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Blaby Landscape and Settlement Character Assessment

Final report
Prepared by LUC for Blaby District Council
January 2020



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Executive summary

Background

- 1.1 LUC was commissioned by Blaby District Council in July 2019 to produce an up-to-date evidence base for the landscape and settlement character of the district, to support the Blaby Local Plan.
- 1.2 This study involved undertaking a review of the landscape and settlement character evidence produced in 2008. It also included an assessment of the sensitivity of the landscape to various development scenarios.

Purpose of the Blaby Landscape and Settlement Character Assessment

- 1.3 The evidence presented in this landscape and settlement character assessment will provide the context for policies and allocations within the emerging Local Plan and act as a material consideration in the determination of planning applications, as well as being available for other uses by Blaby District Council, partners, stakeholders and communities.
- 1.4 Understanding the character of a place is a key part of ensuring the protection and enhancement of built and natural environments, managing sustainable economic growth and improving the health and wellbeing of local communities.

How was the Landscape and Settlement Character Assessment prepared?

- 1.5 A number of stages were followed for the preparation of the Landscape and Settlement Character Assessment, which are summarised below:
 - **Evidence gathering:** A review of the existing landscape and settlement character evidence, including the 2008 study and information from Natural England's National Character Areas. This stage also collated and reviewed the full range of mapped (GIS) and descriptive information available to inform an understanding of current landscape and settlement character and landscape sensitivity across Blaby district.
 - **Desk-top research: A review of the existing landscape character classification, with the amended classification dividing the district into 16 unique 'Landscape Character Areas' (LCAs),** followed by the population of desk-based information on current landscape character and sensitivity to three development scenarios (residential/supporting infrastructure), light commercial/industrial (B1/B2 uses) and large warehouse developments (B8 uses). The contents of the existing settlement character assessment were reviewed and updated using the available data sources. Parish councils were invited to input into the review of the settlement character assessments as part of the desk-top research.
 - **Field verification:** A structured process of field survey verification was undertaken in order to test and refine the outputs from the desk study for both the landscape and settlement character assessment and the landscape sensitivity assessment.
- 1.6 The approach taken in the preparation of this Landscape Character Assessment is in line with national guidance published by Natural England (2014). The landscape sensitivity component has

been undertaken in line with Natural England's document 'An approach to landscape sensitivity assessment – to inform spatial planning and land management', June 2019.

How is this report structured?

1.7 The report is structured into a number of chapters, as follows:

- **Chapter 1** provides a detailed introduction to this study, including its policy context and an overview of the existing landscape baseline.
- **Chapter 2** sets out the methodology followed to produce the Landscape and Settlement Character Assessment and the linked criteria-based landscape sensitivity study.
- **Chapter 3** presents the Landscape Character Assessment classification for Blaby district and the overall landscape sensitivity assessment results.
- **Chapter 4** includes the full landscape character assessment profiles.
- **Chapter 5** includes the full settlement character assessment profiles.
- **Appendix 1** lists the main data and information sources used to inform this study.
- **Appendix 2** is a glossary of terms used in the Landscape and Settlement Character Assessment.
- **Appendix 3** lists the organisations consulted as part of the project.

1 Introduction and background



1 Introduction and background

Introduction

- 1.1 LUC was commissioned by Blaby District Council in July 2019 to produce up-to-date landscape and settlement evidence to inform the emerging Blaby Local Plan and help guide development management decisions.
- 1.2 This study involved undertaking a review of the existing 2008 Landscape and Settlement Character Assessment to produce a comprehensive and up-to-date assessment of landscape and settlement character and landscape sensitivity of Blaby District. The new landscape evidence will provide the context for policies and allocations within the emerging Local Plan and act as a material consideration in the determination of planning applications, as well as being available for other uses by the Council, partners, stakeholders and communities.
- 1.3 Understanding the character of a place is a key part of ensuring the protection and enhancement of built and natural environments, managing sustainable economic growth and improving the health and wellbeing of local communities.

Background and policy context

The European Landscape Convention

- 1.4 The European Landscape Convention (ELC) came into force in the UK in March 2007. It establishes the need to recognise landscape in law; to develop landscape policies dedicated to the protection, management and planning of landscapes; and to establish procedures for the participation of the general public and other stakeholders in the creation and implementation of landscape policies.
- 1.5 The ELC definition of 'landscape' recognises that all landscapes matter, be they ordinary, degraded or outstanding:
"Landscape means an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors"
- 1.6 Signing up to the ELC means that the UK is committed on the one hand to protect, manage and develop our landscapes and on the other to raise landscape awareness, involvement and enjoyment amongst local and visiting communities. Landscape character is defined by the ELC as *'a distinct, recognisable and consistent pattern of elements in the landscape that makes one landscape different from another, rather than better or worse'*.

National planning policy context

- 1.7 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), was amended in February 2019 and contains several policies which refer to the consideration of landscape and the built environment in planning decisions.
- 1.8 Paragraph 20 states that:
"Strategic policies should set out an overall strategy for the pattern, scale and quality of development, and make sufficient provision for: ...d) conservation and enhancement of the natural, built and historic environment, including landscapes and green infrastructure, and planning measures to address climate change mitigation and adaptation."
- 1.9 Paragraph 170 states that:

"Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by: a) protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity or geological value and soils (in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan); b) recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services – including the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land, and of trees and woodland;..."

- 1.10 An up-to-date Landscape Character Assessment is also recommended to support planning decisions and underpin criteria-based policies against which development proposals will be judged, with landscape sensitivity assessments undertaken where expansion options are being considered. This Landscape Character Assessment provides evidence to ensure that any new development in Blaby considers the character and qualities of the landscape that contribute to the local distinctiveness of the area.
- 1.11 As set out in the NPPF, all local authorities need to identify a local housing target and to plan for its delivery over the plan period. The emerging new Local Plan will consider how much new development is required within the district and where new development should be located.

Local planning context

- 1.12 The Blaby District Core Strategy was adopted in February 2013 and the Local Plan (Delivery) Development Plan Document was adopted in February 2019. Relevant policies to landscape character and settlement character include:
- Policy CS2 - Design of New Development
 - Policy CS14 – Green Infrastructure
- 1.13 Blaby District is included within the Leicester and Leicestershire Strategic Growth Plan¹ which sets out the spatial vision for the City and County to 2050. The final version of the Plan was approved in December 2018. The Strategic Growth Plan sets out the agreed Growth Strategy across Leicester and Leicestershire to 2050 and will be delivered through the Local Plan mechanism. The Strategic Growth Plan includes the proposed A46 Priority Growth Corridor which will link the M1 and M69 to the south and east of Leicester via a new road; the A46 expressway. This route will create the opportunity for major development along its corridor.
- 1.14 The Blaby District Growth Plan was also published in February 2019², and commits to six key non-negotiable principles for future development and place-making, underpinned by a number of objectives.

New Lubbethorpe

- 1.15 The sustainable urban extension (SUE) of New Lubbethorpe is located to the south of Leicester Forest East. Plans for over 4,000 homes along with employment development and significant areas of public green space. The first phase of this New Lubbethorpe has already been constructed. Once completed, a settlement character assessment for New Lubbethorpe should be undertaken.

Hinckley National Rail Freight Interchange

- 1.16 The proposal for the Hinckley National Rail Freight Interchange is a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP) which is currently at pre application stage. This is a proposed strategic rail freight interchange located between the Hinckley-Leicester railway and Junction 2 of the M69 motorway³. The proposals are located in the west of the Blaby District administrative area, between Elvesthorpe and Aston Flamville. If approved, these proposals are likely to result in large-scale changes to the character of the landscape and settlements in this area.

¹ Leicester and Leicestershire Strategic Growth Plan, December 2018

² Blaby District Council Growth Plan, February 2019.

³ Hinckley National Rail Freight Interchange (HNRFI), Community Explanation Document.

Landscape baseline

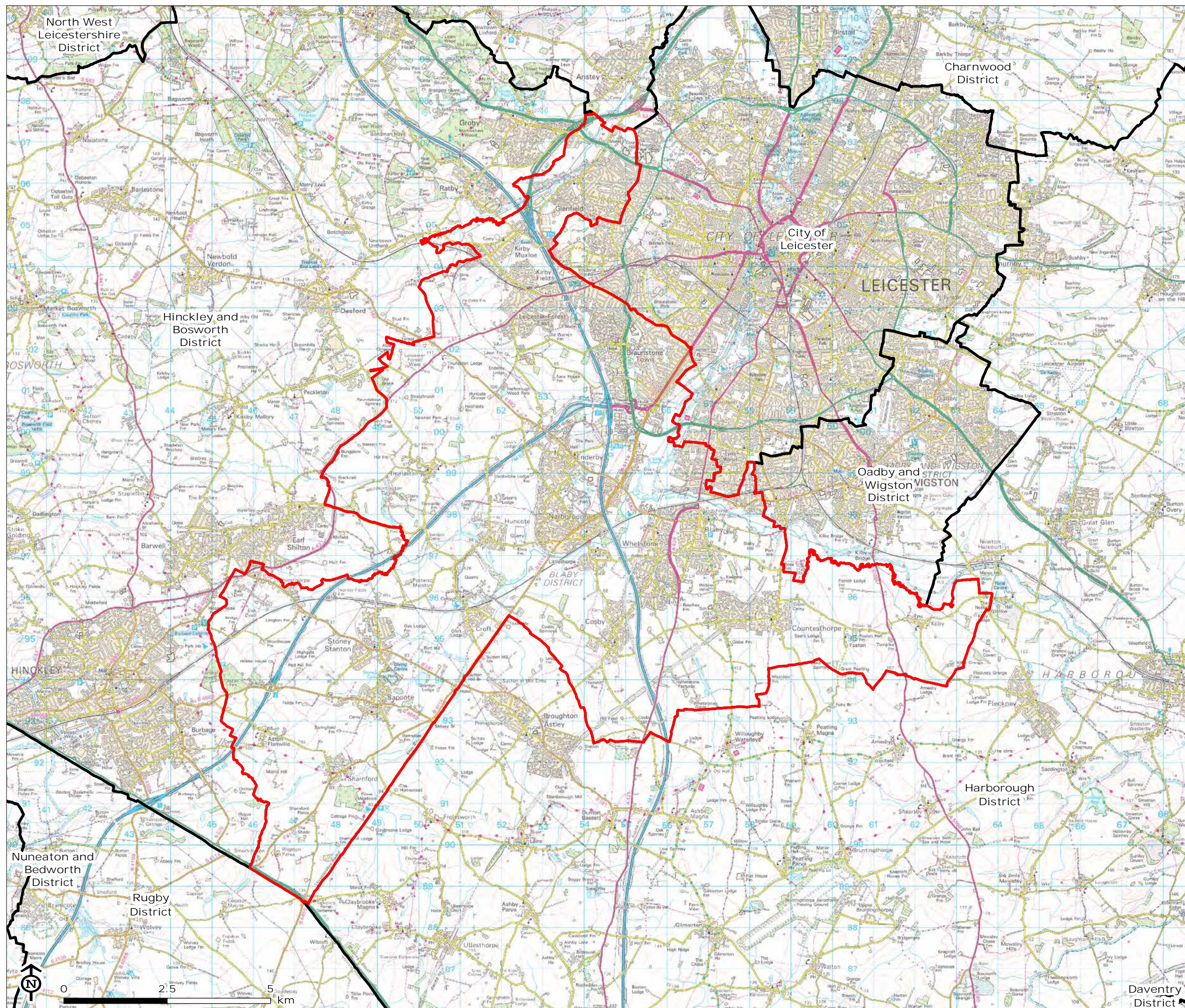
Existing landscape evidence base (prior to this study)

- 1.17 A Landscape Character and Sensitivity Assessment was produced for Blaby District in 2008 and defined eight Landscape Character Types and 15 Landscape Character Areas. This information has formed the basis for this study, to bring the landscape evidence up-to-date and in line with current best practice in the process of Landscape Character Assessment.

Other national and regional landscape evidence

- 1.18 England is divided into a total of 159 National Character Areas (NCA)⁴, which identify areas based on their landscape character, biodiversity and geodiversity. Blaby district falls within two NCAs as shown in **Figure 1.2**:
- NCA 73: Charnwood
 - NCA 94: Leicestershire Vales
- 1.19 The majority of the district is within the Leicestershire Vales NCA, with a small part in the north of the district located within the Charnwood NCA. The part of the district within the Charnwood NCA is characterised by major roads and development and consequently is not typical of the rest of the NCA (located within adjacent local authority areas).
- 1.20 Blaby District is also included within the county-scale Landscape Character Areas (LCAs) defined by the Leicester, Leicestershire & Rutland Landscape and Woodland Strategy (2001, updated 2006). This study identified 18 LCAs across Leicestershire.
- 1.21 The following county-level LCAs occur within Blaby District; Charnwood Forest, Lutterworth Lowlands and Upper Soar. The majority of the district falls within the Upper Soar character area, suggesting a degree of consistency of landscape character when viewed at county level. The spatial distribution of these areas across the district are shown in **Figure 1.3**.

⁴ For more information and to access the NCA profiles, please see the Natural England website.



