

Melton Borough Council

Melton Local Plan

Melton Statement of Community Involvement

April 2014

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Planning shapes the places where people live and work, so it is right that people should be able to take an active part in the process. The Statement of Community Involvement is vitally important in setting out how the community will be involved in the planning process. It is important that the community can be involved from the beginning of the process, in order to identify issues and debate options from the beginning of the process.

The emphasis is to create an open and transparent process where communities and stakeholders are encouraged to be involved in and have ownership of the decisions being made in the preparation of the Melton Local Plan.

Local communities will also be encouraged to take up the opportunities and to take ownership of their neighbourhoods by preparing neighbourhood plans.

BACKGROUND

The changes to the planning system encourage a collaborative form of working with the entire community which will result in an inclusive planning system which promotes sustainable development for the benefit of all. The revisions to our Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) intend to provide even greater opportunity for creative, community led planning.

We believe that our community, from the individual to families and groups; and from the entrepreneur to businesses who invest in the area, should be given the opportunity to actively influence the plans that are put in place.

The Melton Statement of Community Involvement defines our commitment to active participation and sets out how the community will be engaged as we prepare the new Melton Local Plan. It also sets out our expectations for public consultation on applications for planning permission to make sure communities are involved.

This is the third Melton Statement of Community Involvement. The first Statement was published in October 2006 as part of the Melton Local Development Framework, changes to the planning system resulted in a revision to this in October 2011.

Further changes to the planning system mean that our 2011 Statement is now no longer representative of how we wish to involve our community in the preparation of the new Local Plan and, how we will engage partners, neighbouring authorities and other organisations to achieve sustainable development.

We have also taken the opportunity in this Statement to reflect the technological changes which have increased the means available for consultation. Alongside the more traditional methods of consultation, advances in technology mean that electronic engagement and consultation are becoming ever more important. As well as the online consultation software and web pages used previously, consideration will also be given to the use of social media, electronic forums and notice boards.

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 introduced a system for Local Development Frameworks and Development Plan Documents. The Act required Local Planning Authorities to produce a Statement of Community Involvement as part of their Local Development Frameworks.
- 1.2 There have been more recent changes in legislation and regulations with the enactment of the Localism Act 2011; the introduction of the National Planning Policy Framework 2012; and, the publication of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012. These changes require Local Planning Authorities to put in place an up to date development plan as quickly as possible.
- 1.3 This Statement describes how we will engage the community when preparing the new Melton Local Plan, Supplementary Planning Documents and also when dealing with strategic planning applications. Our proposals for community involvement have been set out in accordance with the advice contained in para.155 of the NPPF which encourages early and meaningful engagement across a wide section of the community. The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 specify a number of organisations that are required to be consulted. In preparing the Local Plan the local planning authority must take into account any representation made in response to invitations.
- 1.4 The planning system operates within a legal framework that involves a variety of documents and terms. Appendix 1 contains a glossary that describes the terms used in this document.
- 1.5 The SCI should ensure that stakeholders and all sections of the community, including local groups and organisations, are actively involved throughout the process of consultation.
- 1.6 This Statement sets out the standards we want to achieve when involving the community throughout the preparation of the Melton Local Plan. It identifies the methods we will use and the key opportunities for community engagement. It also describes how we will involve the community when we consider planning applications.

Changes in Consultation methods

- 1.7 The NPPF para 155 states that early and meaningful engagement and collaboration with neighbourhoods, local organisations and businesses is essential. A wide selection of the community should be proactively engaged, so that Local Plans, as far as possible for the sustainable development of the area, including those contained in neighbourhood plans where they have been made.
- 1.8 The new National Planning Practice Guidance states that there is considerable flexibility open to local planning authorities in how to carry out the initial stages of plan production, provided that they comply, with some specific consultation requirements in regulation 18 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012, and with the commitments in their Statement of Community Involvement.

- 1.9 Local Planning Authorities need to identify at an early stage with all those that may be interested in the development or content of the Local Plan, including those groups who may be affected by its proposal but who do not play an active part in most consultations.
- 1.10 The Council resolved that the new Melton Local Plan should be influenced by Reference Groups which will provide a continuous opportunity for community and stakeholder engagement. The Reference Groups will be invited to consider and offer feedback on all issues, but, have been drawn up to be especially focussed upon areas of interest, as shown below:
- Residents (Housing and Community Issues)
 - Environment (Environment and Green Issues)
 - Town Centre and Employment (Retail and Leisure and Business across the Borough)
 - Special Interest (Groups for the Whole Borough)
 - Landowners and Developers
 - Young People (Targeted at 16-24 year olds)
- 1.11 However depending on the subject matters under consideration and level of engagement and representation within each group, the number and structure of the groups may be revised over the duration of the Local Plan preparation process. Each Reference Group will be Chaired by one of the Members from the Melton Local Plan Working Group. Once the Reference Groups have been established each of the Groups will elect a spokesperson to attend the joint meeting of the Reference Group representatives. These meetings will be an opportunity for a representative to attend from each of the Reference Groups to provide feedback directly to the Melton Local Plan Working Group. These meetings will be held before the Melton Local Plan Working Group meetings, in order for Members to be able to take account of the recommendations put forward by the Reference Groups, when deciding upon their own recommendations to Full Council.
- 1.12 All members of the Reference Groups will receive an Action Note from the Melton Local Plan Working Group. The Action Notes will give a summary of the discussion behind the suggestions put forward to Full Council along with any dismissed suggestions put forward by the Reference Groups and the reasons behind the decision. In order for the process to remain open and transparent, the action notes will be made readily available on the Borough Council's website. The agendas, reports and detailed notes of the MLP Working Group will remain exempt.
- 1.13 As well as traditional consultation methods, the Council intends to use more electronic engagement and consultation methods. The Melton Borough Council website will be an important way of communicating information to stakeholders. In order to do this more effectively the Planning Policy web pages will be structured around themes of the Local Plan, for example housing and employment issues. The information on the website will be structured in order to tell a story of the development of the Local Plan. The web pages will be continually updated in order for the information to remain up to date, once information is no longer relevant this will be placed on an historical web page in order to show a timeline of events.

- 1.14 A webpage will be developed for each of the Reference Groups to include the action notes for the Melton Local Plan Working Groups meetings; this will allow the process to remain inclusive, open and transparent.
- 1.15 A mechanism will be developed to allow members of the public to email questions regarding the Local Plan and its evidence base directly to officers at ourmeltonlocalplan@melton.gov.uk. Questions received using this method and online forums will be monitored in order to develop a frequently asked questions web page.
- 1.16 Social media will also be utilised in the form of Facebook and Twitter. This will allow local people to follow the Borough Council and to receive regular updates on the Local Plan and its evidence base. These social media networking sites will also be particularly useful as part of community consultation exercises, in order to raise awareness of the Local Plan.
- 1.17 The Borough Council will also have the opportunity to monitor comments received on the social networking sites and to respond quickly to comments made by the general public; this will allow information on the Local Plan to remain factual.
- 1.18 It is proposed to further develop the use of community forums, possibly through specifically developed online community engagement software.

