

**Blaby District Council
Council**

Date of Meeting	30 June 2026
Title of Report	Leicester & Leicestershire Authorities - Statement of Common Ground relating to Strategic Distribution Floorspace Needs Update and Apportionment This is not a Key Decision and is on the Forward Plan
Lead Member	Cllr. Mike Shirley – Planning, Strategic Growth and Environmental Portfolio Holder
Report Author	Development Strategy Manager
Strategic Themes	All Themes: Enabling communities and supporting vulnerable residents; Enhancing and maintaining our natural and built environment; Growing and supporting our economy; Keeping you safe and healthy; Ambitious and well managed Council, valuing our people

1. What is this report about?

- 1.1 This report provides information on a Statement of Common Ground for the Strategic Distribution Floorspace Needs Update and Apportionment (known as Strategic B8) report prepared by the Leicester and Leicestershire authorities to demonstrate effective cooperation and joint working in plan making. The Statement of Common Ground has been produced in response to the need to reflect a more accurate and up to date position on Strategic B8 needs across Leicestershire. The content of which will be used by Councils across Leicester and Leicestershire to inform local plan making.
- 1.2 The report seeks approval for Council to sign the Leicester and Leicestershire Authorities Statement of Common Ground for Strategic B8 allocations.

2. Recommendation(s) to Council

- 2.1 Council approves the signing of the Leicester & Leicestershire Authorities - Statement of Common Ground for Strategic Distribution Floorspace Needs Update and Apportionment. (Appendix 1 to this report)
- 2.2 Council note that in signing up to this Statement of Common Ground it does not infer support from Blaby District Council, or any of the relevant Local Authorities, for a future rail-served strategic proposal in the District.

2.3 Council reaffirm Blaby District Council's continued opposition to the scheme, referred to as the Hinckley National Rail Freight Interchange, which was rejected by the Secretary of State in March 2025.

3. Reason for Decisions Recommended

3.1 To continue to maintain effective cooperation that Blaby District Council must fulfil to progress the emerging Local Plan.

4. Matters to consider

4.1 Background

What is a Statement of Common Ground?

A Statement of Common Ground is a formal written document used in the plan-making process to demonstrate collaboration between authorities and relevant strategic bodies. It records the cooperation maintained between parties and clarifies agreed evidence on strategic matters such as the distribution of commercial floorspace apportionment. It provides proof of evidence of cooperation at Examination.

The 2021 Strategic B8 Needs Study

To inform the emerging Local Plan, the 2021 Strategic B8 Needs Study has been updated, to reflect a more accurate and up to date position on Strategic B8 needs across Leicester and Leicestershire.

Strategic B8 is defined as logistics and warehousing units of 9,000 sqm+. The study period is up to 2046 so that the evidence will cover the timeframes of all the Local Plans currently being prepared in Leicester and Leicestershire. The Blaby Local Plan will run to 2042.

The update was commissioned by all the Leicester and Leicestershire (L&L) local authorities, contracted by North West Leicestershire and project managed by Charnwood Borough Council. It is evidence that will feed into each of the Local Plans progressing to Regulation 19 Pre Submission Stage. This is the next stage of the Blaby Local Plan.

Scope of the study

The study updates the amount of need for strategic distribution floorspace and considers how this need may be apportioned across the whole of Leicester and Leicestershire, as the Housing Market Area (HMA). To do this it identifies:

- Broad locations, defined as Areas of Opportunity (largely informed by strategic road network junction access).
- Apportions the need to the Areas of Opportunity.
- Capacity tests the target apportionment.
- Phases delivery across the study period up to 2046.

Key outputs

The study identifies an overall need of 3,969,400sqm over the next 23 years (study period 2023 – 2046). The study assumes that the identified need up to 2046 will be met through both rail and road served sites. It assumes a road/rail split of 66%/34%. The portion of rail served is a reduction on the 2021 Study and is informed by National Rail forecasts on rail served new warehousing and the East Midlands existing stock served by railheads.

The table below sets out the split of the identified need across the HMA:

Table 0.8 Apportionment by District/Borough

District / Borough	Completions + Commitments		Residual Need Apportioned		Total	Apportionment incl. completions + commitments
	Rail	Road	Rail	Road		
North West Leicestershire		221,100	240,000	1,093,600	1,554,700	39%
Harborough		257,000		566,400	823,400	21%
Hinckley & Bosworth		327,000		428,800	755,800	19%
Blaby		105,100	650,000	0	755,100	19%
Charnwood		0		80,500	80,500	2%
Total		910,200	890,000	2,169,200	3,969,400	

Source: Icenl analysis

As the above table shows North West Leicestershire District Council takes most of the need due to the broad East Midlands Gateway location connectivity and relatively unconstrained A42 corridor. This includes an expansion of the existing East Midlands Gateway rail served strategic B8 location of 240,000 sqm. The majority apportioned to Harborough is to be delivered through a Magna Park expansion. The amount apportioned to Blaby and Hinckley is roughly the same at 19%.

BDC share of the meeting the need

The study assumes 755,100 sqm of Strategic B8 will come forward within Blaby over the study period (2023 - 2046). This is formed of 105,100sqm for road served and 650,000 sqm for rail served.

The road served need is formed entirely of committed sites. These are Enderby Hub (33.33Ha) and Land North of Leicester Lane (Lubbesthorpe SES Residual), Lubbesthorpe (5.52ha).

Rail served Strategic B8

The rail served need of 650,000sqm has been apportioned for Blaby due to there being a location with the right strategic infrastructure proximity of a railway line and motorway junction to accommodate a rail served logistics facility to meet this identified need.