Blaby District Landscape & Settlement Character

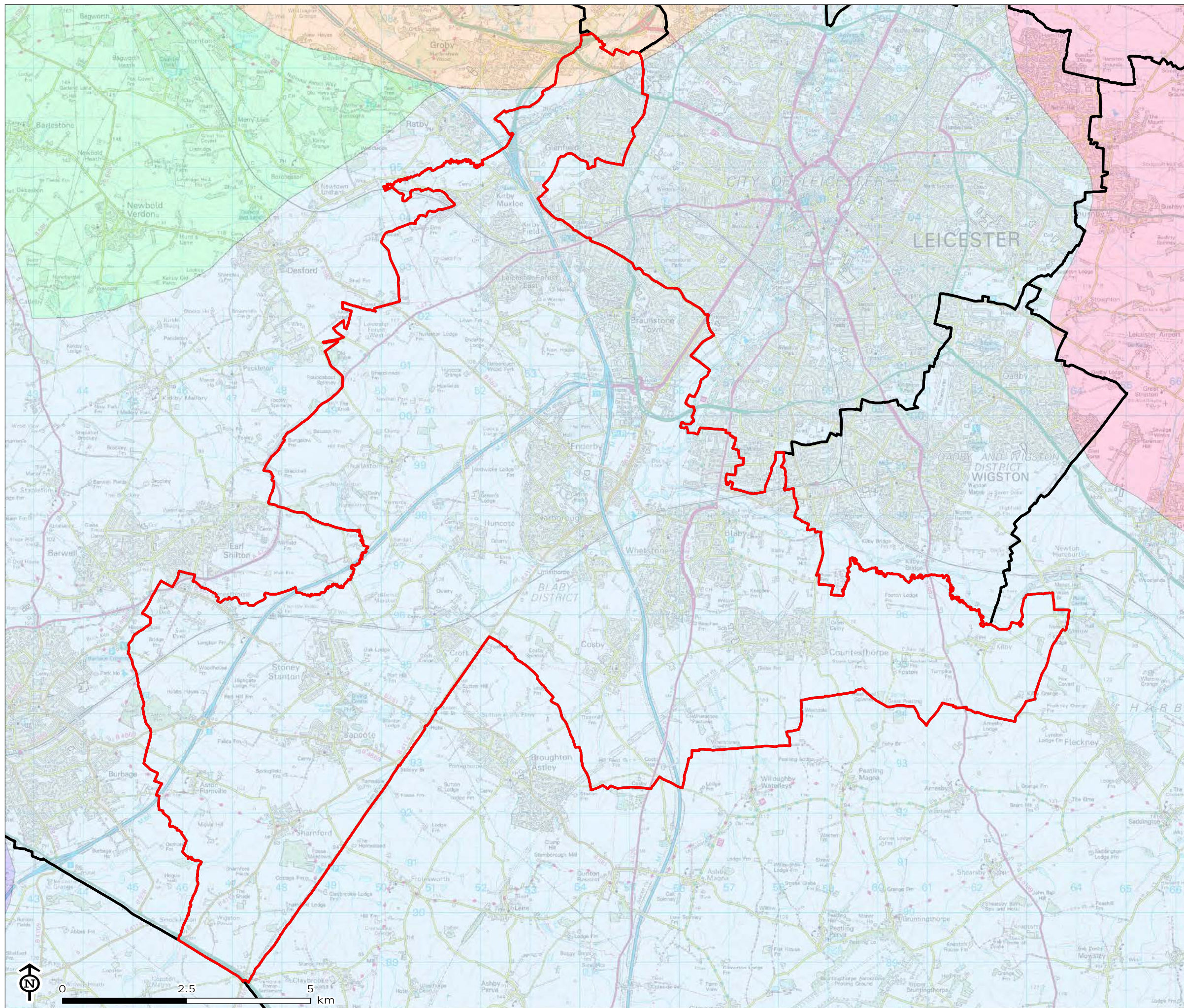
Figure 1.1: Blaby District Study
Area

- Blaby District Boundary
- Adjacent Local Authority

Map Scale @A3: 1:90,000



Daventry
District



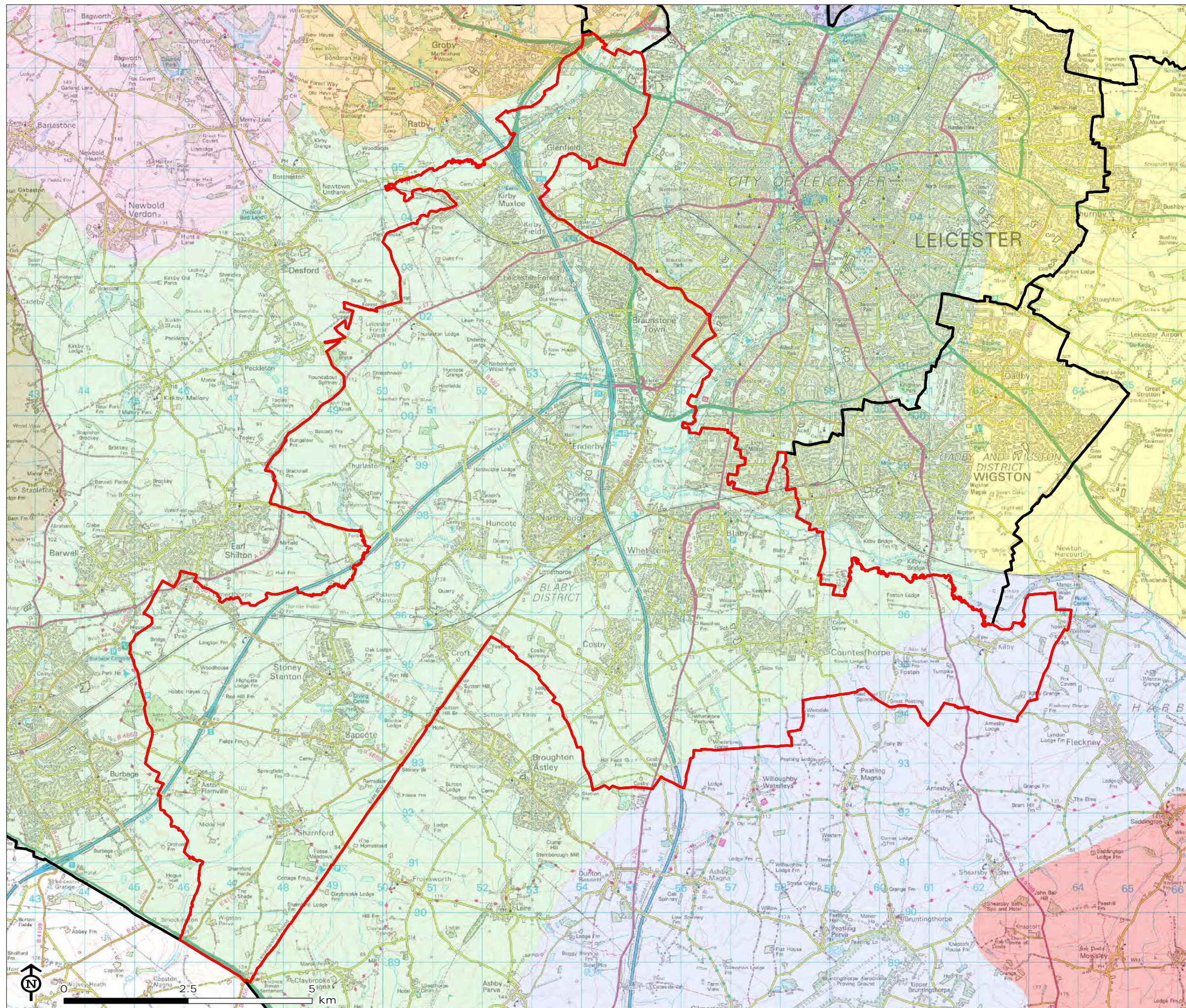
Blaby District Landscape & Settlement Character

Figure 1.2: Blaby District in the
context of National Character Areas

- Blaby District Boundary
- Adjacent Local Authority
- National Character Area
 - Charnwood
 - High Leicestershire
 - Leicestershire and South Derbyshire Coalfield
 - Leicestershire Vales
 - Mease/Sence Lowlands

Map Scale @A3: 1:75,000





Blaby District Landscape & Settlement Character

Figure 1.3: Leicestershire County
Landscape Character Areas in Blaby
District

- Blaby District Boundary
- Adjacent Local Authority
- Charnwood Forest
- High Leicestershire
- Laughton Hills
- Lutterworth Lowlands
- Mease/Sence Lowlands
- Soar Valley
- The Coalfield
- Upper Soar

Map Scale @A3: 1:75,000



2 Methodology



2 Methodology

- 2.1 This new landscape and settlement evidence comprises an integrated landscape character, settlement character and sensitivity assessment for Blaby. This was based upon a review and update of the existing Blaby District Landscape and Settlement Character Assessment completed in 2008.
- 2.2 The approach to the **landscape and settlement character assessment** is consistent with the requirements of the European Landscape Convention and the National Planning Policy Framework. It reflects the approach to characterisation set out in 'Landscape Character Assessment Guidance for England and Scotland' (Countryside Agency and Scottish Natural Heritage, 2002) and Natural England's more recent 'An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment' (2014).
- 2.3 The **landscape sensitivity** component has been undertaken in line with Natural England's document 'An approach to landscape sensitivity assessment – to inform spatial planning and land management', June 2019. This assessment has also been informed by the third edition of 'Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment' ('GLVIA3') (Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment, 2013), 'Topic Paper 6: Techniques and criteria for judging landscape sensitivity and capacity' (Countryside Agency and Scottish Natural Heritage, 2004) and best practice in recent assessments completed by LUC and others.
- 2.4 As part of the duty to co-operate, a detailed method statement was circulated to neighbouring local authorities and other partners including the Environment Agency, Natural England and Historic England. A full list of those consulted is included in **Appendix 3**.

Stage 1: Desk study

Evidence gathering

- 2.5 All relevant documents and available GIS data were compiled and reviewed to form the starting point and overall context for the study. These are set out in Appendix 1.

Preliminary landscape classification

- 2.6 Feedback from the Council was sought on the existing framework of eight Landscape Character Types (LCTs) and 15 Landscape Character Areas (LCAs) defined during the previous study. This particularly focused upon aspects of the landscape that had changed since the previous assessment was completed (notably development).
- 2.7 Some amendments were made to boundaries in agreement with Blaby District Council. It was noted that the Blaby, Countesthorpe and Whetstone Fringe LCA (within the Urban Fringe LCT) extended some distance from the urban fringes. Subsequently, it was agreed to split this LCA, retaining the parts adjacent to Blaby, Countesthorpe and Whetstone as the urban fringe LCT and reclassifying the remaining areas as part of the gently rolling farmland LCT, creating the new Cosby and Whetstone Rolling Farmland LCA.
- 2.8 The classification was also reviewed against up-to-date spatial information, particularly focusing on the current extent of urban development.
- 2.9 The updated Landscape Character Assessment for Blaby therefore comprises the following 16 Landscape Character Areas:
 - Aston Flamville Wooded Farmland
 - Blaby, Countesthorpe and Whetstone Fringe
 - Cosby Agricultural Parkland

- Cosby and Whetstone Rolling Farmland
- Croft Hill and Quarries
- Elmesthorpe Floodplain
- Foston Open Farmland
- Kilby Meadows
- Kilby Rural Rolling Farmland
- Lubbesthorpe Agricultural Parkland
- Normanton Agricultural Parkland
- Rothley Brook Fringe
- Sence and Soar Floodplain
- Soar Meadows
- Stoney Stanton Rolling Farmland
- Thurlaston Rolling Farmland

2.10 These are mapped at **Figure 3.2** in the next chapter.

Updating settlement character assessment

- 2.11 A review of the existing settlement character assessments was undertaken and it was concluded that most of the text was still relevant. The 'Capacity for change along the settlement edge' and 'recommendations' sections tended to be most outdated as most changes (although not all) since the previous study tended to be focused around the edges of settlements. Maps, satellite photography and the council planning portal were used to identify locations where significant changes had taken place within the settlements.
- 2.12 Parish councils were consulted on the settlement character assessment update and were invited to respond to the following questions:
1. To what extent is the Settlement Character Assessment document still valid?
 2. What have the main changes within and surrounding the settlement been since 2008?
 3. Does the assessment adequately reflect what is special about the settlement? If not, what needs to be added?
- 2.13 Responses from the Parish councils helped to inform the update of the Settlement Character Assessment profiles and these inputs were an invaluable source of evidence for the study. A list of the Parish councils consulted as part of the study are included in **Appendix 3**.

Confirming the approach to assessing landscape sensitivity

Background and definitions

- 2.14 The landscape sensitivity assessment method has been developed in accordance with the Natural England guidance⁵ published in June 2019, as well as building upon LUC's considerable experience from previous and ongoing studies of a similar nature. The guidance includes the following definition:

"Landscape sensitivity may be regarded as a measure of the resilience, or robustness, of a landscape to withstand specified change arising from development types or land management practices, without undue negative effects on the landscape and visual baseline and their value."

- 2.15 The *Landscape Character Assessment Guidance for England and Scotland Topic Paper 6: Techniques and Criteria for Judging Capacity and Sensitivity* (Scottish Natural Heritage and the

⁵ An approach to landscape sensitivity assessment– to inform spatial planning and land management. Natural England. June 2019.

former Countryside Agency, 2004) is a discussion paper on landscape sensitivity and capacity which has also informed the approach.

2.16 Paragraph 4.2 of Topic Paper 6 states that:

'Judging landscape character sensitivity requires professional judgement about the degree to which the landscape in question is robust, in that it is able to accommodate change without adverse impacts on character. This involves making decisions about whether or not significant characteristic elements of the landscape will be liable to loss... and whether important aesthetic aspects of character will be liable to change'.

Types of development considered

2.17 The landscape sensitivity assessment for Blaby District assesses the landscape of each LCA in terms of its sensitivity to the 'principle' of built development, without knowing the specific size, configuration or exact location (as this would be detailed at the planning application level). The assessment considers the types of development deemed most likely to come forward across Blaby in the coming years. The three development scenarios considered across the LCAs are:

- **Residential development** - Housing developments with a net density range of approximately 30 to 40 dwellings per hectare⁶, plus supporting community infrastructure. Dwellings are typically 2–3 storeys with gardens.
- **Light commercial/industrial development (B1/B2 uses)** - defined as small-scale office, light industry or small sheds. Structures are typically 2-4 storeys high, with associated car parking and landscaping including trees, grass and areas of planting.
- **Warehouse development (B8 uses)** - Large block shaped warehouse-type buildings, generally two to four storeys (approximately 5 to 15 metres) high. These comprise the typical regular grid-like layouts of a business park, with associated road infrastructure and car parking. Limited landscaping usually comprises grass verges and occasional tree planting.

A criteria-based assessment

2.18 In line with the recommendations in Topic Paper 6 and NPPF, the landscape sensitivity assessment is based on an assessment of landscape character using carefully defined criteria – drawing on the experience of other similar studies in Leicestershire and elsewhere in the UK. Criteria selection is based on the attributes of the landscape most likely to be affected by development and considers both 'landscape' and 'visual' aspects of sensitivity. The criteria used by this study are defined in **Table 2.2**, providing examples of the types of landscape character or features that could indicate low or high sensitivity against each.

Making an overall judgement on levels of landscape sensitivity

2.19 A five-point rating from 'low' to high' landscape sensitivity is used to illustrate overall levels of landscape sensitivity – i.e. how susceptible the character and quality of the landscape would be to change. These definitions are shown in the **Table 2.1** below.