Local Development Scheme

- 1.19 The Melton Local Development Scheme (MLDS) sets out our programme for preparing the documents we intend to prepare over the next three years as part of the new Melton Local Plan.
- 1.20 Key milestones will be monitored as part of the Annual Monitoring Report preparation and the timetable may be reviewed as part of the monitoring process.
- 1.21 The current Local Development Scheme is available to download from the Melton Borough Council website at: www.melton.gov.uk

2 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

2.1 We believe that our entire community, from the individual to families and groups, and from the entrepreneur to businesses, who invest in the area, should be given the opportunity to actively influence the plans that are put in place. We want to strengthen community involvement in planning. We want to provide pro-active opportunities for the community to have a constructive input into the shaping of policy and our decision making processes.

2.2 Our Vision for community involvement in the Local Plan is that:

We will offer the widest opportunity to stakeholders and the local community to be informed of, and participate in, the preparation of the Melton Local Plan, within the resources available; and, we will exceed the minimum legal requirements for consultation and publicity wherever reasonably possible.

2.3 Our aims are to:

- take a structured approach to managing community involvement based on stakeholder and community interests;
- value the opinions, insights and expertise of stakeholders, groups and individual members of the community;
- make a particular effort to involve under represented and hard to reach groups;
- wherever possible use resources available from stakeholders for particular aspects of Local Plan consultation and publicity;
- use different approaches, methods and techniques to secure community involvement that are appropriate to different stages of the plan process and specific groups within the community; and,
- Integrate consultation with other community involvement initiatives wherever reasonably possible.

3 THE MELTON LOCAL PLAN

- 3.1 The new Melton Local Plan, along with national policies and guidance, will form the statutory development plan for the Borough of Melton. It will replace the Melton Local Plan 1999.
- 3.2 The new Melton Local Plan will be a statutory document and will be the development plan for the Borough. Further guidance will be provided on the policies and proposals set out in the plan by Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs). SPDs do not have development plan status but act as a material planning consideration when planning decisions are made.

4 CONSULTATION ON A DEVELOPMENT PLAN DOCUMENT (DPD)

- 4.1 The Local Plan is a statutory document and has the weight of development plan status as defined in Section 38 (6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. We will ensure that such documents undergo rigorous procedures of community involvement and consultation in their formation. The resulting DPD which is developed from this process will be subject to an independent examination by a Planning Inspector.
- 4.2 To assess that the plan has been prepared with the objective of contributing to sustainable development and is consistent with the principles and policies set out in the NPPF, including the presumption in favour of sustainable development.
- 4.3 To assess the needs, problems and opportunities to be addressed by a DPD; and, to ensure that policies and proposals are robust; credible; relevant; and based on fact, we will gather evidence and consult at the earliest possible stage to inform the decisions to be made. The evidence and consultation responses gathered will be relied upon when the soundness of a document is tested at independent examination. The role of the independent Inspector is to assess whether the plan has been prepared in accordance with the Duty to Cooperate, legal and procedural requirements, and whether it is sound, which means it should be:
- Positively prepared – the plan should be prepared based on a strategy which seeks to meet objectively assessed development and

infrastructure requirements, including un met requirements from neighbouring authorities where it is reasonable to do so and consistent with achieving sustainable development.

- Justified – the plan should be the most appropriate strategy, when considered against the reasonable alternatives, based on proportionate evidence;
- Effective- the plan should be deliverable over its period and based on effective joint working on cross- boundary strategic priorities; and
- Consistent with national policy- the plan should enable the delivery of sustainable development in accordance with the policies in the Framework.

4.4 We will involve Reference Groups and all other stakeholders, in the preparation and evaluation of this evidence, as appropriate. The Reference Groups will be involved in workshops and conferences which can identify issues which the Local Plan will need to address. Statutory Consultees, e.g. the Environment Agency, will be involved in the preparation of a Strategic Flood Risk Assessment. Figure 1 below sets out how the Borough Council will encourage community engagement and how the public can take responsibility for their involvement in the preparation of the Melton Local Plan.

Figure 1: Involvement in the New Local Plan

1 Inform

We Will

- Tell you clearly
 - What the scope of the plan is;
 - How you can get involved
 - How you can influence the plan
- Contact you directly either by letter or email if you have added your details to the details to the community consultation database on objective online
- Notify all Statutory Consultees
- Provide press releases
- Update Twitter, Word Press and Face book
- Update the Melton Local Plan Newsletter
- Update the Melton Borough Council website with appropriate information

1 Inform

Your responsibility will be to:

- Ask to be added to our new Local Plan consultation database at anytime by contacting the Planning Policy Team via:
- Email to ourmelton@melton.gov.uk
- Follow us on Twitter @meltonplan
- Join us on Facebook / Melton Local Plan
- Telephone : 01664503321
- You can also register directly at: <http://melton.limehouse.co.uk/portal/>

2 Engage

We will engage the with the local communities and stakeholders by:

- Holding Workshops and Conferences with members of the Reference Groups
- Holding Public Exhibitions
- Engaging Statutory Consultees
- Making our plans available on the Councils website
- Updating social networking sites
- Making copies of our plans available at the Council Offices, Post Offices and Public Libraries

2 Engage

Your responsibility will be to:

- Identify and share ideas and issues.
- Consider, question and promote options
- Affect decision making
- Identify preferred approaches for future development

3 Provide Feedback**We Will :**

- Acknowledge your comments
- Make summarised responses received publicly available
- Prepare a Statement of Community Engagement
- Explain clearly why decisions have been made
- Share the evidence about the preferred approach

3 Feedback**Your Responsibility will be to:**

- Read the Statement of Community Engagement

4 Plan**We will:**

- Prepare and publish the Melton Local Plan
- Advertise the Local Plan in the local press
- Contact you directly
- Notify all our statutory consultees
- Make all documents available on the Councils website, in the main Council offices, Post Offices and local libraries
- If appropriate make changes to the plan, in response to public consultation
- Prepare and publish evidence base documents as required
- Publish a Statement of Consultation and Engagement

4 Plan**Your Responsibility will be to:**

- Comment on the final draft plan
- Request to speak at the public examination

5 Examine

We will:

- Submit the plan to the Secretary of State and take it through public examination
- Publish full details of the submission and public examination of the Melton Local Plan on the Borough Councils website and;
- Where appropriate make changes to the plan
- Publish the independent persons report on the Borough Councils website
- Adopt and publish the final plan

5 Examine

Your Responsibility will be to :

- Make written comments in relation to the plan at early stages in the plan preparation process.
- Request to appear at the public examination to speak for or against, the plan.
- Request to be notified of the adoption of the plan.

