an SPD. This will include a 6 week public consultation prior to the formal adoption process.

- 5.3 **Temporary Traffic Regulation Order (TTRO):** Following the reversion of a temporary traffic order that was put into place during the Covid pandemic, a temporary measure has changed the loading times do not go back to 4pm. This has been secured through working in partnership with the BID, MMTE and Leicestershire County Council Highways. A temporary order has been submitted which will last for 12 months before the times will be reversed again. This was fully funded by Melton Borough Council at a cost of £1,500. A permanent change to the order is expected to cost £7,500 and will need to be submitted to the LCC highways department. The Council will work with MMTE and the BID determine how this future order will be funded and if supported, will support a permanent change to the TRO.
- 5.4 **Country Park Masterplan:** a draft document has been informed by stakeholder site visits and basic desktop study information. The document aimed to analyse the existing facilities and infrastructure within the park, suggesting potential improvements and different types of uses that could be provided within the area. Objectives of biodiversity, wellbeing, connectivity and tourism were identified as key aims for the Country Park and helped inform the proposals in the document. An intrinsic component of the Country Park's development will be to act as a gateway from new housing in the north of the town into the town centre. The proposals formed part of an unsuccessful funding application to the Government's Nature Towns and Cities Fund. The work put into this proposal will be developed further to support further funding applications to enhance the links between the Country Park and the town centre, as part of wider opportunities to support access to heritage and culture in the town. Officers will liaise closely with the Portfolio Holder to develop a comprehensive plan and proposed delivery mechanism. Delivery of aspirations for the Country Park masterplan will rely on investment and a financially viable approach. Action to assess and progress achievement of Green Flag status for the Country Park will continue in keeping with the commitment in the Corporate Strategy. Further work will continue on the Masterplan with a view to it being considered formally by Cabinet later this year.
- 5.5 **Pride in Place:** An officer working group, supported by the Portfolio Holder, will directly support collaboration between teams, whilst also supporting coordination and prioritisation of resources to deliver on actions that will enhance pride in place across the public realm (for example, country park, play areas, town centre) within the resources available. It will enable an increased and collective focus on Pride in Place to align with the increased corporate strategy focus, through which a range of council teams can collaborate on actions, projects and priorities, work together to understand what works well, consider more needs to be done and to have a shared understanding on outcomes and performance. Additionally, the group will be able to coordinate responses to ad-hoc requests that arise and ensure the council continues to work proactively and positively with stakeholders and the voluntary and community sector. A coherent plan for the town centre which aligns and complements the Pride in Place activity will ensure clarity and direction for resource and finance, whilst stimulating an aspirational approach to collaboration and collegiate working both internally and externally.

- 5.6 **Potential development and funding opportunities:** Following the Inward Investment programme of work and developer enquiries received by the Council, there are a number of potential regeneration sites identified in the town centre, which require business case development and feasibility studies. Discussions are ongoing with a range of partners locally and with potential funders to support these proposals.
- a) Protection and preservation of the conservation area and associated heritage projects within the town.
 - b) Engagement and support of the creative industries to facilitate and support events and activities that animate the town centre, engage and attract visitors and develop and growth the creative sector.
 - c) Waterways and green spaces (linked to the town centre).
 - d) Development opportunities with private sector and other stakeholders.
- 5.7 **HM Government UK Shared Prosperity Funding for 2025/26:** UKSPF for the financial year from 1 April 2025 – 31 March 2026, is split between capital and revenue and will support delivery of several existing and ongoing initiatives with the town centre at their heart. The UKSPF, where it is being invested in Melton Mowbray, will ensure it continues to deliver in accordance with the priorities listed above and continue to support their delivery through its implementation.
- 5.8 The Strategic Funding Coordination, as agreed at Cabinet on 12 March – will ensure funding is available to the Council to enable the development of applications for external funds that are available and support delivery of Council priorities.

6 Options Considered

- 6.1 Do nothing: this would make it increasingly difficult to attract any investment into the town and would significantly reduce the council ability to deliver any meaningful change in the town, ultimately it would make it more difficult to deliver the council priority for this area.