Table 2.1: The five-point scale of landscape sensitivity

Sensitivity judgement	Definition
High	The key characteristics and qualities of the landscape are highly sensitive to change.
Moderate-high	The key characteristics and qualities of the landscape are sensitive to change.

⁶ As defined in the Leicester & Leicestershire Housing Market Area Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment. Methodology Paper. March 2017

Moderate	Some of the key characteristics and qualities of the landscape are sensitive to change.
Low-moderate	Few of the key characteristics and qualities of the landscape are sensitive to change.
Low	The key characteristics and qualities of the landscape are robust and are unlikely to be subject to change.

- 2.20 **As with all assessments based upon data and information which is to a greater or lesser extent subjective, some caution is required in its interpretation.** This is particularly to avoid the suggestion that certain landscape features or qualities can automatically be associated with certain sensitivities – the reality is that an assessment of landscape sensitivity is the result of a complex interplay of often unequally weighted variables (i.e. 'criteria').
- 2.21 Each LCA is assessed against each criterion in turn, with explanatory text indicating specific locations, features or attributes of lower or higher sensitivity. This culminates in an overall landscape sensitivity judgement (using the five-point scale above), taking account of the inter-relationships between the different criteria and the specific characteristics of the landscape being assessed. These overall judgements are also displayed in summary tabular and mapped format for all LCAs in **Chapter 4** with LCA-specific detail provided in the individual profiles at **Chapter 5**.
- 2.22 Landscape sensitivity often varies within LCAs, with areas exhibiting of higher and lower sensitivity. It is therefore very important to take note of the explanatory text supporting the assessments in each LCA profile in Chapter 5, particularly the boxes entitled '*Notes on any variations in landscape sensitivity*' and '*Special landscape qualities and key sensitivities*'. Whilst the Landscape Sensitivity Assessment results provide an initial indication of landscape sensitivity, they **should not be interpreted as definitive statements on the suitability of individual sites for a particular development**. All proposals will need to be assessed on their own merits through the planning process, including – where required – through proposal-specific Landscape and Visual Impact Assessments (LVIAs).

Landscape Sensitivity Assessment Criteria

Physical character (including topography and scale)

This considers the shape and scale of the landform, landscape pattern and landscape elements in relation to the scale of potential development. Smooth, gently undulating or flat landforms are likely to be less sensitive to development than a landscape with a dramatic landform, distinct landform features or incised valleys with prominent slopes. This is because developments may mask distinctive topographical features which contribute to landscape character.

This criterion considers how developments fit with the scale of the landform (understanding the scale of the development proposed is important when applying this criterion). Larger scale, simple landforms are likely to be less sensitive to larger scale developments than smaller scale, enclosed landforms (where large scale developments could appear out of scale with the underlying landform). Conversely, smaller developments may be able to be screened within enclosed landforms, therefore reducing landscape sensitivity. Existing small-scale features in the landscape in the form of existing buildings or trees will influence the scale of development that can be accommodated in the landscape.

Low sensitivity	Low-moderate sensitivity	Moderate sensitivity	Moderate-high sensitivity	High sensitivity
<i>e.g. the landscape has smooth, gently undulating or featureless landform with uniform large-scale landscape pattern and low density of overlying landscape features.</i>		<i>e.g. the landscape has an undulating landform and some distinct landform features; it is overlain by a mixture of small-scale and larger scale field patterns and a moderate density of small-scale landscape features.</i>		<i>e.g. the landscape has a dramatic landform or distinct landform features that contribute positively to landscape character; the area has a high density of small-scale landscape features and is overlain by a small-scale field pattern.</i>

Natural character

This criterion considers the 'naturalistic' qualities of the landscape in terms of coverage of semi-natural habitats and valued natural features (e.g. trees, hedgerows) which could be vulnerable to loss from development. Areas with frequent natural features (including large areas of nationally or internationally designated habitats) result in increased sensitivity to development, while landscapes with limited natural features (including intensively farmed areas or areas with high levels of existing development) will be less sensitive.

Low sensitivity	Low-moderate sensitivity	Moderate sensitivity	Moderate-high sensitivity	High sensitivity
<i>e.g. much of the landscape is intensively farmed or developed with little semi-natural habitat coverage and few valued natural features.</i>		<i>e.g. there are areas of valued semi-natural habitats and features found in parts of the landscape, whilst other parts are intensively farmed or developed.</i>		<i>e.g. large areas of the landscape are nationally or internationally designated for their nature conservation interest; there is a frequent occurrence of valued natural features across the landscape.</i>

Historic landscape character

This considers the extent to which the landscape has 'time-depth' (a sense of being an historic landscape, with reference to the Historic Landscape Characterisation) and/or the presence of heritage assets that are important to landscape character (i.e. Conservation Areas, Scheduled Monuments, listed buildings, archaeological features and remains or other features listed in the landscape character assessment).

Landscapes with small-scale, more irregular field patterns of historic origin are likely to be more sensitive to the introduction of modern development than landscapes with large, regular scale field patterns because of the risk of losing characteristic landscape patterns.

Low sensitivity	Low-moderate sensitivity	Moderate sensitivity	Moderate-high sensitivity	High sensitivity
<i>e.g. A landscape with relatively few historic features important to the character of the area and little time depth (i.e. large intensively farmed fields).</i>		<i>e.g. A landscape with some visible historic features of importance to character, and a variety of time depths.</i>		<i>e.g. A landscape with a high density of historic features important to the character of the area and great time depth (i.e. piecemeal enclosure with irregular boundaries, ridge and furrow)</i>

Form, density and setting of existing settlement/development

This considers the overall settlement form and character of existing settlement edges and considers whether development in the landscape would be in accordance with the general pattern, setting and form of current development. It also relates to the landscape pattern associated with existing settlement edges (where relevant), for example if it is well integrated by woodland cover or open and exposed to form a 'hard edge' to the adjoining landscape.

This criterion also considers the extent to which the landscape contributes to the identity and distinctiveness of settlements, by way of its character and/or scenic quality, for example by providing an attractive backdrop/ setting, or playing an important part in views from a settlement. This also considers the extent to which the area contributes to a perceived gap between settlements (the loss of which would increase coalescence).

Low sensitivity	Low-moderate sensitivity	Moderate sensitivity	Moderate-high sensitivity	High sensitivity
<i>e.g. the area does not contribute positively to the setting of the settlement or play a separation role. Development in the assessment area would have a good relationship with the existing settlement form/ pattern, and could provide the opportunity to improve an existing settlement edge.</i>		<i>e.g. the area provides some contribution to the setting of the settlement by providing, or plays some part in views from the settlement, or play a role in the perception of a gap between settlements. Development in the assessment area may be slightly at odds with the settlement form/ pattern, and may adversely affect the existing edge to some extent.</i>		<i>e.g. the area provides an attractive backdrop/ setting to the settlement, plays an important part in views from the settlement, or forms an important part in the perception of a gap between settlements. Development in the assessment area would have a poor relationship with the existing settlement form/pattern, and would adversely affect an existing settlement edge (which may be historic or distinctive).</i>

Views and visual character including skylines

This considers the visual prominence of the assessment area, reflecting the extent of openness or enclosure in the landscape (due to landform or land cover), and the degree of intervisibility with the surrounding landscape (i.e. the extent to which potential development would be visible).

Visually prominent landscapes are likely to be more sensitive to development than those which are not so visually prominent. Landscapes which are visually prominent and inter-visible with adjacent landscapes (both urban and rural) are likely to be more sensitive to development than those which are more hidden or less widely visible.

It also considers the skyline character of the area including whether it forms a visually distinctive skyline or an important undeveloped skyline. Prominent and distinctive and/or undeveloped skylines, or skylines with important landmark features, are likely to be more sensitive to development because new buildings/structures may detract from these skylines as features in the landscape. Important landmark features on the skyline might include historic features or monuments.

Low sensitivity	Low-moderate sensitivity	Moderate sensitivity	Moderate-high sensitivity	High sensitivity
<i>e.g. the area is enclosed/visually contained and/or has a low degree of visibility from surrounding landscapes and the area does not form a visually distinctive or important undeveloped skyline</i>		<i>e.g. the area is semi-enclosed or has some enclosed and some open areas. It is likely to have some inter-visibility with surrounding landscapes, and may have some visually distinctive or undeveloped skylines within the area.</i>		<i>e.g. the area is open and/or has a high degree of visibility from surrounding landscapes, and/or the area forms a visually distinctive skyline or an important undeveloped skyline.</i>

Access and recreation

This criterion considers the presence of features and facilities which enable enjoyment of the landscape, and the importance of these. They may include public rights of way, bridleways, open access land, and outdoor tourist / visitor attractions with facilities. Recreation activities such as walking, cycling, horse riding or more formal recreation activities where enjoyment of the landscape is important to the experience. Importance of features may be indicated by designation as long distance footpaths or recreation routes, national cycle routes, proximity to areas of local population, presence of National Trust land ownership, and outdoor tourist attractions often marked on Ordnance Survey maps.

Low sensitivity	Low-moderate sensitivity	Moderate sensitivity	Moderate-high sensitivity	High sensitivity
<i>e.g. recreation value limited to community sports facilities and local open spaces.</i> <i>Limited provision of access routes which are likely to be of community importance, e.g. local footpaths, bridleways and limited areas of open access land.</i>		<i>e.g. landscapes with green spaces or recreation areas valued in the local context.</i> <i>Well-used landscapes with some access land, footpaths and public rights of way, possibly with long distance recreation routes or presence of land under National Trust ownership.</i>		<i>e.g. landscapes regionally important for access and enjoyment of the landscape, e.g. with popular outdoor tourist attractions, country parks, land under National Trust ownership, or a concentration of locally important outdoor attractions with visitor facilities. Presence of well-connected long-distance routes and public rights of way linking centres of population.</i>

Perceptual and experiential qualities

This considers qualities such as the rural character of the landscape (traditional land uses with few modern human influences), sense of remoteness or tranquillity. Landscapes that are relatively remote or tranquil (due to freedom from human activity and disturbance and having a perceived naturalness or a traditional rural feel with few modern human influences) tend to increase levels of sensitivity to development compared to landscapes that contain signs of modern development. High scenic value and dark night skies also add to sensitivity in relation to this criterion. This is because development will introduce new and uncharacteristic features which may detract from a sense of tranquillity and or remoteness/naturalness.

Low sensitivity	Low-moderate sensitivity	Moderate sensitivity	Moderate-high sensitivity	High sensitivity
<i>e.g. the area is significantly influenced by development/ human activity, where new development would not be out of character.</i>		<i>e.g. A landscape with some sense of rural character, but with some modern elements and human influences.</i>		<i>e.g. A tranquil or highly rural landscape, lacking strong intrusive elements. A landscape of high scenic value with dark skies and a high perceived degree of rural character and naturalness with few modern human influences.</i>

Desk-based LCA character and sensitivity assessments

- 2.23 All available spatial and descriptive information was interrogated against the framework of 16 Landscape Character Areas, to draft into descriptive/evaluative profiles to form the basis for the final versions (following the stakeholder engagement and fieldwork verification stages) presented in Chapter 4. The profiles are structured into four main sections as follows:
- **Overview map, representative photographs and a summary description** of the LCA's location and overall character.
 - **Landscape character description**, comprising bullet-pointed key characteristics under the following sub-headings for ease of reference:
 - Topography, geology and drainage
 - Land use and field patterns
 - Semi-natural habitats and woodland cover
 - Archaeology and cultural heritage
 - Settlement, road pattern and rights of way
 - Views and perceptual qualities
 - **Landscape evaluation**, comprising the following sections:
 - Summary of current landscape condition
 - A bullet-pointed list of the key pressures forces for change impacting on landscape character and condition – both past and current forces, and potential future ones.
 - **Landscape sensitivity assessment**, comprising the following:
 - An assessment of landscape sensitivity against the individual criteria set out in Table 2.2, using the five-point low to high sensitivity scale described at Table 2.1
 - An overall assessment of landscape sensitivity for the LCA as a whole to the relevant development scenarios as described at para 2.17 – again using the five-point scale of sensitivity
 - Notes on any key variations in landscape sensitivity – outlining any locations within the LCA which might be of higher or lower sensitivity to the overall assessment score
 - Special landscape qualities and key sensitivities: a bullet-point summary of the landscape features or attributes that would be most sensitive to change
 - Guidance and opportunities to consider for any future development within the LCA.
- 2.24 The draft desk-based information compiled at this stage was used as a basis for field verification, as described below.

Desk based settlement character assessments

- 2.25 Similar to the landscape character assessment profiles, the existing settlement character assessments were updated using the available desk-based data sources and literature. This information was then verified during the field visit. The profiles are structured into the following sections.
- **Overview**, comprising a contextual map, representative photographs and location and context of the settlement
 - **Key settlement characteristics**, with a bullet-pointed list of the main settlement characteristics
 - **Description**, comprising more detailed description of the settlement character under the following headings
 - - Built form and settlement pattern
 - - Architectural style
 - - Public realm and green space
 - - Gateway features
 - **Capacity for change along the settlement edge**
 - **Recommendations**, outlining guidance and opportunities in the settlement and around its edges.

Stage 2: Field verification

- 2.26 A structured process of field survey verification was undertaken in order to test and refine the outputs from the desk study, both in terms of the landscape classification (including definition of key characteristics) and the desk-based information populated into draft LCA profiles. Each LCA was visited in turn, with a number of viewpoints visited and public rights of way walked (in addition to driving through and around each LCA on public highways) to record information and take photographs.
- 2.27 The field survey exercise was particularly helpful in gathering information on current landscape condition, relationships with existing development locations and patterns, aesthetic/perceptual qualities (e.g. feelings of tranquillity) and important views. The latter considered both views within each LCA and visual relationships between adjacent urban areas and surrounding authority areas. It also noted any important landmark features/areas within each LCA that would be sensitive to change.
- 2.28 The draft settlement character profiles were also verified in the field to identify changes which have occurred since the 2008 study. In particular this focused on changes on the periphery of settlements, such as the presence of new development or changes to gateway features.
- 2.29 High quality digital photographs were taken to record key attributes, typical character and distinguishing features of the individual LCTs/LCAs and settlements and have been used to illustrate the landscape and settlement character profiles.

Stage 3: Reporting

- 2.30 This report was produced in draft in December 2019 for consideration by Blaby District Council.