6 Review

We will:

- Set clear targets within our Annual Monitoring Reports
- Review our plans regularly to ensure that they are up to date and accurately reflect the needs of the community

6 Review

Your responsibility will be to:

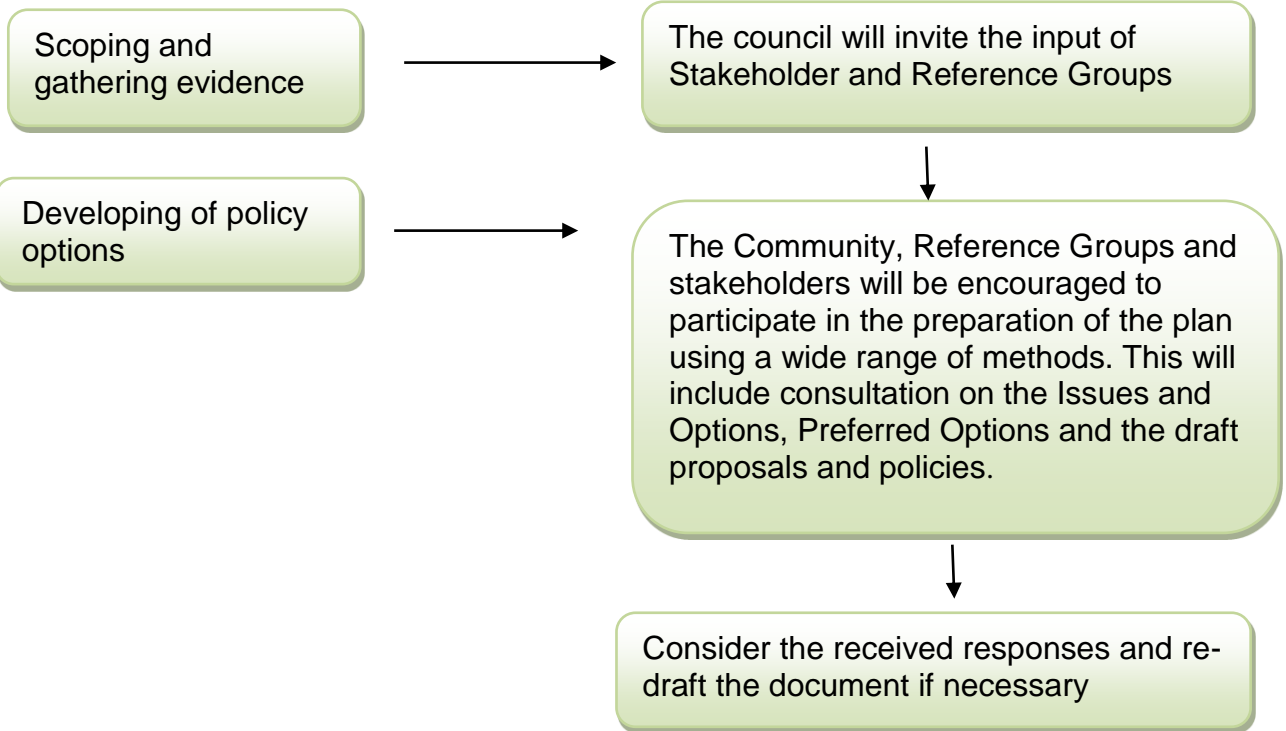
- Review the Annual Monitoring Report and see what the plan is achieving for the community
- Raise any issues or concerns
- Explain options to pursue neighbourhood planning

Stages of consultation

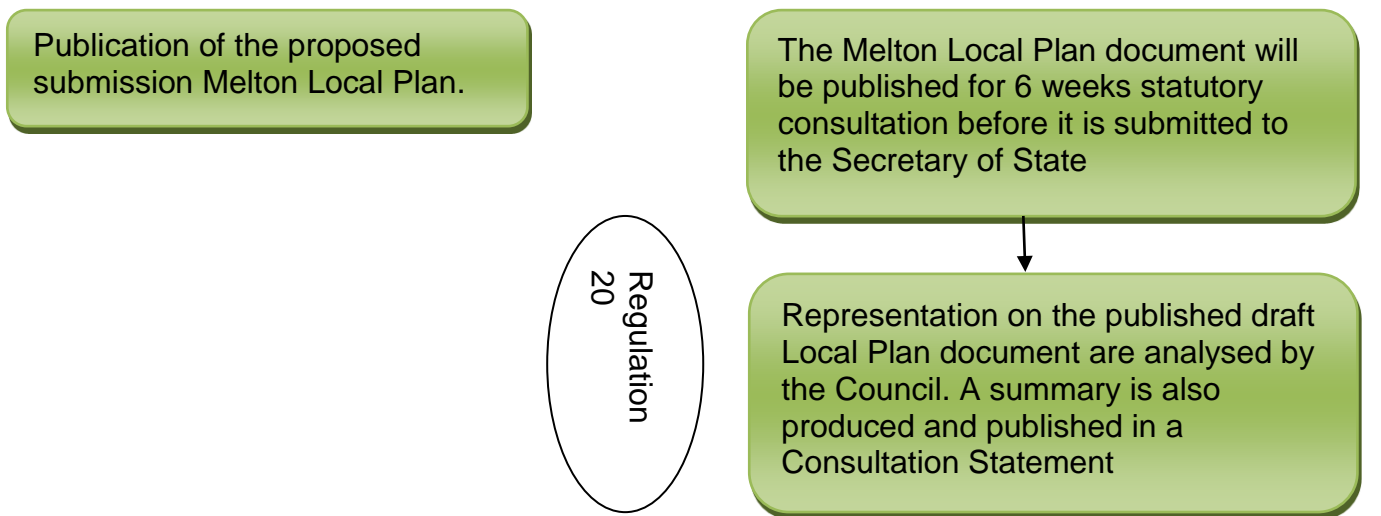
- 4.5 The process for preparing the Melton Local Plan can generally be divided into informal and formal stages. The requirements are now less rigid but consultation still remains a central and an important part of the process. The key stages of public consultation for a DPD now consist of:-