7 Consultation/Engagement

- 7.1 Consultation has been undertaken on several components of the programme highlighted above. These have broadly consisted of;
- a) Workshops: a range of workshops to support delivery of key interventions such as the town centre design guide. These workshops consisted of key partners such as highways, BID, MMTE and other stakeholders for the town
 - b) 1-2-1 sessions: in some instances, 1-2-1 sessions have been held to inform emerging pieces of work. These have been done to ensure we are coordinating any of our proposed outputs with what our partners and other stakeholders are already planning to deliver.
 - c) Surveys: a range of surveys have taken place to better understand local residents, visitors and businesses views, opinions and needs in relation to a range of the proposal outlined above. This feedback has been taken on board and in many instances, where appropriate have informed these merging plans and pieces of work.

8 Next Steps – Implementation and Communication

- 8.1 Subject to approval of the above officers will pull together a timeframe for delivery of an updated action plan for the town. This will then be the overarching document which will set out council activity for the next 3 years.
- 8.2 Subject to Cabinet support for the town centre design guide, the Planning team can progress with adopting the design guide as an SPD. This will include a 6-week public consultation prior to the formal adoption process.

9 Financial Implications

- 9.1 Noting Cabinet approved £52,720 on 12 March for strategic funding coordination to support the Council's objectives, this may include any future proposals arising from the Town Centre Action Plan, Country Park and other priorities, which would be managed on a case-by-case basis in line with the delegation to the Director of Place and Prosperity in consultation with the Leader.

Financial Implications reviewed by: Assistant Director for Resources (Deputy S151)

10 Legal and Governance Implications

- 10.1 There are various legal powers which allow local authorities to hold and manage public spaces, including Open Spaces Act 1906 and the Public Health Act 1875, which also allow the Council that land it for the benefit of residents. Whilst the Design Guide can set out the Council's vision for improvement of the town centre, it is important that, where it is implemented on land owned by the Council, specific legal advice is obtained to ensure that we are acting within the limits of that legislation and ensuring that any procedural requirements are met.
- 10.2 There is a statutory process for adopting local plan documents, including Supplementary Planning Guidance, which must be followed to ensure that they have legal effect. Further advice can be given on that process as required.

Legal Implications reviewed by: Monitoring Officer.

11 Equality and Safeguarding Implications

- 11.1 These will be assessed on a project basis. There are no equality and safeguarding implications arising from this report.

12 Data Protection Implications

- 12.1 A Data Protection Impact Assessments (DPIA) has not been completed because there are no risks to the rights and freedoms of natural persons.

13 Community Safety Implications

- 13.1 These will be assessed on a project-by-project basis. Where relevant and appropriate, areas such as Martyn's Law and good practice around 'designing out crime', have been thoroughly considered, and will continue to be considered, in the context of any work that is produced through this work plan.

14 Environmental and Climate Change Implications

14.1 Work undertaken to support a cleaner, greener Melton and objectives associated with the Country Park masterplan as outlined in this report will directly contribute positively to environmental and climate change implications.

15 Other Implications (where significant)

15.1 None.

16 Risk & Mitigation

To be completed following Cabinet briefing.

Risk No	Risk Description	Likelihood	Impact	Risk
1	Lack of capacity to deliver the proposed review and update to the Action Plan.	Significant	Critical	Medium
2	Adapting to Policy changes	Significant	Critical	Medium
3	Stakeholder support and engagement	Low	Critical	Medium

		Impact / Consequences			
		Negligible	Marginal	Critical	Catastrophic
Likelihood	Score/ definition	1	2	3	4
	6 Very High				
	5 High				
	4 Significant			1, 2	
	3 Low			3	
	2 Very Low				
	1 Almost impossible				

Risk No	Mitigation
1	Additional resource needs are included in the ask for external grant funding such as UKSPF to increase capacity within the team and seek external support where required.
2	Stay updated and informed on policy changes to ensure compliance and plans can adapt with support from engagement with stakeholders.
3	Early engagement, proactive and transparent communications, fostering collaboration and addressing concerns promptly.

17 Background Papers

- 17.1 Melton Borough Council Corporate Strategy 2024-2036: [Corporate Strategy 2024 -2036 – Melton Borough Council](#)
- 17.2 Scrutiny Committee, 3 December 2024, Cleaner, Greener Melton – Collaboration to support environmental quality: [Committee Report Template](#)
- 17.3 Cabinet, 12 March 2025, UKSPF and Inward Investment: [UKSPF and Inward Investment report.pdf](#)

18 Appendices

- 18.1 Appendix A – Draft Town Centre Design Guide
- 18.2 Appendix B – Town Centre Design Guide Annex