3 Landscape Character classification and overall Landscape Sensitivity results



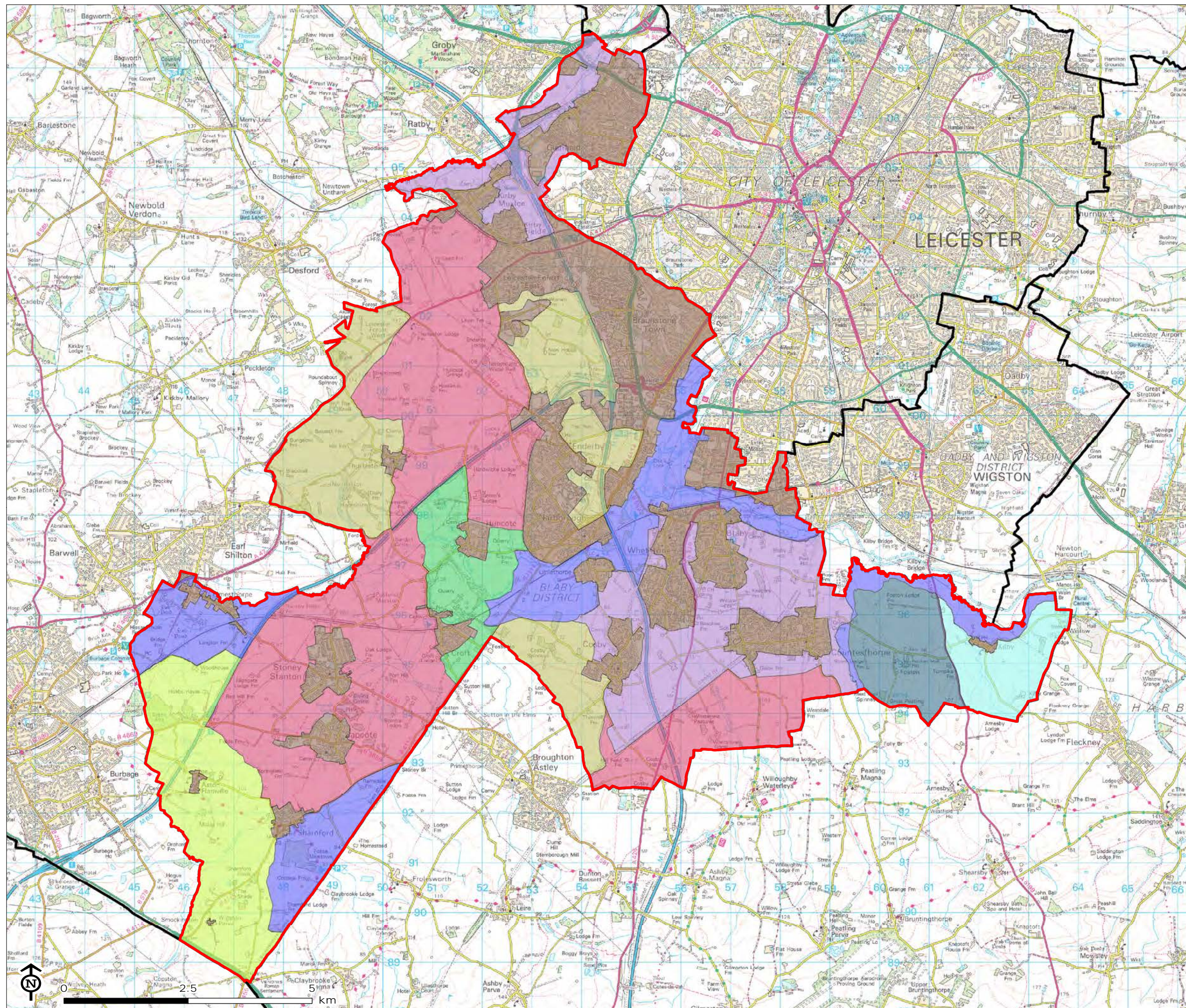
3 Landscape Character classification and overall Landscape Sensitivity results

Landscape Character Assessment classification for Blaby

- 3.1 **Table 3.1** shows the relationship between the eight LCTs and 16 LCAs. **Figure 3.1** shows the spatial distribution of the LCTs, while **Figure 3.2** shows the location of the LCAs.

Table 3.1: Relationship between Landscape Character Types and Landscape Character Areas

Blaby Landscape Character Type	Blaby Landscape Character Area
Floodplain	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elmhurst Floodplain • Kilby Meadows • Sence and Soar Floodplain • Soar Meadows
Gently Rolling Farmland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cosby and Whetstone Rolling Farmland • Stoney Stanton Rolling Farmland • Thurlaston Rolling Farmland
Agricultural Parkland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cosby Agricultural Parkland • Lubbesthorpe Agricultural Parkland • Normanton Agricultural Parkland
Quarrying and Farmed Land	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Croft Hill and Quarries
Open Farmland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foston Open Farmland
Urban Fringe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Blaby, Countesthorpe and Whetstone Fringe • Rothley Brook Fringe
Wooded Farmland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aston Flamville Wooded Farmland
Rural Rolling Farmland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kilby Rural Rolling Farmland



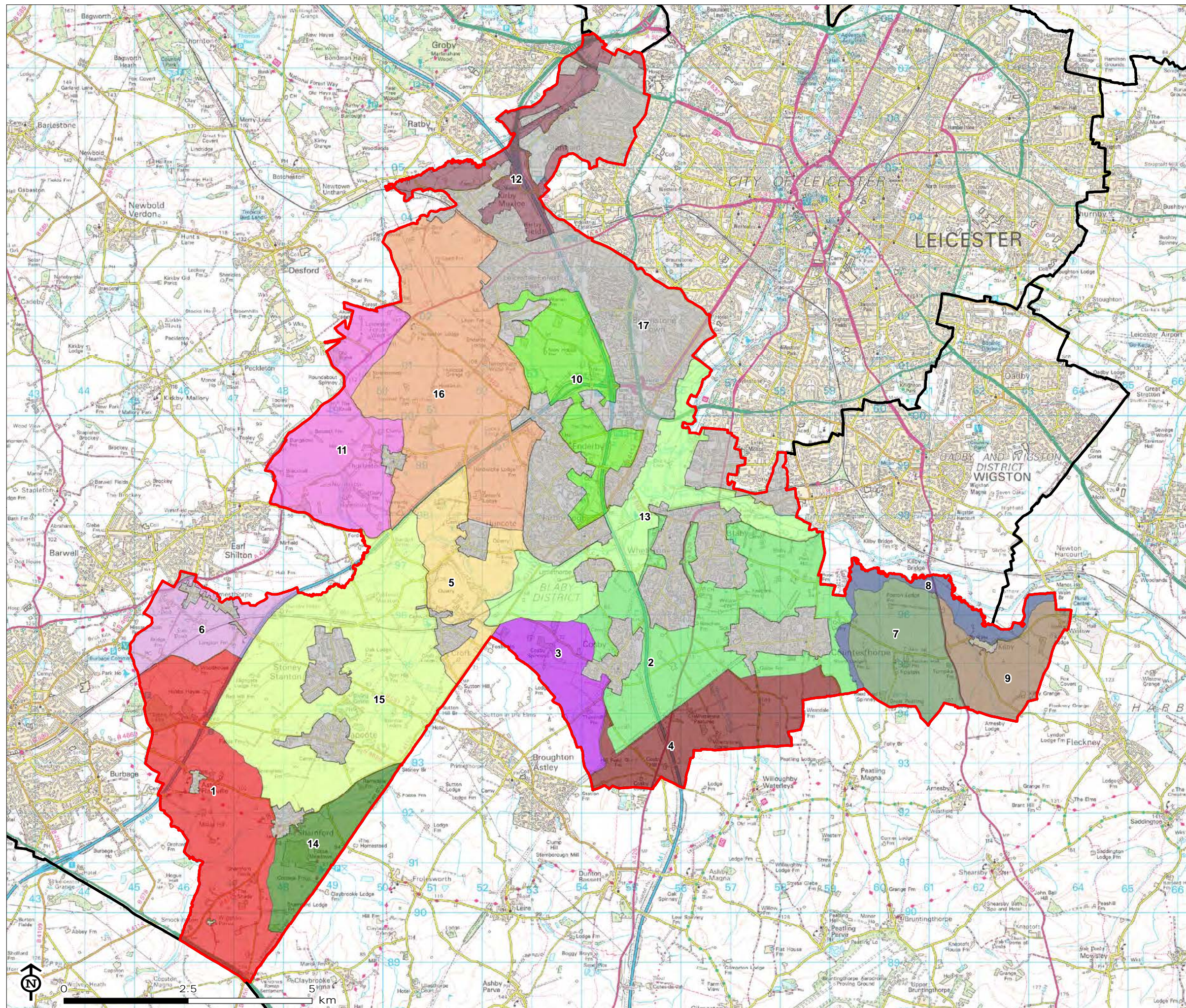
Blaby District Landscape & Settlement Character

Figure 3.1: Landscape Character
Types

- Blaby District Boundary
- Adjacent Local Authority
- Agricultural Parkland
- Floodplain
- Gently Rolling Farmland
- Open Farmland
- Quarrying and Farmed Land
- Rural Rolling Farmland
- Settlement
- Urban Fringe
- Wooded Farmland

Map Scale @A3: 1:75,000





Blaby District Landscape & Settlement Character

Figure 3.2: Landscape Character
Areas

- Blaby District Boundary
- Adjacent Local Authority
- 1: Aston Flamville Wooded Farmland
- 2: Blaby, Countesthorpe and Whetstone Fringe
- 3: Cosby Agricultural Parkland
- 4: Cosby and Whetstone Rolling Farmland
- 5: Croft Hill and Quarries
- 6: Elmesthorpe Floodplain
- 7: Foston Open Farmland
- 8: Kilby Meadows
- 9: Kilby Rural Rolling Farmland
- 10: Lubbethorpe Agricultural Parkland
- 11: Normanton Agricultural Parkland
- 12: Rothley Brook Fringe
- 13: Sense and Soar Floodplain
- 14: Soar Meadows
- 15: Stoney Stanton Rolling Farmland
- 16: Thurlaston Rolling Farmland
- 17: Settlement

Map Scale @A3: 1:75,000



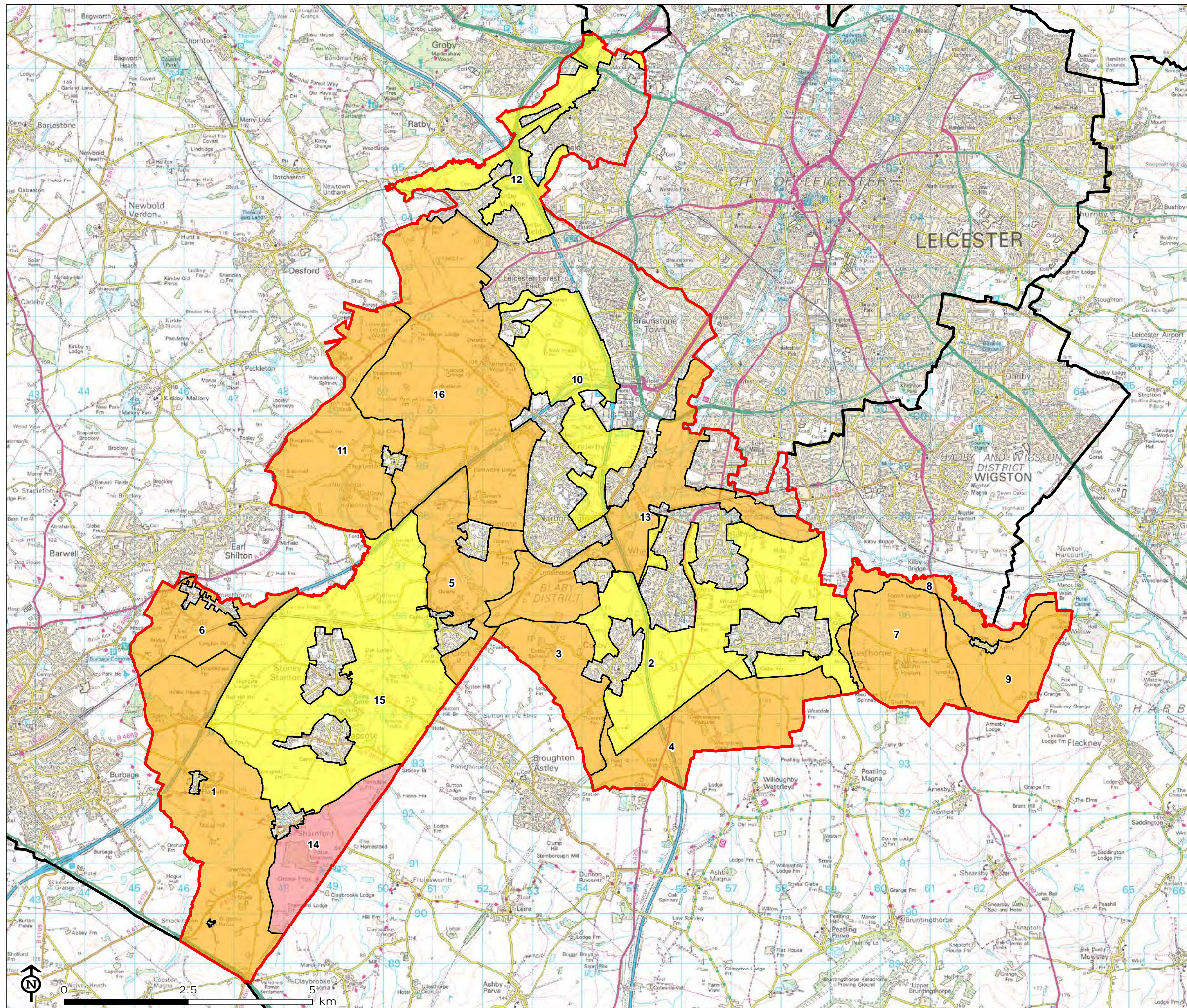
Overall Landscape Sensitivity Assessment results

- 3.2 **Table 3.2** provides a summary of the overall judgement scores for each of the LCAs by the three development scenarios. These scores are also shown in mapped format at **Figures 3.3 to 3.5**.
- 3.3 **Please note that the overall judgement scores should always be interpreted in conjunction with the information contained in the detailed LCA profiles at Chapter 4.**

Table 3.2: Overall sensitivity scores for each Landscape Character Area⁷

LCA	Sensitivity to scenarios		
	2-3 storey residential housing / transport infrastructure	Small-scale commercial (B1/B2 use categories)	Large scale commercial (warehousing – B8 use category)
Aston Flamville Wooded Farmland	M	M-H	H
Blaby, Countesthorpe and Whetstone Fringe	L-M	M	M-H
Cosby Agricultural Parkland	M	M-H	H
Cosby and Whetstone Rolling Farmland	M	M-H	H
Croft Hill and Quarries	M	M	M-H
Elmesthorpe Floodplain	M	M-H	H
Foston Open Farmland	M	H	H
Kilby Meadows	M	H	H
Kilby Rural Rolling Farmland	M	M-H	H
Lubbesthorpe Agricultural Parkland	L-M	M	M
Normanton Agricultural Parkland	M	Not assessed	Not assessed
Rothley Brook Fringe	L-M	L-M	M
Sence and Soar Floodplain	M	Not assessed	Not assessed
Soar Meadows	M-H	M-H	H
Stoney Stanton Rolling Farmland	L-M	M	M-H
Thurlaston Rolling Farmland	M	Not assessed	Not assessed

⁷ Some development scenarios were not assessed as development of these type(s) is considered less likely to come forward within the LCA over the Plan period.