New Melton Local Plan Consultation Process

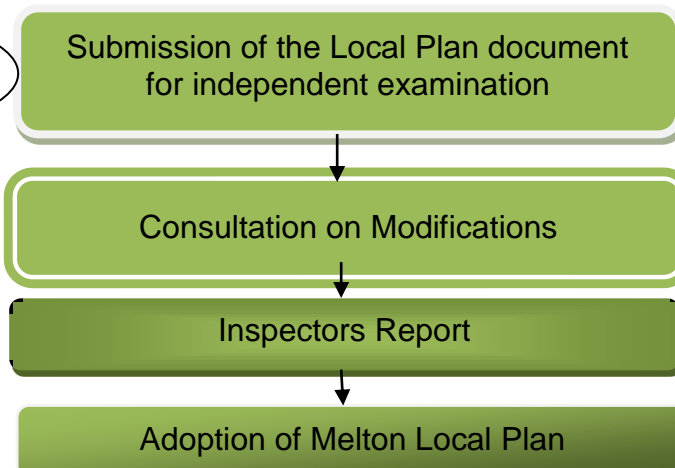
Stage 1



Stage 2



Regulation 20



Period of consultation

- 4.6 We will ensure that following publication of a consultation document there is an appropriate period of time during which comments can be submitted. This will allow us to provide all parties with the opportunity to have an input into the plans and policies which will affect our community before we prepare for the next stage of plan production.

5.0 Methods of Engagement

Methods Of Engagement		
Method	How	Stage
Facebook	The Council will use Facebook in order to reach communities that would not respond to traditional consultation methods.	Throughout the preparation of the Melton Local Plan.
Twitter	<p>A Twitter account has been set up to tweet the messages surrounding the preparation of the Melton Local Plan and invite local people to consultation events. This will allow us to reach communities that may not have responded to traditional methods of consultation.</p> <p>A Twitter account will also be set up for each of the Reference Groups in order for members of the Groups to discuss issues between themselves. It will also allow each of the Reference Groups to publicise their final recommendations to the Melton Local Plan Working Group.</p>	Throughout the preparation of the Melton Local Plan.
Word Press	<p>The Council will use Word Press in order to develop a website solely for the purpose of the Melton Local Plan. Each of the Reference Groups will have their own page where notes of their meetings will be posted; this will allow the process to remain open and transparent. The dates and times of the meetings for the Reference Group meetings will also be advertised on this site.</p> <p>A blog has been included to in the website to include up to date information on the preparation of the Melton Local Plan.</p>	Throughout the preparation of the Melton Local Plan.
The Internet	The Melton Borough Council website will be an important way of communicating information to stakeholders. In order to do this more effectively the Planning Policy web pages will be structured around themes of the Local Plan, for example housing and employment issues. The information on the website will be structured in order to tell a story of	Throughout the preparation of the Melton Local Plan

	<p>the development of the Local Plan. The web pages will be continually updated in order for the information to remain up to date, once information is no longer relevant this will be placed on an historical web page in order to show a timeline of events.</p> <p>A webpage will be developed for each of the Reference Groups to include the agendas, notes and reports for the Melton Local Plan Working Group meetings; this will allow the process to remain open and transparent.</p> <p>A mechanism exists to allow members of the public to email questions regarding the Local Plan and its evidence base directly to officers at ourmeltonlocalplan@melton.gov.uk. Questions received using this method and online forums will be monitored in order to develop a frequently asked questions web page.</p>	
Letters	Notifications will be sent to statutory bodies, stakeholders, relevant groups and other individuals and organisations on the consultation database.	At all consultation periods throughout the preparation of the Melton Local Plan
Email	Notifications will be sent to statutory bodies, stakeholders, relevant groups and other individuals and organisations on the consultation database, via email.	At all consultation periods throughout the preparation of the Melton Local Plan
Local newspaper	<p>Public notices will be placed in the Melton Times, Grantham Journal and Leicester Mercury at the start of the consultation period.</p> <p>Press releases will be prepared to advertise the preparation progress and highlight events in which local people can get involved.</p>	Throughout the preparation of the Melton Local Plan, when required.
Deposit Points	Documents will be made available to view at the Council Offices, Post Offices and Public libraries	All Consultation Periods
Local Plan Newsletter	A quarterly online newsletter will be prepared to keep local people informed of the progress of the Melton Local Plan.	Throughout the preparation of the Melton Local Plan.

	It will publicise future consultation periods, exhibitions, roads shows etc and how people can get involved in the Melton Local Plan.	
Conferences	Conferences will be used to inform Members and members of the Reference Groups of key decisions such as the 'Preferred Option'. The conference will be used to present the evidence to inform the decision required e.g. transport modelling and the findings of the Sustainability Appraisal. A number of presentations will be given by the consultants and officers involved to highlight the key findings in the evidence produced to support the Local Plan.	All key stages of the preparation of the Melton Local Plan
Workshops	The Reference Groups will be invited to attend workshops at key periods within the development plan process: the frequency of the workshops will be guided by the Local Plan phasing plan at key decision stages. It is proposed that these workshops will be used to aid discussion within the Reference Groups and with officers, for example "Planning for Real" exercises to discuss the location of new development. It may also be necessary to hold workshops to include a number of the Reference Groups together, in order to aid the discussion between the different groups. Workshops will also be a very useful way of engaging with young people in order to gain their views and opinions throughout the Local Plan process. This will involve carrying out workshops at local schools and youth clubs.	At all key stages in the preparation of the Melton Local Plan.
Online Questionnaires	Online questionnaires will be used to determine attitudes towards particular issues and options.	At all stages of community involvement
Reference Groups	The Council is keen to include as many people as possible in producing the new plan. To do this, the Council will invite 'Reference Groups' to have a direct input into the content of the Plan at every	As required throughout the preparation process

	stage of its production as well as the normal means of inviting comment at key stages through advertisements and publicity. They will include a wide range of interests and be made up of representatives from the rural community, residents, landowners, the business community and other interest groups who the future plan will affect.	
Public Exhibitions	Will provide a more informal setting, in a variety of locations and times across the Borough, to inform and encourage participation in the Melton Local Plan process.	All stages during the consultation periods

Stakeholder Involvement

5.2 We have established an extensive database of interested parties which includes stakeholders, organisations and members of the public. We encourage any party or individual to be added to our database. This enables us to ensure that stakeholders and members of our community, who have expressed an interest, receive notice of any consultation event involving the Melton Local Plan. To be added to the community consultation database please email us your details to ourmeltonlocalplan@melton.gov.uk

5.3 We maintain an extensive list of potential consultees whose views may be important.

The parties we will consult may include:

Specific consultation bodies:

- Central and local government (including neighbouring local authorities)
- The Secretary of State for Transport (in relation to the Secretary of State's functions with regard to railways and highways)
- Statutory advisory bodies (the Coal Authority, the Environment Agency, English Heritage, and Natural England)
- Parish Councils within or adjacent to Melton Borough
- Infrastructure providers
- Leicestershire Fire and Rescue Service
- East Leicestershire and Rutland Clinical Commissioning Group
- Police authorities operating within or adjacent to Leicestershire

The local community:

- the general public
- community area partnerships
- resident/community/civic societies and associations
- local businesses and business groups
- charity and voluntary organisations
- under-represented groups within the community

The extended community:

- landowners, developers and agents
- national interest groups
- general business and industry
- housing bodies
- transport bodies

Consultation Responses

5.4 We will consider the representations received at the end of each consultation period and make decisions on each of the matters raised. This will provide the ultimate direction for the preparation of the formal DPD. The consultation process and our decisions on the representations received will be conducted in as fair, transparent and efficient a manner as reasonably possible, having regard to all material factors including the need to ensure full and open discussions.