The study specifically addresses the mechanism for rail served Strategic B8. It concludes that once the expansion of East Midlands Gateway has been accounted for, there are no further rail-served opportunities within the study area beyond Blaby District. It reflects on the Government policy for an expanded network of Strategic Rail Freight Interchanges. The study does acknowledge the reasons for refusal by the Secretary of State for the previous Development Consent Order (DCO) application in Blaby District. Any future DCO application would need to overcome these issues, which are significant. Blaby District Council would have the continued ability to reject such an application were it brought forward for consideration to the Secretary of State.

It is very clear throughout the study that the opportunity for any rail served proposal must be explored via the DCO route and could not be via a Local Plan allocation or planning application determined by Blaby District Council due to the scale. Therefore, a smaller road served Strategic B8 scheme at a location with rail and motorway connections through a Local Plan allocation or otherwise could compromise the comprehensive delivery of a DCO in such a location and would not meet the rail-served need for Leicestershire, as identified by the study.

Conclusions of the Study

The study includes a section which outlines the conclusions made and its intended application. The study uses information available now and is liable to change as Local Plans progress during the study period. Importantly it is explicit that it does not allocate or grant permission on any of the sites considered within the Areas of Opportunity, nor are the outputs and quantitative conclusions absolute.

Local Plan Submission Deadline

In his statement the Housing and Planning Minister confirmed that Local Plans being prepared under the current planning system, which the emerging Blaby Local Plan is, must be submitted to Government for examination by 31 December 2026.

If this deadline is missed, work on a new plan, under the emerging planning system must be produced. This would result in a delay of uncertain amount of time to Local Plan adoption and restoration of plan led decision making. This will result in a continuation of speculative planning applications being submitted and being considered by planning committee under the tilted balance.

Why should Blaby District Council sign the Strategic B8 Statement of Common Ground?

The Government has confirmed as of 25th March 2026, the statutory Duty to Cooperate (DtC), introduced by the Localism Act 2011, is abolished for local plans in England. This includes the Blaby District Local Plan.

Notwithstanding this, the Government has been clear the need for plan making authorities to continue to maintain collaboration, in particular with neighbouring plan making authorities, on meeting unmet development needs. This is

something the examination Inspector will consider through the tests of soundness. The council has continued to progress the Compliance Statement on Duty to Cooperate as a record of the collaboration on strategic matters with statutory bodies.

The Statement of Common Ground remains a key part of each individual authority's local plan evidence to demonstrate they have complied with the Tests of Soundness that an Inspector will test the Local Plan against during the Examination in Public. If an Inspector determines the Local Plan fails the Tests of Soundness, the Local Plan will fail the examination and cannot be adopted by the Local Planning Authority. Not signing the Statement of Common Ground therefore carries a risk to the council. Consequently, in the case of Blaby, the local planning authority will continue to be vulnerable to speculative planning applications with increased challenges to deliver strategic infrastructure. It is therefore essential that council sign the attached Statement of Common Ground to allow the progression of the Local Plan work.

The Statement of Common Ground, as appended to this report at Appendix 1, is also being considered by other authorities in Leicestershire with the same recommendation for approval.

4.2 Proposal(s)

It is proposed that approval is given for Council to sign the Leicester & Leicestershire Authorities - Statement of Common Ground for Strategic Distribution Floorspace Needs Update and Apportionment.

Council note that in signing up to this Statement of Common Ground it does not infer support from Blaby District Council, or any of the relevant Local Authorities, for a future rail-served strategic proposal in the District.

Council reaffirm Blaby District Council's continued opposition to the scheme, referred to as the Hinckley National Rail Freight Interchange, which was rejected by the Secretary of State in March 2025.

4.3 Relevant Consultations

Relevant internal consultations have taken place. External consultation on this matter is not required or appropriate. Publication of the Local Plan will be undertaken separately.

4.4 Significant Issues

There are no significant issues directly arising from this report.

5. Environmental impact

5.1 No Net Zero and Climate Impact Assessment is required for this report.

6. What will it cost and are there opportunities for savings?

- 6.1 There are no cost implications to this report over and above the provision made within existing budgets.

The Statement of Common Ground for Strategic B8 further cements joint working opportunities for evidence production for plan making across Leicestershire. This includes the evidence referred to throughout this report. Blaby District Council has made a financial contribution to pay for this evidence equal to that of the other authorities in Leicestershire.

7. What are the risks and how can they be reduced?

- 7.1 The risks are set out in the table below.

Current Risk	Actions to reduce the risks
Without the Statement of Common Ground being approved, the Council will struggle to demonstrate at Examination that it has maintained cooperation on the strategic cross boundary matter of Strategic B8 needs. This poses a significant risk to adoption and the council will remain vulnerable to speculative developments across the District.	Acknowledgement of the need to agree the updated Strategic B8 allocation, as outlined in the Statement of Common Ground, will ensure the Council can control development across the District.
The potential to not maintain cooperation on strategic matters and the demonstration of this through Statement of Common Ground.	Continuing to work collaboratively with the authorities across Leicester and Leicestershire in evidence production; and ensuring the cooperation is maintained throughout the production of the new Local Plan. Approval for Council to sign the Statement of Common Ground is part of this process.

8. Other options considered

- 8.1 The alternative option would be to reject the Statement of Common Ground. However, in doing so Council would be compromising the ability as a local planning authority to demonstrate collaboration is maintained and therefore progress the emerging Local Plan for the District and allow the local planning authority to submit by the deadline of 31 December 2026.

9. Appendix

- 9.1 Appendix A – Leicester & Leicestershire Authorities - Statement of Common Ground relating to Strategic Distribution Floorspace Needs Update and Apportionment.
- 9.2 Appendix B – Leicester and Leicestershire Strategic B8 consultant's report

10. Background paper(s)

- 10.1 None.

11. Report author's contact details

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