Blaby District Landscape & Settlement Character

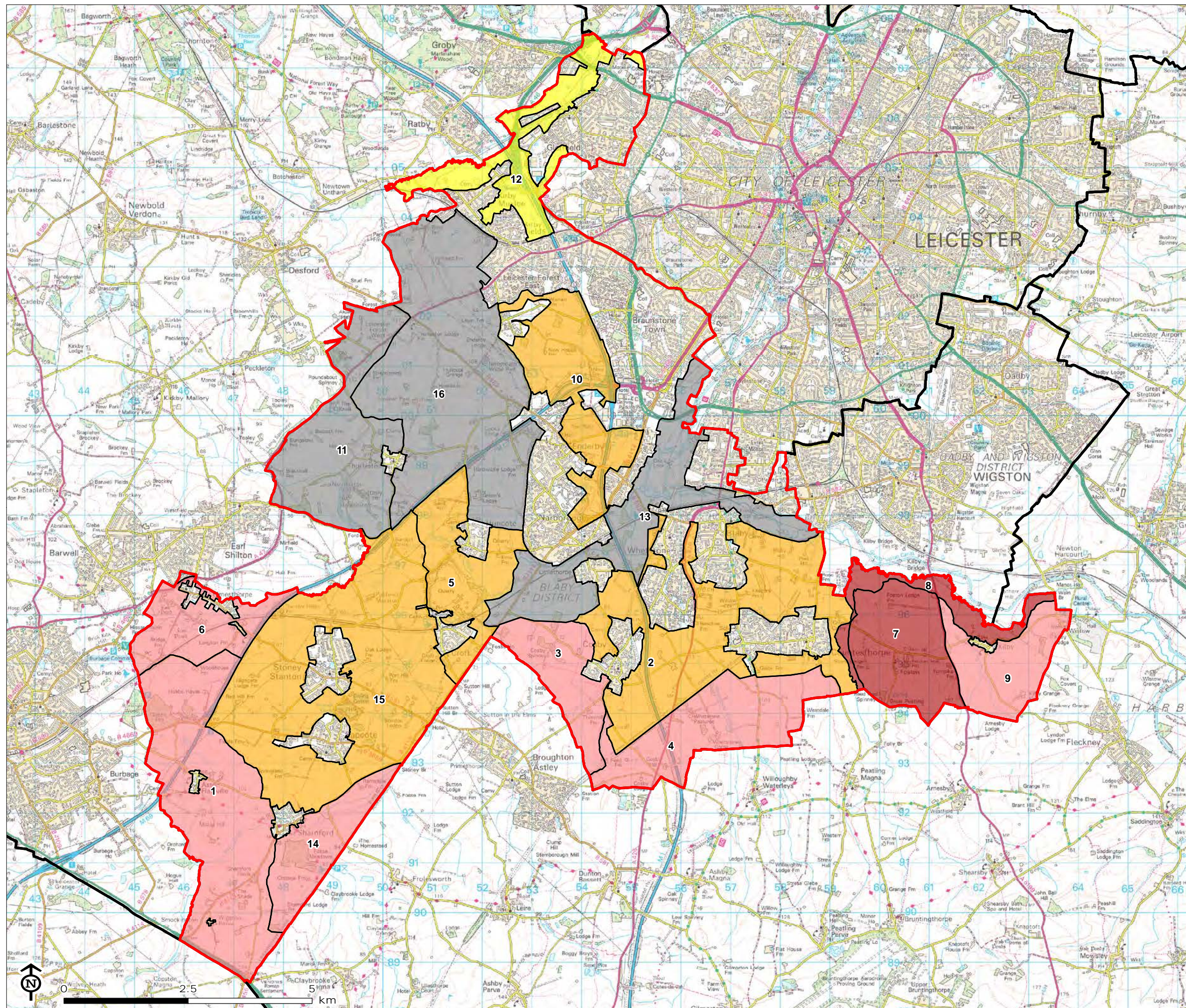
Figure 3.3: Overall Landscape Sensitivity Results by LCA: 2-3 storey residential housing/transport infrastructure

- Blaby District Boundary
- Adjacent Local Authority
- Landscape sensitivity score
 - Low-Moderate
 - Moderate
 - Moderate-High
- Landscape Character Area

- 1: Aston Flamville Wooded Farmland
- 2: Blaby, Countesthorpe and Whetstone Fringe
- 3: Cosby Agricultural Parkland
- 4: Cosby and Whetstone Rolling Farmland
- 5: Croft Hill and Quarries
- 6: Elmhurst Floodplain
- 7: Foston Open Farmland
- 8: Kilby Meadows
- 9: Kilby Rural Rolling Farmland
- 10: Lubbethorpe Agricultural Parkland
- 11: Normanton Agricultural Parkland
- 12: Rothley Brook Fringe
- 13: Sense and Soar Floodplain
- 14: Soar Meadows
- 15: Stoney Stanton Rolling Farmland
- 16: Thurlaston Rolling Farmland

Map Scale @A3: 1:75,000





Blaby District Landscape & Settlement Character

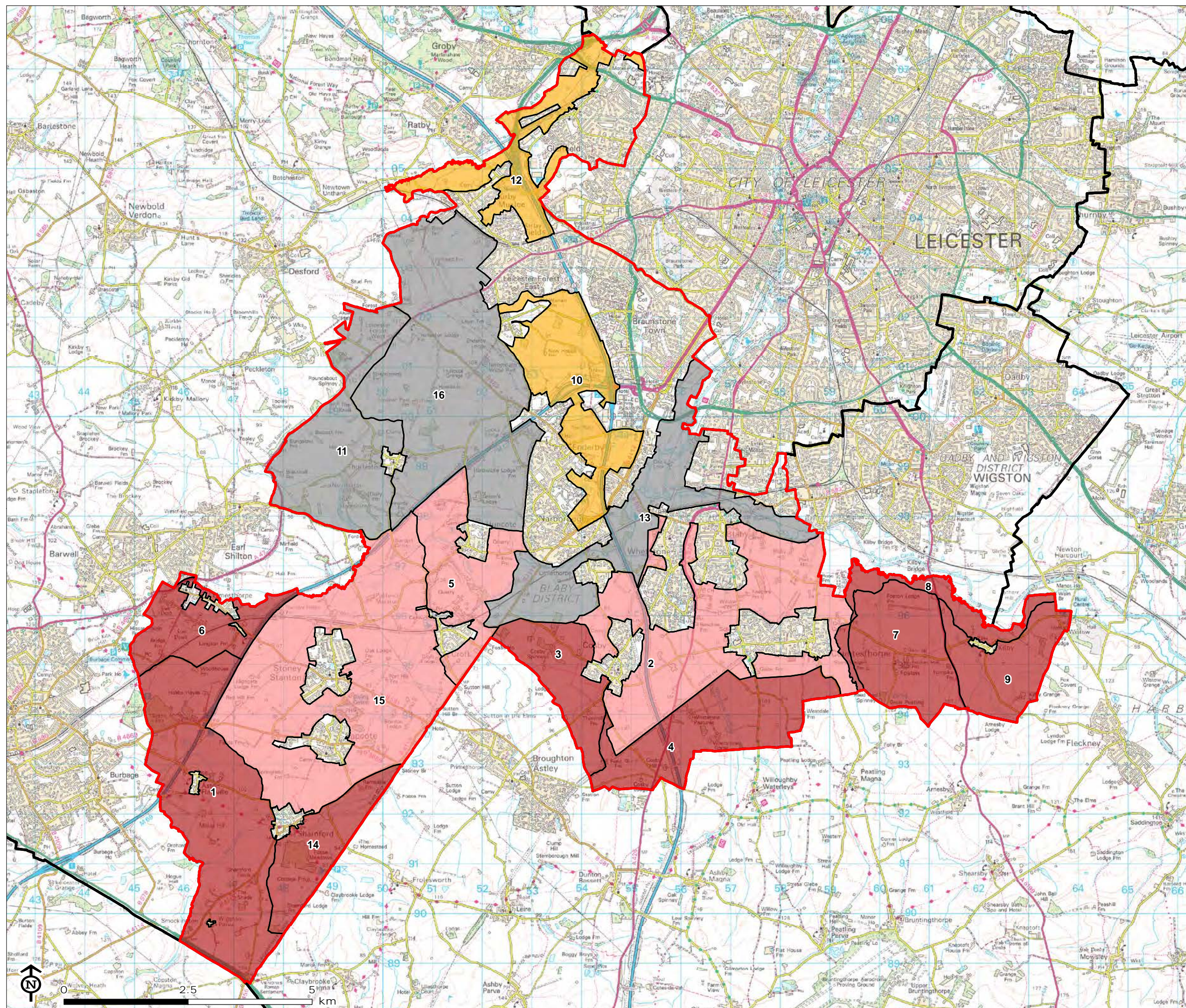
Figure 3.4: Overall Landscape Sensitivity Results by LCA: Small-scale commercial (B1/B2 use categories)

- Blaby District Boundary**
Adjacent Local Authority
- Landscape sensitivity score**
- Low-Moderate
 - Moderate
 - Moderate-High
 - High
 - N/A
- Landscape Character Area**

- 1: Aston Flamville Wooded Farmland
- 2: Blaby, Countesthorpe and Whetstone Fringe
- 3: Cosby Agricultural Parkland
- 4: Cosby and Whetstone Rolling Farmland
- 5: Croft Hill and Quarries
- 6: Elmeesthorpe Floodplain
- 7: Foston Open Farmland
- 8: Kilby Meadows
- 9: Kilby Rural Rolling Farmland
- 10: Lubbethorpe Agricultural Parkland
- 11: Normanton Agricultural Parkland
- 12: Rothley Brook Fringe
- 13: Sense and Soar Floodplain
- 14: Soar Meadows
- 15: Stoney Stanton Rolling Farmland
- 16: Thurlaston Rolling Farmland

Map Scale @A3: 1:75,000





Blaby District Landscape & Settlement Character

Figure 3.5: Overall Landscape Sensitivity Results by LCA: Large-scale commercial (warehousing - B8 category)

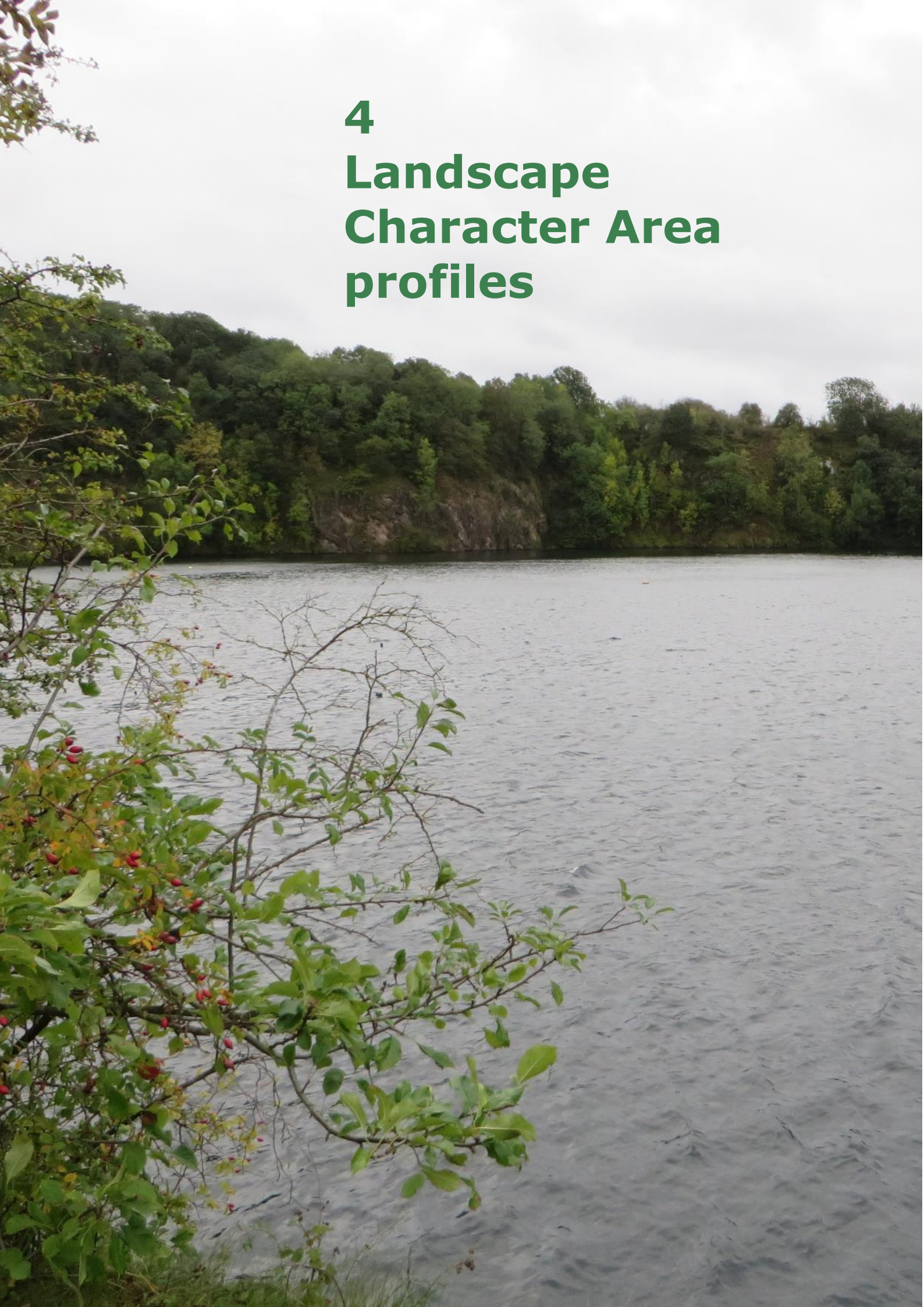
- Blaby District Boundary**
Adjacent Local Authority
- Landscape sensitivity score**
- Moderate
 - Moderate-High
 - High
 - N/A
- Landscape Character Area**