Statement of Consultation

- 5.5 We want our community to know how the representations received have been used. We will produce a Statement of Consultation setting out the key issues raised and how we intend to deal with the representations received. The decisions we take will ultimately be fed into the preparation of the 'Publication' DPD. The statement will demonstrate that the consultation process and our decisions on the representations have been conducted in a fair, transparent and efficient manner. The statement will be made available together with a summary of the consultation results to respondents, stakeholders and the public, and for downloading from the website, www.melton.gov.uk.

Publication of a DPD and its Consultation

- 5.6 We will provide the opportunity for the public and stakeholders to comment on a DPD when it is published, before it is submitted to the Secretary of State. We will make the DPD available for public inspection at venues throughout the Borough, including the Borough Council Offices; the Melton Mowbray and Bottesford public libraries; the County mobile library; and Post Offices and shops in villages throughout the Borough.
- 5.7 We will seek media coverage through press articles and a notice will be published in the Melton Times, Grantham Journal and Leicester Mercury newspapers. Posters will be displayed throughout the Borough to advertise the submission documents. We will also seek coverage through our web site and social media sites. Workshops will be held, where appropriate, during the consultation period at various venues to enable members of the community to discuss the document. Conferences will also be held at the Borough Council Offices in order to present information on the publication of the Local Plan and the supporting evidence base.
- 5.8 Full Council will decide the period for consultation with a statutory minimum of 6 weeks. We will publish details on our website (www.melton.gov.uk) of where and when the proposed submission documents will be available for inspection. The documents will also be available to view and comment on using our online consultation portal which can also be accessed on our website. This will provide the principal means by which comments can be made by our community but we will make sure that a variety of other methods are available and no members of our community excluded.
- 5.9 As soon as reasonably practicable, we will make the representations received on the DPD available for public inspection on the website www.melton.gov.uk .
- 5.10 Should any representations be made during the specified period which include proposals for alternative site allocations or boundary changes (where a DPD deals with such matters) which do not repeat issues previously raised and are realistic and related matters we will publish notices in the same newspaper and invite representations on the proposals to be made within a further specified period of six weeks.
- 5.11 Prior to the allocation of land in any DPD, the Council will contact the landowners involved to ensure that the land will be made available for development.

Submission of a DPD

- 5.12 We will send the Submission DPD and the representations received to the Secretary of State for the purpose of examination.
- 5.13 We will make information available on the Melton Borough Council website, www.melton.gov.uk, including the proposed submission documents, a statement of the representations and a statement of the fact that the proposed submission documents are available for inspection and of the places and times at which they can be inspected.

Advertising & the media

- 5.14 When we submit the DPD we will publish notices (outlining a statement of the representations procedure and a statement of the fact that the proposed submission documents are available for inspection and of the places and times at which they can be inspected) in the Melton Times, Grantham Journal and Leicester Mercury newspapers. We will seek media coverage and provide information on our web site, www.melton.gov.uk that is available for downloading. Where possible, posters will be displayed on notice boards throughout the Borough to advertise the submission document. Social media will be utilised to send out information in relation to the submission if the Local Plan.

The Examination in Public and Adoption

- 5.15 The purpose of an Examination is for the Planning Inspector to assess if the Local Plan has been prepared in accordance with the legal and procedural requirements, including the duty to cooperate. The Inspector will also be looking to see if the plan is sound in terms of the guidance set out in the NPPF.
- 5.16 We will publish a notice in the Melton Times, Grantham Journal and Leicester Mercury at least six weeks before it begins that gives details of the Examination. We will include this information on our web site, www.melton.gov.uk, and notify any person who has made a representation at the Publication stage.
- 5.17 Following the Examination, the Inspector will prepare a report advising of any changes to the DPD which are considered appropriate in order to make it sound. If the Council wishes to adopt the DPD it must be amended on the basis of the Inspector's binding report. Our intention would be to adopt the DPD as soon as possible after receipt of the report. Although not expressly consultation, there is a six week period for legal challenge after adoption.
- 5.18 We will publish the Inspector's report on our website together with a schedule of all the modifications required to the DPD.
- 5.19 We will publish a notification of adoption of the DPD in the Melton Times, Grantham Journal and Leicester Mercury. Following adoption, a DPD will be made available at the Council Offices and published on the web site, www.melton.gov.uk.

6.0 Neighbourhood Planning

6.0 The Localism Act 2011 introduced Neighbourhood Planning and empowers communities to shape development and growth of their local area through; the preparation of:

- A Neighbourhood Development Plan
- Neighbourhood Development Order; or
- Community Right to Build Order

6.1 The main principle behind community planning is to give local people a major say in shaping development in the area in which they live. Neighbourhood Plans are still required to conform to the National Planning Policy Framework and the new Melton Local Plan.

6.2 The Council will support identified and legitimate neighbourhood/ community groups wishing to develop neighbourhood planning approaches, for more information on the councils duty to support neighbourhood planning, please see Appendix 2

The Community Right to Challenge

6.3 The Community Right to Challenge Act 2012 allows communities to take over local services they think they can run differently and better. This Act will allow communities to run a wide range of local services.

Community Right to Bid

6.4 The Community Right to Bid Act 2012 allows communities and Parish Councils to nominate buildings or land for listing by the local authority as an asset of community value. An asset can be listed if it furthers their community's social well-being or social interests and is likely to do so in the future. When a listed asset comes to be sold, a moratorium on the sale of up to six months may be involved, providing the local community with a better chance to raise the finances to bid and buy the asset from the open market.

Community Asset Transfer

6.5 The Community Asset Transfer is an established mechanism used to enable the community ownership and management of publicly owned land and buildings. The general consent allows a range of public bodies to transfer the ownership and management of land and buildings they own to local communities at less than market value. Communities can apply for asset transfers where it is their intention to promote social, economic and environmental well-being.

6.6 The aim of Community Asset Transfer is community empowerment that is, to ensure that land and buildings are retained or transformed then operated for public benefit through community asset ownership and management.

Community Right to Build

6.7 The Community Right to Build aims to make it easier for local people to initiate and deliver small scale developments they would like to see in their area. The Community Right to build is a particular type of neighbourhood development order that allows people to propose a development in their local area and obtain permission for it, without having to go through the planning process. A proposal can be developed as part of a full neighbourhood planning process, or on its own.

Duty to co-operate

6.8 The Localism Act 2011 introduced the Duty to Co-operate which places a requirement for all local planning authorities, county councils and other public organisations to engage with one another and consider joint approaches as part of the preparation of local plans.

6.9 The NPPF para. 181 states that local planning authorities are expected to demonstrate evidence of having effectively cooperated to plan for issues with cross-boundary impacts when their local plans are submitted for examination. This could be by way of plans or policies prepared as part of a joint committee, a memorandum of understanding.

6.10 The Duty to Co-operate forms part of the Test of Soundness against which the Planning Inspector will assess the Local Plan during the Public Examination. It is considered essential that the Council can demonstrate effective and collaborative working with neighbouring authorities, key stakeholders and other organisations during the preparation of both the new Melton Local Plan and the evidence base that supports it.

7 CONSULTATION ON A SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT

7.1 Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) can cover a range of issues that may expand policy or provide further detail to policies in a DPD. They are likely to take the form of design guides; development briefs; or, issue or thematic based documents that supplement policies in a DPD. Community involvement will be extremely important in preparing SPDs but they will not be subject to independent examination.

7.2 There will be a three stage process of:

- survey and evidence gathering;
- draft preparation; and
- adoption.

Survey & evidence gathering

7.3 We will consult the relevant community, stakeholders and other bodies as part of the survey and evidence gathering stage of the process.

Period of consultation and access to information

7.4 The draft SPD will be subject to a six-week consultation period. Throughout the period copies of the SPD will be made available at the Council offices for public inspection.

- 7.5 The consultation arrangements we will use will depend on the theme or geographic area of a SPD. They may be localised if, for example, they deal with a development site or specific area.
- 7.6 Copies of the draft SPD will be sent to the relevant stakeholders and other bodies for comment. Where a SPD involves a particular parcel of land, owners and occupiers of the land will be notified of the consultation arrangements. Letters advising of the consultation exercise will be sent to occupiers of properties adjoining the land. The draft document will be made available for downloading from the web site, www.melton.gov.uk

Advertising and the media

- 7.7 At the commencement of the period of consultation we will seek media coverage through press editorials and the use of our social media sites.

Forums and meetings

- 7.8 If necessary, a public meeting will be held during the consultation period at a venue that is convenient to the stakeholders or section of the community that is interested in or affected by the subject of the document.

Statement of consultation

- 7.9 At the end of the consultation period we will produce a Statement of Consultation that summarises the main issues raised and how they have been addressed. The Statement will explain how we have dealt with the comments and how they have affected the final SPD.

Adoption

- 7.10 The adopted SPD will be made available for public inspection and purchase, together with the Statement of Consultation, at the Council offices. These documents will be made available for inspection and downloading from the web site, www.melton.gov.uk

8 CONSULTATION ON A SUSTAINABILITY APPRAISAL

For a Development Plan Document

- 8.1 A Sustainability Appraisal (SA) is an iterative process which will be integrated into the preparation of a DPD. We will consult key stakeholders on the scope of the SA at commencement of DPD preparation.
- 8.2 A SA report will be published at the Issues and Options and Preferred Options Consultation stages together with the DPD. The same period will be given for representations to be made on the SA. It will be made available for inspection at the venues where the DPD is deposited.
- 8.3 At the publication stage of a DPD, a final SA will be published and made available for inspection with the DPD for the same period and at the same venues where it is deposited. It will be submitted together with the DPD to the Secretary of State. The SA will be made available for downloading from the web site, www.melton.gov.uk.

For a Supplementary Planning Document

- 8.4 A Sustainability Appraisal is generally not required for an SPD. However, we will publish a 'screening report' which draws on the SA report of the parent DPD, and clarifies whether or not the SPD is likely to lead to any further significant effects.

The screening report will ensure that any requirements under the European Directive on SEA are met for the SPD.

9 CONSULTATION ON PLANNING APPLICATIONS

- 9.1 Involvement of the community and stakeholders at an early stage of the planning application process is of great benefit to the public, individuals, organisations, authorities and the applicant themselves.
- 9.2 The Council encourages developers to consult the community prior to submitting planning applications for larger schemes or potentially contentious development proposals. This is in accordance with guidance on decision making set out in both the National Planning Policy Framework and the Localism Act 2012.
- 9.3 The Borough Council currently engage in pre-application discussions with developers which are undertaken in confidence because of the various sensitivities of some of the early ideas. These discussions are always recorded and are without prejudice to the later applications, consultation requirements and the decision making process. The Borough Council has a schedule of charges for pre-application advice available at www.melton.gov.uk.
- 9.4 Applicants are expected for larger cases to carry out their own pre-application consultation. This should be effective in bringing draft proposals to the attention of the public, parish councils and other affected parties. There should be the opportunity for consultees to make comments on the proposal. Appendix 4 sets out the Council's suggested consultation mechanisms for the pre-application and post-submission stages.
- 9.5 The consultations undertaken by the developer may take the form of a public meeting and / or exhibition, additional neighbourhood notification or press coverage. Consultation will normally be localised with an emphasis on informing and involving stakeholders, businesses, residents or members of the public that might be affected by the proposal. Appendix 3 sets out the Council's suggested consultation mechanisms for the pre-application and post-submission stages.
- 9.6 The principle of early discussions between the developer and the community is to encourage agreement with the community early in the process and provide a better opportunity for schemes to be positively received. This will allow key issues to be addressed prior to planning applications being submitted.
- 9.7 Pre-application consultation is not a statutory requirement; therefore the Council is not empowered to decline an application where it has not been carried out. The Government has announced its intention to introduce compulsory pre-application consultation with local communities for more significant onshore wind development.
- 9.8 We will assist applicants who wish to undertake consultations by making the policy widely available as part of our application guidance notes. Where consultations are carried out we will request the submission of a 'certificate' with the formal application that describes the measures an applicant has taken, the impact that the measures have had in terms of the content of the original proposal, and if no amendments have been made to the proposal, why that conclusion was reached.