- 1: Aston Flamville Wooded Farmland
- 2: Blaby, Countesthorpe and Whetstone Fringe
- 3: Cosby Agricultural Parkland
- 4: Cosby and Whetstone Rolling Farmland
- 5: Croft Hill and Quarries
- 6: Elmeesthorpe Floodplain
- 7: Foston Open Farmland
- 8: Kilby Meadows
- 9: Kilby Rural Rolling Farmland
- 10: Lubbethorpe Agricultural Parkland
- 11: Normanton Agricultural Parkland
- 12: Rothley Brook Fringe
- 13: Sense and Soar Floodplain
- 14: Soar Meadows
- 15: Stoney Stanton Rolling Farmland
- 16: Thurlaston Rolling Farmland

Map Scale @A3: 1:75,000



4 Landscape Character Area profiles

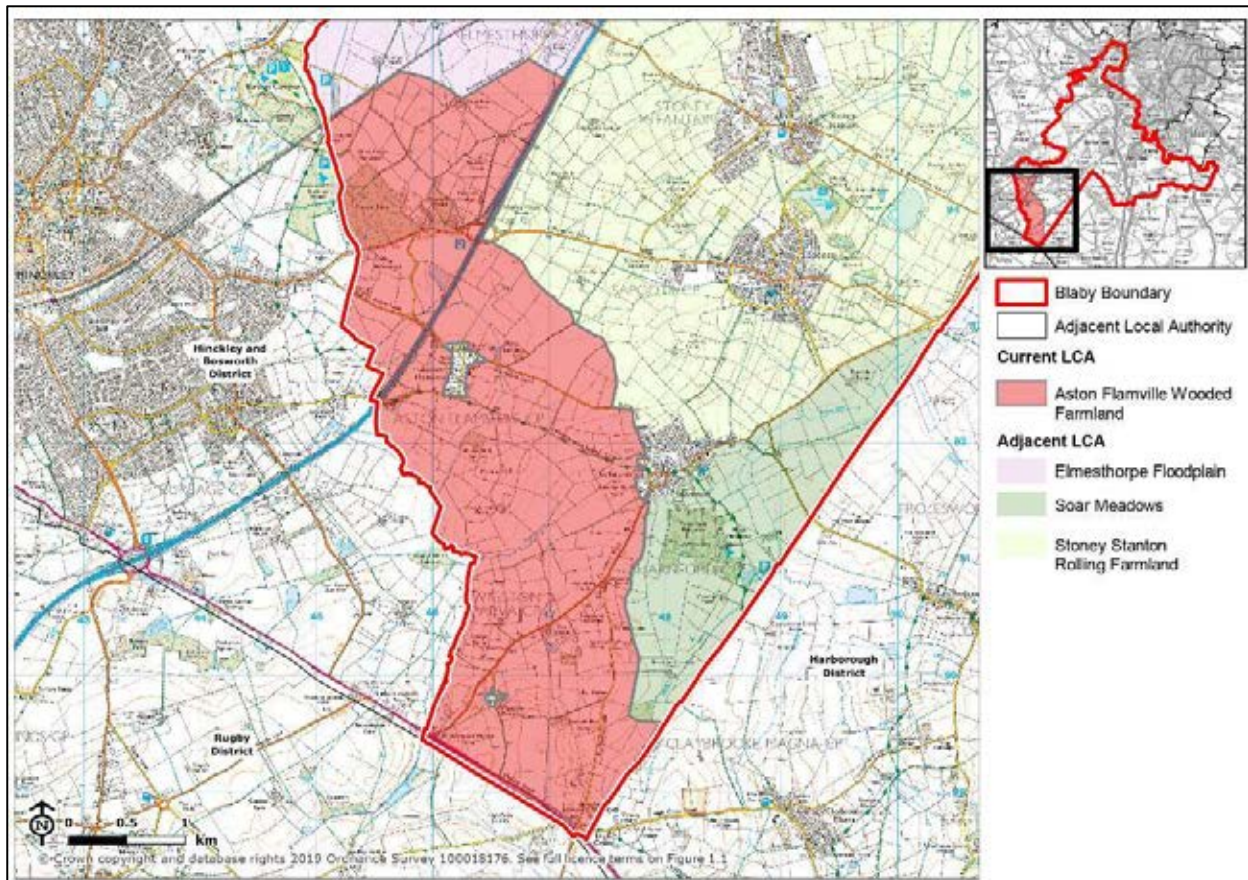


4 Landscape Character Area profiles

- 4.1 The following chapter contains the full profiles for each Landscape Character Area, including the Landscape Character Assessments and Landscape Sensitivity Assessments. Use the contents table below to navigate to the profiles by clicking on the hyper-linked page number.

Landscape Character Area	Page Number (Ctrl+click to navigate to profile)
Aston Flamville Wooded Farmland	29
Blaby, Countesthorpe and Whetstone Fringe	34
Cosby Agricultural Parkland	39
Cosby and Whetstone Rolling Farmland	45
Croft Hill and Quarries	50
Elmesthorpe Floodplain	56
Foston Open Farmland	61
Kilby Meadows	66
Kilby Rural Rolling Farmland	71
Lubbesthorpe Agricultural Parkland	76
Normanton Agricultural Parkland	81
Rothley Brook Fringe	86
Sence and Soar Floodplain	91
Soar Meadows	97
Stoney Stanton Rolling Farmland	102
Thurlaston Rolling Farmland	108

Aston Flamville Wooded Farmland



Representative photographs



Location and summary of overall character

The Aston Flamville Wooded Farmland LCA stretches along the south western edge of Blaby District, running concurrently with most of its boundary at this point. High points within the LCA provide expansive views across a rolling agricultural landscape with notable blocks and tracts of woodland. This LCA includes the highest point in the district at High Cross, with an elevation of 130m AOD. High Cross was also the site of a Romano-British settlement, Venonis, which was positioned at the crossroads of the Fosse Way and Watling Street Roman Roads.

Landscape character description

Key characteristics

Topography, geology and drainage

- Several high points intersected by broad valleys constitute a varied landform. This LCA includes the highest point in the district at High Cross (130m AOD) and the distinct landform of Mickle Hill (115m AOD). The Soar Brook runs through the LCA to the west of Sharnford within a shallow valley.
- Underlying geology is Triassic mudstone, siltstone and sandstone, overlain by glacial till. Alluvial deposits are associated with Soar Brook. Agricultural land is classified as Grade 3, with some smaller areas of Grade 4 land along the Soar Brook.

Land use and field patterns

- Land use is predominantly agricultural with a mix of arable land and pasture. Equestrian uses are associated with the edges of settlements.
- Fields vary in size. Boundaries tend to follow contours, with the overall pattern variable but size tends to be large, becoming smaller around watercourses and to the south.

Semi-natural habitats and woodland cover

- Fields are enclosed by hedgerows which are often fairly mature and scrubby, particularly in the northern part of the LCA. The main species in hedgerows are hawthorn, blackthorn, elder and hazel. Oak and ash hedgerow trees are scattered throughout.
- A large area of woodland is located at Aston Firs, which is ancient semi-natural woodland nationally designated as an SSSI. Aston Firs boundaries Burbage Wood, which lies beyond the district boundary (Hinckley and Bosworth District) and forms part of Burbage Common and Woods.
- Other copses and blocks of woodland tend to reflect the field pattern. Most of the woodland is mixed oak-ash broadleaf woodland, though evergreen and ornamental species are common within the village fringes.

Archaeology and cultural heritage

- There are several Scheduled Monuments in the southernmost part of the LCA, which include the site of Venonis Roman Settlement at High Cross.
- There are two designated Conservation Areas within the LCA – Aston Flamville and Wigston Parva. Several of the farm buildings within the LCA are Grade II listed.

Settlement, road pattern and rights of way

- Settlements are not a significant feature of the character area. Aston Flamville is a small linear settlement located on high ground. The retention of historic form by both Aston Flamville and Wigston Parva is notable. Small agricultural buildings and shelters within fields are a feature of this area.
- The M69 crosses the north of the LCA. Several roads and lanes cross the LCA, linking the settlements to Hinckley, which lies to its west, and the A5 to the south.
- Numerous public rights of way cross the character area and connect settlements to the wider countryside. This includes part of the Leicestershire Round trail. Public footpaths are concentrated around recreational facilities.

Views and perceptual qualities

- Views are varied according to the landform and vegetation cover. From elevated land at High Cross, there are long views north across Blaby District.
- This LCA retains much of its traditional rural character, which is particularly apparent in the north. The presence of pylon routes is a detracting feature with the pylons being prominent above the trees. Noise and movement of traffic associated with the M69 impacts on the tranquillity and rural perceptual qualities of the LCA.

Landscape evaluation

Summary of current landscape condition

This LCA has a distinct rural character. The two settlements within it, Aston Flamville and Wigston Parva, are relatively small and both are designated Conservation Areas. Neither have been significantly influenced by recent development. The relative abundance of woodland within the LCA provide a well-wooded character, with trees and woodland featuring prominently in skylines. The management of hedgerows varies throughout the LCA, with some lengths becoming scrubby through lack of management. Traffic noise and movement from the M69 has a discernible impact on tranquillity where these routes cross the landscape.

Key pressures/forces for change

- The proposal for Hinckley National Rail Freight Interchange, if approved, will drastically alter the character of the landscape by introducing significant amounts of industrial and transport infrastructure in the north of the LCA.
- Urban expansion at the edges of settlements could reduce the distinctly rural qualities of the LCA. There is existing development pressure to the west and south-west of Sharnford with the recent Brampton Valley Homes development and extension of an outdoor storage yard.
- Diversification of land uses to non-agricultural enterprises (i.e. residential) and small-holdings (e.g. pony keeping).
- Uncertain future for agriculture (including levels of funding support and market prices for livestock), threatening the viability of remaining farmed land and reducing the prevalence of land set aside for ecological purposes (e.g. wildflowers).
- Loss or reduction of significant areas of natural vegetation and trees through increasing intensity of management.
- Lack of management of mature and scrubby hedgerows leading to increased scrub establishment and fragmentation of intact boundaries.
- Perceptual qualities influenced by the M69 and A5, with busy traffic impacting on levels of tranquillity.
- Knock-on effects from an increase in population and associated development pressure on the doorstep of the LCA as it is situated near to the urban fringe of Hinckley.

Landscape sensitivity assessment

Criteria	Description	Rating
Physical character (including topography and scale)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Several high points intersected by broad valleys result in an undulating landscape. Soar Brook runs through the LCA and is located within a shallow valley This LCA includes the highest point in the district at High Cross (130m AOD) and Mickle Hill (115m AOD). Land use is predominantly agricultural with a mix of arable and pasture and small agricultural buildings and shelters commonly present within fields. Fields tend to be medium-large scale. 	M-H
Natural character	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hedgerows tend to mark field boundaries and are often mature and scrubby. Hedgerow trees are scattered throughout. Species tend to be oak or ash, with ash more common towards the south. Aston Firs is an ancient semi-natural woodland and is nationally designated as a SSSI. Aston Firs boundaries Burbage Wood, which lies beyond the district boundary and forms part of Burbage Common and Woods. Most woodland is mixed oak-ash broadleaf woodland, though evergreen and ornamental species are common on village fringes. 	M
Historic landscape character	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There are a number of Scheduled Monuments in the LCA. These are located in the southernmost part and include the site of Venonsis Roman Settlement at High Cross. The Fosse Way and Watling Street Roman Roads intersect at High Cross. There are two designated Conservation Areas within the LCA – Aston Flamville and Wigston Parva. The retention of historic form by both Aston Flamville and Wigston Parva is notable. Pockets of ridge and furrow are visible in some of the pasture fields. 	M-H
Form, density and setting of existing settlement/ development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This LCA is primarily a rural landscape. Aston Flamville is a small linear village located on high ground in the centre of the LCA and Wigston Parva is a distinct hamlet centred around a green. The larger village of Sharnford is adjacent to the east of the LCA. Buildings typically in red brick appear occasionally, peeping through areas of woodland and nestled into the landscape. 	M-H
Views and visual character including skylines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There are long views across the district from elevated areas, including views north from High Cross. Some views are restricted by the woodland and topography. Skylines are generally undeveloped and marked by woodland. A pylon line crosses the landscape near Mickle Hill. 	M
Access and recreation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Multiple access routes traverse the LCA. The M69 crosses the north of the LCA as well as several roads and lanes which link the settlements to its east with Hinckley and the A45 to the south. Numerous public rights of way cross the character area, with many public footpaths concentrated around recreational facilities such as Burbage Common (within Hinckley and Bosworth Borough). The Leicestershire Round long-distance route crosses the LCA. 	M
Perceptual and experiential qualities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This LCA has a largely rural quality which is particularly apparent within the northern part. The sense of rurality and associated tranquillity is compromised in parts by noise and movement of traffic associated with the M69. The prominence of woodland within the LCA is exaggerated by its topography. 	M-H

Overall assessment of landscape sensitivity to development scenarios

Development scenario	Sensitivity				
2-3 storey residential housing / transport infrastructure			M		
Small-scale commercial (B1/B2 use categories)				M-H	
Large scale commercial (warehousing – B8 use category)					H
Notes on any variations in landscape sensitivity					
Areas of high ground such as Mickle Hill and High Cross have increased sensitivity to development due to their visual prominence in the landscape.					

Special landscape qualities and key sensitivities

The following provides a summary of the special landscape qualities and key features/attributes that would be sensitive to change (e.g. as a result of development):

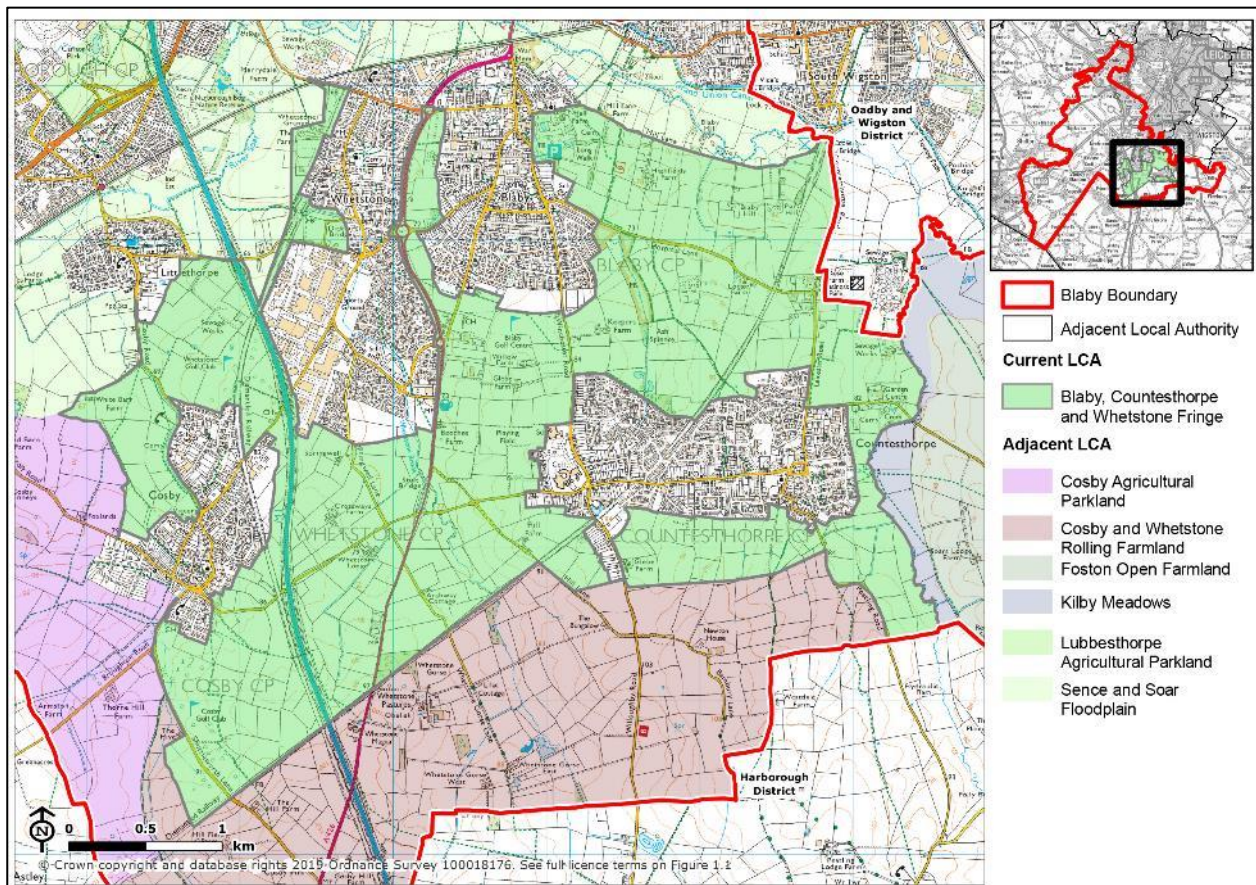
- Important heritage features including the site of the Venonis Roman Settlement and bowl barrows, which are designated as Scheduled Monuments.
- Aston Firs SSSI, ancient semi-natural woodland which is one of the more substantial blocks of woodland within the district.
- The strong rural qualities of the LCA, with modern intrusions limited to transport routes in the north of the LCA and a pylon route.
- Mature oak and ash hedgerow trees are scattered throughout and feature in the skyline.
- The two designated Conservation Areas within the LCA – Aston Flamville and Wigston Parva – both have a strong local vernacular.
- Numerous public rights of way cross the character area including part of the Leicestershire Round long-distance route
- The function of the remaining rural, agricultural land in providing a setting to existing development and their distinct identities.

Guidance and opportunities for future development

Guidance and opportunities to consider for any future development within this Landscape Character Area include:

- Protect the integrity and rural setting of nationally important heritage features within the landscape, including the site of the Venonis Roman Settlement.
- Protect the rural setting the landscape provides to the existing settlements including the Conservation Areas at Aston Flamville and Wigston Parva.
- Respect and enhance the existing settlement character, ensuring new development complements existing context with regards to scale, form, materials and boundary features.
- Conserve important woodlands in the character area including the nationally designated Aston Firs SSSI.
- Explore opportunities to strengthen and increase the public rights of way network, linking settlements to strategic recreation destinations such as Burbage Common and the Leicestershire Round trail.
- Conserve hedgerow trees within the landscape by encouraging natural establishment and planting of new hedgerow trees. Species chosen for planting should reflect those present within the fields immediately surrounding to enhance local distinctiveness within the character area.
- Protect the rural working agricultural setting the landscape provides to development. Avoid siting development on the more open, visible slopes and where ridge and furrow is evident.

Blaby, Countesthorpe and Whetstone Fringe



Representative photographs



Location and summary of overall character

The character area surrounds several of the largest settlements in the District including Blaby, Countesthorpe, Whetstone, Cosby and the smaller village of Littlethorpe. The landscape consists of rolling farmland with a small to medium scale field pattern. Woodland strips give the area a perceived wooded character. However, the landscape is heavily influenced by urbanising features such as a highly developed road network, golf courses and playing fields.

Landscape character description

Key characteristics

Topography, geology and drainage

- The landform is gently rolling with flatter areas adjacent to settlements, and more rolling parts around Whetstone Brook and other small watercourses. There are some minor stream corridors which have created localised valleys, including Whetstone Brook.
- Elevation ranges from 70m to 100m AOD with elevated areas to the north of Countesthorpe, at Port Hill and the southwestern edge of the LCA.
- Soils are slowly permeable base-rich loamy and clayey. The agricultural land is classed as Grade 3⁸.

Land use and field patterns

- The area has varied agricultural use, including pockets of rough grassland, set-aside and arable farmland. There is also some evidence of agricultural diversification such as fruit farming. Other land uses include parks, golf courses, wooded open spaces and playing fields.
- Field patterns tend to be regular and small to medium scale and defined by hedgerows.

Semi-natural habitats and woodland cover

- Prominent linear deciduous woodland follows the disused railway lines, the M1 and Whetstone Brook. These create the perception of a well-wooded landscape although there are few large woodland blocks. There is also a small traditional orchard at Beeches Farm, south of Whetstone.
- Ornamental and parkland trees are common elements within golf courses and parks on the urban fringe. The poplar shelter belt on the southern edge of Blaby is prominent in the character area.
- Hedgerows are frequent, with numerous hedgerow trees. Those along roads are usually mature and appear as wooded belts. Close to the urban edge hedgerows are often fragmented.

Archaeology and cultural heritage

- There are two Grade II listed buildings located to the east of Blaby; Blaby Hall and Ice House 150 metres south-east of Blaby Hall.
- The HER identifies most fields to be planned enclosure or re-organised piecemeal enclosure, although there are also localised areas of piecemeal enclosure, very large post-war fields, other large rectilinear fields, large irregular fields and other small rectilinear fields.

Settlement, road pattern and rights of way

- The LCA surrounds the settlements of Blaby, Countesthorpe, Whetstone and Cosby and the southern edge of Littlethorpe. It separates and contributes to the distinct identity of the settlements. Urban edges vary, with some defined by new development (e.g. the southern edge of Blaby) and some well-integrated into the landscape by vegetation, such as the north-western edge of Countesthorpe.
- The LCA is undeveloped except for scattered farms and cottages. Most buildings are red brick, sometimes combined with white or cream render.
- There are numerous infrastructure routes in the area. The M1 and two disused railway lines dissect the western part of the character area. The A426 between and some B-roads cross the area.
- Public rights of way are scarce given the dense settlement. National Cycle Route 6 passes from south of Countesthorpe onto Winchester Road and along the eastern edge of Blaby. Blaby Oaks is an open access area of woodland to the south-east of Blaby.

Views and perceptual qualities

- Views across high ground tend to be rural and wooded with strong views of linear woodlands. Views are often limited by intervening trees. Some elevated areas overlook lower-lying settlements such as Whetstone. There are views to the spire of the Grade II* listed Church of St Michael and All Angels in Cosby and the Grade I listed church of All Saints in Blaby.
- Much of the landscape is distinctly agricultural with rural perceptual qualities, particularly in areas providing views to the surrounding countryside. Harsh settlement edges and intervisibility with residential development and large-scale business parks/warehouses detract from rural qualities.
- Roads produce sound and visual disruption, although often reduced by woodland screening. Sports pitches, golf courses and garden centres introduce urban fringe influences into the landscape.

⁸ For further information on the Agricultural Land Classification (ALC) please see the Natural England website.

Landscape evaluation

Summary of current landscape condition

The landscape is a largely agricultural and with fields enclosed by well-managed hedgerows and woodland strips. The landscape has retained much of its rural character, despite development pressures from surrounding settlements. Mature hedgerows and shelterbelts often screen the urban edges, although there are areas where intervisibility detracts from perceptions of tranquillity and emits light pollution into the landscape. Some marginal areas of degraded or neglected farmland are falling out of traditional use. Alternative land uses such as horse keeping, playing fields and golf courses have a suburbanising effect on the landscape. The presence of major infrastructure routes has led to fragmentation and compartmentalisation of the area which results in an overall lack of cohesion and continuity. The densely populated surrounding area introduces urban-fringe issues including litter and fly tipping, which reduce the landscape's visual appeal.

Key pressures/forces for change

- Settlement expansion encroaching into the character area is a key issue. The landscape is important for retaining the separate identities of each settlement by preventing their coalescence.
- The potential for new in-fill development which risks further fragmenting the agricultural landscapes and habitats within the area.
- Continuing pressures for alternative land use on the urban edges.
- Widening of roads may increase their prominence in the landscape and further fragment the character of the area.
- A decline in traditional farming activity and an uncertain future for agriculture (including levels of funding support and market prices for livestock) may result in the change of management or land use.
- Change in woodland/tree species composition as new pests/diseases spread (particularly phytophthora pathogens) and invasive species become more prevalent. Loss of tree cover would be particularly damaging in this landscape as it would significantly increase the visibility of built features.
- Increasing population in surrounding settlements will add further recreational pressures to the landscape.

Landscape sensitivity assessment

Criteria	Description	Rating
Physical character (including topography and scale)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gently rolling landform with flatter areas adjacent to settlements. Elevation ranges from 100m AOD to 70m AOD. Localised valleys are associated with minor stream corridors. Fields are small to moderate in scale and follow a regular field pattern. 	L-M
Natural character	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Land use is a mixture of arable and pastoral agriculture as well as areas managed as sports pitches and rough grassland. Woodland areas are limited, although frequent trees create a well-wooded character. Linear woodland follows features such as the disused railway lines, the M1, Whetstone Brook and the edges of settlements. Woodland along Whetstone Brook stream corridor is scrubby and naturalistic. Hedgerows are generally in good condition, with frequent hedgerow trees. Those along roads area often mature and appear as wooded belts. Ornamental and parkland trees are common elements within golf courses and parks within the urban fringe. And there is a small traditional orchard at Beeches Farm, south of Whetstone. 	M
Historic landscape character	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There are limited designated historic features in this area. There are two Grade II listed buildings; Blaby Hall and Ice House 150 metres south-east of Blaby Hall. The HER identifies a mixed field pattern of mostly planned enclosure or re-organised piecemeal enclosure. 	L-M
Form, density and setting of existing settlement/ development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The area has an important role in maintaining a sense of separation between settlements including Blaby, Countesthorpe, Cosby and Whetstone. There is no predominant material for buildings within this character area, although many are red brick sometimes combined with white or cream render. 	M-H
Views and visual character including skylines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Views across high ground tend to be rural and wooded in character. Intervening trees often limit the distance of views. Some elevated areas overlook lower-lying settlements such as Whetstone. Small scale overhead electricity lines pass through the landscape. These do not form dominant skyline features due screening from mature woodland vegetation. There is some localised intervisibility with taller buildings in settlements, such as the spire of the Grade II* listed Church of St Michael and All Angels in Cosby and the Grade I listed church of All Saints in Blaby. 	L-M
Access and recreation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Major transport routes including the M1, the A426 and numerous B-roads transect the area and link settlements. There are limited public rights of way in comparison to the density of settlement in the area. Blaby Oaks is an open access woodland situated to the south-east of Blaby. 	L-M
Perceptual and experiential qualities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The landscape is influenced by urbanising features and has a large amount of intervisibility with existing built development, detracting from the landscape's rural perceptual qualities. Sound and visual pollution from transport infrastructure detracts from tranquillity, although some of the routes are screened by woodland strips and mature hedgerows. Enclosure from woodland can provide relative rural seclusion in a landscape that is otherwise strongly influenced by built development, despite being itself being largely undeveloped agricultural land. 	L-M

Overall assessment of landscape sensitivity to development scenarios

Development scenario	Sensitivity				
2-3 storey residential housing / transport infrastructure		L-M			
Small-scale commercial (B1/B2 use categories)			M		
Large scale commercial (warehousing – B8 use category)				M-H	
Notes on any variations in landscape sensitivity					
Land which separates distinct settlements has increased sensitivity to all development scenarios, as it plays an important role in maintaining preventing them from converging and losing their individual identities.					
Areas of sloping or elevated land (e.g. north of Countesthorpe) have increased landscape sensitivity as development in these locations is likely to be visually prominent and intrusive on the landscape.					