- 9.9 We currently consult on planning applications in accordance with the requirements of Article 8 of the Town & Country Planning (General Development Procedure) Order 2010 (as amended) and the 'good practice' set out in Circular 15/92. This is supplemented by additional mechanisms Melton BC has employed to consult more widely than the legislation and guidance requires, for example with Parish Councils and re-consultation following substantive amendments to applications. The results of consultation are considered by officers and Members when making decisions on the acceptability of planning applications. Please note bodies such as English Heritage will be allowed a longer period of time to comment on applications where this is prescribed by legislation.
- 9.10 These provisions consist of public notices in the press, on-site or 'near to site' notice, and, letters of notification to adjoining neighbours.
- 9.11 We will continue to consult in accordance with the Order and Circular and our supplementary arrangements for all planning applications that are submitted.
- 9.12 We recognise that applications of a more significant scale can raise particular issues and concerns that may require wider community consultation.

10 PLANNING AID

- 10.1 Planning Aid England is a free voluntary service offering independent professional advice to enable local communities, especially those with limited resources, to engage effectively in planning decisions which may affect their area. Planning Aid England aims to give people the confidence to help themselves and to become involved in wider planning issues.
- 10.2 Despite the recent reductions in funding from central Government, which have impacted upon a wide range of public services, the benefits of the advice provided by Planning Aid has been recognised with a continuation of support. They can be contacted on the planning aid advice line, on 0330 123 9244, or via the email address advice@planningaid.rtpi.org.uk. We will encourage the use of the service provided by Planning Aid where it will help to secure more effective engagement with the community.

11 MAKING CONSULTATION INCLUSIVE

- 11.1 We believe it is important to make consultation inclusive to find out the views of an accurate cross-section of the whole community. We are aware that different sections of the community, particularly minority groups, may have views that differ from those of the majority. If they are not consulted effectively these views could be unheard. To assist effective consultation, our documents will be clearly written without jargon and made available in a variety of formats (e.g. large print, audiotape). We have access to skills of language interpretation and sign language for people who may find it difficult to access our services due to language barriers.
- 11.2 We are aware that some groups and individuals can find it difficult to access consultation exercises. In rural areas problems of distance and transport can be a barrier to certain types of consultation exercises. We will make full use of local facilities (e.g. village shops) in which to place our documents and make other information available.

- 11.3 We want to use existing community forums to access certain ‘hard to reach’ groups. We have already made progress in reaching the Seniors Forum and Access Group. By consulting more widely with groups in the voluntary sector we hope that many more people will be included in the new Melton Local Plan process than in the past.
- 11.4 We recognise that maintaining an open dialogue between, and with, all those parties who have an interest in the planning process can contribute towards on-going education in respect of each other’s views and desired outcomes. A culture of open dialogue can also reduce delays and disagreements that do not contribute to a faster and more efficient process. Whilst we will use internet technology to foster inclusiveness we also recognise the desire for, and benefits of, face to face contact. We will make qualified planning officers available to attend Parish or other local group meetings where necessary.

Engaging Under Represented Groups in the Planning Process

- 11.5 The Borough Council is committed to engaging all sectors of the local community in the planning process. We recognise that there are certain sectors of the local community who the Council has difficulty fully engaging with. This presents two challenges for the Council – firstly, identifying who these ‘under represented’ groups are and secondly, finding new and appropriate ways to encourage them to get involved in the planning process.

- 11.6 We will encourage the following groups to be more involved in the planning process:

- **Farmers** - Melton is a largely rural area and a considerable amount of the land in the Borough is in agricultural use. We are keen for the farming community to become more engaged in the planning process. Connection with these members of the community can be achieved through the National Farmers Union, Country Landowners Association and the Leicestershire Rural Partnership.

- **Young People** - It is often hard to get young people involved in the planning process, yet the future development and use of land within the Borough will have a large impact on their present and future lives. We will seek to actively engage this section of the population within the planning process through the Young Persons Reference Group and working closely with Melton Youth Council, youth clubs and groups, local schools and fully utilising our Children’s Centres. We will inform young people of the purpose of the planning system and the ways in which they can get involved. We plan to actively engage with young people through the use of online social media sites. This is an effective way of communicating with young people and generating their ideas, as it is more informal than speaking to the Borough Council officers directly.

- **Older People** - We recognise that older people form an increasing proportion of Melton’s population. As such it is essential that their views on life in the Borough and the facilities and services they require improving their quality of life are fully taken into account in both the development of the Local Plan and the Community Strategy. The Council will work closely with

Melton Senior's Forum and the voluntary sector in finding ways to engage this group more fully.

12 RESOURCES AND MANAGEMENT

- 12.1 We believe that communicating with the public is the key to swift progress of the Melton Local Plan; however, we realise that consultation exercises require resources in terms of personnel, finances and facilities.
- 12.2 The preparation of the Melton Local Plan will be the responsibility of the planning policy section of the Council, under the direction of the Head of Regulatory Services. The Melton Local Plan process will be overseen by the Melton Local Plan Working Group, and Full Council to ensure that elected Members have full control over the proposals and policies contained within the Melton Local Plan.
- 12.3 The financial implications of consultation and availability of other resources have influenced the extent and approach that we have taken to our consultation strategy. Budgetary provisions have been made to provide for the preparation and publication of the Melton Local Plan.

13 REVIEW AND MONITORING

- 13.1 The Statement of Community Involvement sets out how the Council proposes to involve its communities in the preparation of the new Local Plan and future major planning applications. The Council will regularly monitor proposed strategy to ensure the procedures are responsive to issues that are raised during the preparation of the new Melton Local Plan. Key indicators and targets will be set to enable our performance to be measured. We will regularly monitor the indicators and publish them in the Annual Monitoring Report (AMR).

Evaluating effectiveness

- 13.2 Evaluation will be based on a system of monitoring that involves an on-going assessment of the consultation process. Monitoring will focus on:
- short feedback questionnaires for those who have attended Reference Groups and public meetings at appropriate milestones;
 - questionnaires to respondents on a sample of MLDF documents;
- 13.3 These surveys will help us to consider both the outcomes of consultation and the process. A formal review of the SCI could be triggered if:
- Monitoring of consultation arrangements suggest the need for significant change;
 - The number of responses to a consultation exercise is significantly below expectations, particularly from hard to reach groups;
 - Staff or financial resources become overstretched.

The costs of consultation will be monitored and measured for the purpose of Best Value and evaluation.

15 APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1

Glossary

AMR - Annual Monitoring Report

The Annual Monitoring Report will monitor and assess the implementation of the LDS and whether Local Plan Policies are being achieved. The AMR will review plan progress against targets and milestones and seek reasons if they are not being met. The SA will have specific monitoring requirements and will be useful in developing AMR contextual indicators.

DPD - Development Plan Documents

These documents will be statutory documents and subject to an independent examination by an inspector. They will undergo rigorous procedures of community involvement and consultation. The recommendations of the examination Inspector will be binding.

LDS - Local Development Scheme

The Local Development Scheme will set out the timetable, targets and milestones for the preparation of Local Plan documents.

MSCI - Melton Statement of Community Involvement

The Melton Statement of Community Involvement is the SCI for Melton Borough.

Reference Groups

There are seven Reference Groups, each of the groups will discuss the same topics covered by the local plan and report their recommendations directly to the Melton Local Plan Working Group through their elected spokesperson.

SA - Sustainability Appraisal

The Sustainability Appraisal will assess the social, economic and environmental impacts of the policies and proposals of the Local Plan. It is an iterative process that will commence from the outset of document preparation.

SCI - Statement of Community Involvement

The Statement of Community Involvement is the local authority's strategy on community and stakeholder consultations on the Local Plan and planning applications.

SEA - Strategic Environmental Assessment

A Strategic Environmental Assessment is required under European Union regulations and will assess the environmental impacts of the policies and proposals of DPDs. It will be incorporated within the Sustainability Appraisal process.

Saved

Saved is a term that confirms that an adopted development plan will continue to operate for a period of three years from the commencement of the Act, or from the date of adoption of an emerging plan. The period may be extended for a plan or particular policies with the agreement of the Secretary of State.

Specialist body

Before granting planning permission for particular types of development that are defined in the Town and Country Planning (General Development Procedure)

Order 1995, a local planning authority must consult particular bodies e.g. Health and Safety Executive, Environment Agency, the local highway authority.

SPD - Supplementary Planning Documents

Supplementary planning documents will elaborate on policies and proposals in DPDs. They will not have development plan status. They will be considered as a material planning consideration and their weight will be reflected by their status. SPDs are likely to take the form of design guides, development briefs and issue or thematic based documents.

Stakeholder

Stakeholders are an authority, organisation or business that has an interest in the MLDF (e.g. government department or agency).

APPENDIX 2

Neighbourhood Planning

Neighbourhood Plan preparation

The Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 set out the procedure for the designation of neighbourhood areas and neighbourhood forums and for the preparation of neighbourhood development plans and development orders and Community Right to Build Orders.

The Councils role

The Localism Act 2011 imposes new duties on the local authorities including:

- Confirm the status of a proposed neighbourhood forum
- Confirm the geographical area of the proposed neighbourhood plan
- Provide expertise and advice to neighbourhood forums or parish councils
- Check the legal compliance of the plan
- Appoint an independent examiner with the consent of the parish council or neighbourhood forum

Duty to Support

Independent Examination

Neighbourhood Plans are required to be publicly examined by a suitably qualified independent person. This examination assesses the plan against the following conditions:

- National Policy (NPPF)
- The strategic elements of the Local Plan
- Legal Requirements

Where the examination indicates that the plan meets these conditions, or can meet these conditions with modifications to the plan. The Council has a legal duty to hold a referendum. If the plan is supported at the referendum then the Borough Council is required to adopt the plan and it will form part of the statutory development plan for the area it covers.

APPENDIX 3

Methods of informing and involving the community

Method	Main considerations
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Inspection venues	Public access to documents and information at little cost - venues may not be accessible to all members of community – needs to be well publicised
Public meetings	Good opportunity for open debate and discussion of issues - often available to only small sections of the community – issues can become side-lined by more vocal members of community -
Public exhibitions	Good way of bringing information and advice to community – resource intensive – attendees are self-selecting - good publicity necessary beforehand – may require several days – location important – attractiveness of displays important
Leaflet drops	Comprehensive approach to informing community – leaflets should be well designed and user friendly – usually expensive – can be discarded as junk mail
Posters	Cheap form of informing community – limited information
Focus group meetings	Good for in depth discussions – small numbers involved – may be bias in responses
Workshops	Constructive participation - can develop ownership - careful planning required – limited to small numbers
Newsletter	Comprehensive approach to informing community – expensive
Website	For this stage of consultation an online portal, Objective Online 4.0, will be used as a method for the public and stakeholders to leave comments and view comments which have been made.
Citizens panel	Useful for gaining cross section of views at reasonable cost – hard to reach groups can be excluded
Press Notice	Can have wide audience – formal appearance may discourage reading – can be expensive
Presentations to existing groups	Good way of presenting information in detail – can be resource intensive
Media /press editorials	Very good and cheap way of reaching large proportion of community – editorials can have bias – timing important
Twitter	Twitter will be used to in order to send out regular updates on the preparation of the new Melton Local Plan. Twitter will also enable the reference groups to discuss issues on Twitter outside of the meeting.

Facebook	Face book will allow interested parties to join the Melton Local Plan Facebook page and receive regular updates on the preparation of the new Melton Local Plan.
Word Press	A website has been created especially for the new Melton Local Plan and the Reference Groups. The website contains an up to date blog; the dates and times of the reference group meetings. Each of the Reference Groups has their own web page where all of the notes from the meetings will be displayed.

APPENDIX 4

Consultation measures for planning applications

Consultation mechanism	Pre-application stage			Minimum requirement Post-submission	Post-submission stage		
	Strategic	Major	Other		Strategic	Major	Other
Public Exhibition	*						
Public Meeting	*				*	*	
Consultation with parish councils and/or other representative groups	*	*		*	*	*	*
Consultation with specialist bodies	*	*			*	*	
Statutory consultation	*	*		*	*	*	*
Letters to properties adjoining the site (circular 15/92)				*	*	*	*
Non statutory press notices					n/a	n/a	Where impact is likely to extend beyond immediate neighbours
Non statutory site notices					n/a	n/a	Where impact is likely to extend beyond immediate neighbours
Availability of Committee reports at Council offices & on website					*	*	*
Display of full details at Council offices & on website					*	*	*

Definitions:

Strategic applications: applications for >100 houses, 10,000 sq m industrial / retail / commercial floorspace (or outline equivalent: 5 hectares) where the development is on land not allocated in the local plan / LDF for such purposes.

Major applications: applications for >50 houses, 10,000 sq m industrial / retail / commercial floorspace (or outline equivalent: 2.5 hectares) where the development is on land not allocated in the local plan / LDF for such purposes, and strategic applications where they accord with the local plan / LDF.

Other applications: all applications not covered by the above definitions.

Public meetings: meetings conducted by the Council for the purposes of consultation. Meetings will be publicised by a variety of media including (as a minimum) letters to adjacent residents, press and site notices.

Public exhibitions: exhibitions initiated by developers. Meetings will be publicised by a variety of media including (as a minimum) letters to adjacent residents, press and site notices, and will involve liaison with the Council regarding location, format etc.

Non statutory notices: site and/or press notices produced voluntarily by the Council (i.e. where they are not a statutory requirement).