Special landscape qualities and key sensitivities

The following provides a summary of the special landscape qualities and key features/attributes that would be sensitive to change (e.g. as a result of development):

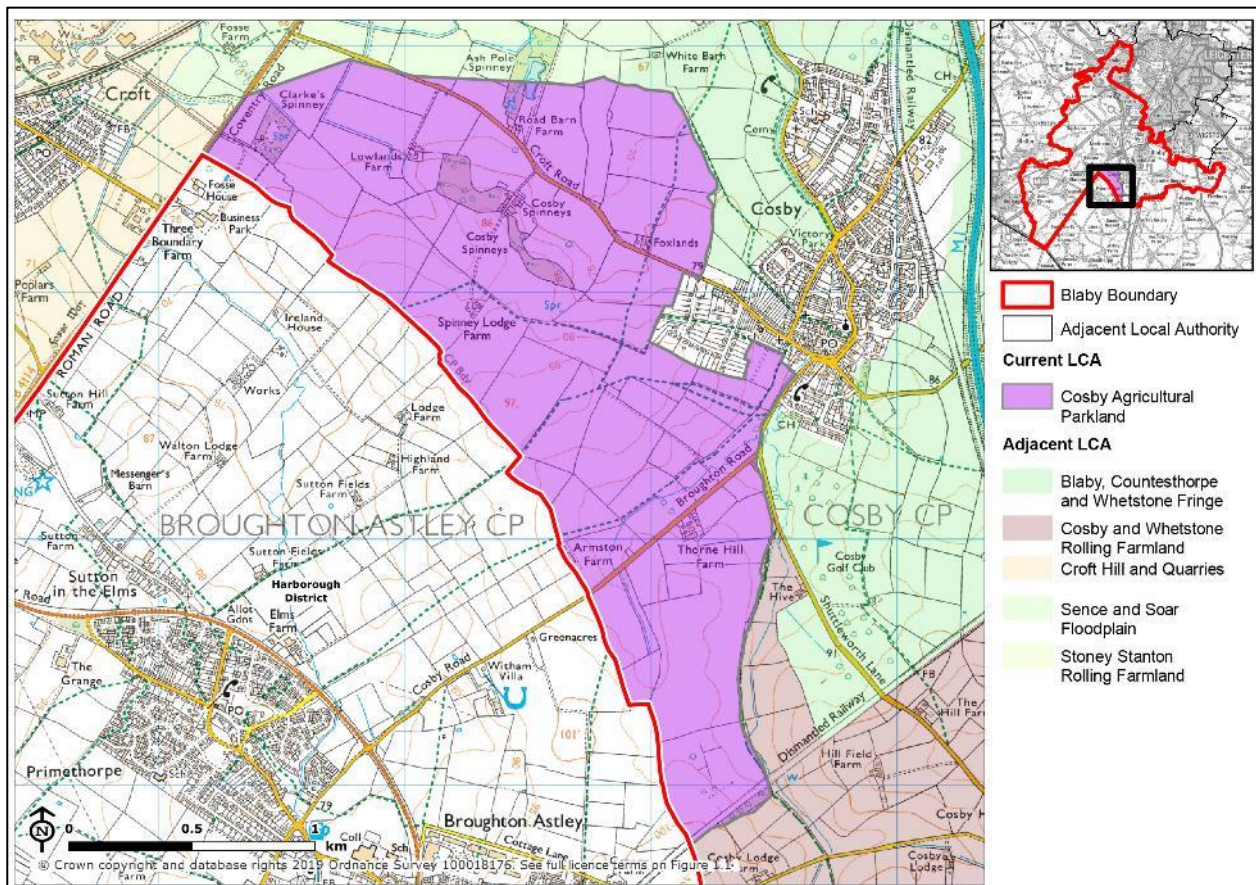
- Fields are small to medium scale with a regular pattern and bounded by well-maintained tall hedgerows, which often screen development outside the character area.
- Strong linear woodland features such as that following the disused railway line, the M1 and well-established hedgerow boundaries which play an important role in screening existing development.
- The extensive tracts of broadleaved woodland form important wildlife corridors connecting the rural and urban environment.
- The role of the landscape as an undeveloped rural buffer, preventing the coalescence of surrounding settlements.
- Small and meandering stream corridors traverse the landscape and influence the localised topography.
- The public rights of way and large area of open access woodland area at Blaby Oaks are used for recreation by people living in the adjacent settlements.

Guidance and opportunities for future development

Guidance and opportunities to consider for any future development within this Landscape Character Area include:

- Protect the character of the open and undeveloped nature of the land within the character area. This is important in maintaining distinctiveness between the villages and also to distinguish this part of Blaby District from the suburbs of Leicester to the north.
- Soften urban edges and filter views of infrastructure development with increased woodland cover.
- Restore fragmented hedgerows and improve the hedgerow condition particularly in urban fringe areas. This should be achieved through new and infill planting which should include native hedgerow trees.
- Conserve existing hedgerow trees and woodlands. There is evidence of ageing trees with dead branches in some areas. In these locations new planting and management of trees should be undertaken, thus ensuring the retention of wooded character.
- Enhance connectivity between woodlands through planting of new woodland and hedgerows to retain linear woodland as landscape features and create wildlife corridors.
- Make use of the disused railway line as public rights of way such as cycle routes, in order to provide better interconnectivity between settlements and reduce traffic pressures on roads. Improve the network of public rights of way between settlements.

Cosby Agricultural Parkland



Representative photographs



Location and summary of overall character

This LCA is a mixed agricultural landscape situated to the west and south west of Cosby, in the south of Blaby District. Individual mature trees give the landscape a distinctive estate parkland character. The landform rises gently to a prominent ridge to the south of Croft Road. From here the area falls gently away to the south and south west from the ridgeline. Fields vary in size and are mostly rectilinear with a uniform pattern and well-maintained hedges. Blocks of woodland are prominent features of the landscape in the north of the LCA due to their location on elevated ground.

Landscape character description

Key characteristics

Topography, geology and drainage

- The topography is very gently undulating. The highest point in the LCA is in the south near the route of the dismantled railway (100m AOD) while the lowest point is in the north at 70m AOD. Many parts of the LCA are elevated in comparison to surrounding landform.
- Underlying Mercia Mudstone Group Mudstone bedrock geology overlain by Till, Mid Pleistocene Diamicton and localised areas of Wolston Sand and Gravel. Soils here are loamy and clayey with impeded drainage, and of Grade 3 (good to moderate) agricultural quality.
- A small number of streams flow through the LCA with a limited influence on the local landscape character.

Land use and field patterns

- Land use is primarily arable farming, although there is also equestrian use near Foxlands Farm. The field pattern within the LCA is regular and uniform, is mostly recognised as reorganised piecemeal enclosure. Some amalgamation of fields between Spinney Lodge and Armston Farms has occurred.
- Clipped, low hedgerows with few trees (sometimes accompanied by avenues of mature trees) contribute a sense of formality to the LCA. Near Cosby Spinneys, estate fencing replaces hedgerows.

Semi-natural habitats and woodland cover

- Overall woodland cover is relatively sparse. There are several blocks of deciduous woodland including Cosby Spinneys, Clarke's Spinney and Ash Pole Spinney. A linear strip of woodland tracks the dismantled railway in the south of the character area.
- Hedgerow species are mostly hawthorn with some elder, while most mature hedgerow trees are ash. Hedgerow trees are sparse and scattered across the LCA, tending to be most abundant at field margins and near farmsteads. Mature specimen trees within fields are mostly oak and lime.

Archaeology and cultural heritage

- The lack of urban influence upon the landscape with its sparse scattering of traditional farmsteads and estate parkland character contribute to the sense of time-depth. The HLC identifies the field pattern to be largely re-organised piecemeal enclosure, with some very large post-war fields, planned enclosure and other large rectilinear fields.
- There are no designated heritage assets within the LCA. The spire of the grade II* listed Church of St Michael and All Angels within Cosby is visible from parts of the LCA.
- The route of a dismantled railway runs along the southern edge of the of the LCA, followed by a strip of deciduous woodland.

Settlement, road pattern and rights of way

- The area is largely unsettled. Where present, buildings tend to be a mix of red brick and render with some timber features on older properties. The edges of Cosby have a higher proportion of evergreen species, integrating the settlement into the landscape and limiting intervisibility.
- The character area provides as a sense of rural separation between the settlements of Cosby, Croft and Broughton Astley/Primethorpe.
- Croft Road and Broughton Road cross the LCA and connect Cosby to neighbouring settlements. Other roads are limited to long access tracks to farmsteads. Footpaths are concentrated to the south-west of Cosby and provide links towards Primethorpe, Broughton Astley and Croft. A bridleway runs along the south eastern boundary of the LCA.

Views and perceptual qualities

- From higher ground there are longer views towards Cosby, Littlethorpe, Primethorpe and Broughton Astley. Elsewhere, views are limited by the rolling landform, mature hedgerows and woodland blocks.
- Features outside of the LCA are also visible including Croft Hill and the adjacent Croft Quarry to the west, Lower Spinney Windfarm to the southeast, the spire of the Church of St Michael and All Angels in Cosby and tall buildings within Leicester in distant skylines to the north.
- The LCA has a strong rural character with high relative levels of tranquillity. Despite the limited roads within the LCA, traffic noise from the nearby M1 creates localised intrusion on the otherwise tranquil landscape.

Landscape evaluation

Summary of current landscape condition

This LCA derives a distinctly historic visual quality from its sparse scattering of traditional farmsteads and estate parkland character. The influence of urban development is low with year-round screening provided by some evergreen species present in woodland on the edges of Cosby. Hedgerows in this character area are generally well-managed, although low cut in some areas. Settlement is not a distinctive feature of the landscape. The relatively undeveloped road infrastructure means traffic noise does not currently impose a significant effect on levels of tranquillity, despite localised intrusions from the M1.

Key pressures/forces for change

- Potential for future development on the urban fringes of Cosby increasing its visual prominence within the landscape.
- Expansion of the built environment around Cosby, particularly taller buildings, could compromise the prominence of the spire of St Michael's and All Angels Church in the skyline.
- Diversification of land uses to non-agricultural enterprises (i.e. residential) and small-holdings.
- Further amalgamation of fields leading to a loss of visual character and wildlife corridors associated with hedgerow boundaries.
- Loss of mature specimen in-field and hedgerow trees through age or removal of hedgerow boundaries.
- Individual in-field and hedgerow trees may become more susceptible to damage from more frequent and intense storm events as a result of climate change. The remaining stock will need replacing in the coming years to maintain their presence as key landscape features in the longer term.
- Replacement of hedgerow boundaries with timber fencing or changes in farm practice and management altering the formal character of the landscape and diluting distinctive estate parkland character.
- Change in woodland and tree species composition as new pests or diseases spread this could be particularly damaging to woodlands with low species diversity as well as the frequent mature ash trees.
- Potential demand for renewable energy installations such as solar panels, wind turbines and ground-source heat pumps.
- The flat ground to the north of Croft Road and a small area to the south of Cosby is prone to flooding, future changes in climate may result in more frequent flooding events here.

Landscape sensitivity assessment

Criteria	Description	Rating
Physical character (including topography and scale)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gently undulating topography with elevation ranging from 70m to 100m AOD. There is a ridge in the centre of the LCA, which is distinctive despite being relatively small. Much of the character area is elevated and exposed in comparison to the surrounding landscape. Several small streams pass through the character area. 	M
Natural character	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Most of the land use is arable agriculture, although there is some localised equestrian use. There are several distinctive blocks of deciduous woodlands in the LCA, often situated in elevated areas; including Cosby Spinney, Clarke's Spinney and Ash Pole Spinney. Woodland on the urban fringe of Cosby has a higher proportion of evergreens. Hawthorn hedgerows contain elder as well as mature ash trees. In-field oak, ash and lime specimen trees are concentrated near farmsteads. 	M
Historic landscape character	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There are no designated historic features within the LCA. A dismantled railway line follows the southernmost boundary of the LCA, marked by woodland. The HLC identifies a mixed field pattern of re-organised piecemeal enclosure, very large post-war fields, planned enclosure and other large rectilinear fields. 	L-M
Form, density and setting of existing settlement/development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The LCA is largely unsettled with settlement limited to large often red-brick and render farmsteads. The LCA is situated directly south-west of Cosby and provides rural setting to the village. This part of the village is of modern origin. The undeveloped LCA provides a sense of rural separation between the existing settlements of Cosby, Croft and Broughton Astley/ Primethorpe. 	M
Views and visual character including skylines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The nearby settlements of Littlethorpe, Primethorpe and Broughton Astley are visible from higher ground. Croft Hill is visible to the west of the character area. Undeveloped skylines marked by woodland blocks and mature hedgerow and in-field trees. Cosby Spinney woodland is a prominent skyline feature due to its elevated location. There is some intervisibility with Cosby, although it is well screened by hedgerows containing a high proportion of evergreen trees. 	M-H
Access and recreation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Croft Road and Broughton Road cross the LCA. Both have wide grassy verges frequently accompanied by avenues of mature trees. The LCA has a good provision of public rights of way. Most are concentrated on the settlement edge of Cosby. 	M
Perceptual and experiential qualities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A rural and removed landscape with limited built development, although more distant surrounding development is visible on skylines. Some traffic noise travels from the M1, disturbing the otherwise peaceful and tranquil LCA. 	M

Overall assessment of landscape sensitivity to development scenarios

Development scenario	Sensitivity				
2-3 storey residential housing / transport infrastructure			M		
Small-scale commercial (B1/B2 use categories)				M-H	
Large scale commercial (warehousing – B8 use category)					H
Notes on any variations in landscape sensitivity					
More elevated and exposed parts of the LCA are more sensitive to any kind of development due to their visual prominence.					

Special landscape qualities and key sensitivities

The following provides a summary of the special landscape qualities and key features/attributes that would be sensitive to change (e.g. as a result of development):

- The gently undulating topography rising to an elevated ridge in the centre of the LCA.
- The undeveloped, uniform arable landscape made up of mixed agriculture and divided by well managed hedgerows. Mature hedgerow trees and in-field specimen trees often clustered around farmsteads.
- Large blocks deciduous woodlands providing important ecological habitats. These are frequently situated on visually prominent elevated areas.
- A largely unsettled landscape, with built features limited to isolated farmsteads. The road network is also relatively undeveloped, with only Croft Road and Broughton Road crossing the area.
- A rural landscape providing a sense of separation between the existing surrounding settlements of Cosby, Croft and Primethorpe/Broughton Astley
- Long distance views from elevated areas, extending to surrounding settlements including Littlethorpe, Primethorpe and Broughton Astley.
- Undeveloped skylines marked by deciduous woodland blocks and mature hedgerow and in-field trees.
- A good network of public rights of way, with footpaths allowing recreational use of the land, particularly to the south-west of Cosby.
- Uniform estate-like character with well-managed hedgerows, avenues of trees and wooden fencing.
- Tranquil and removed perceptual qualities with minimal influences from intruding human development

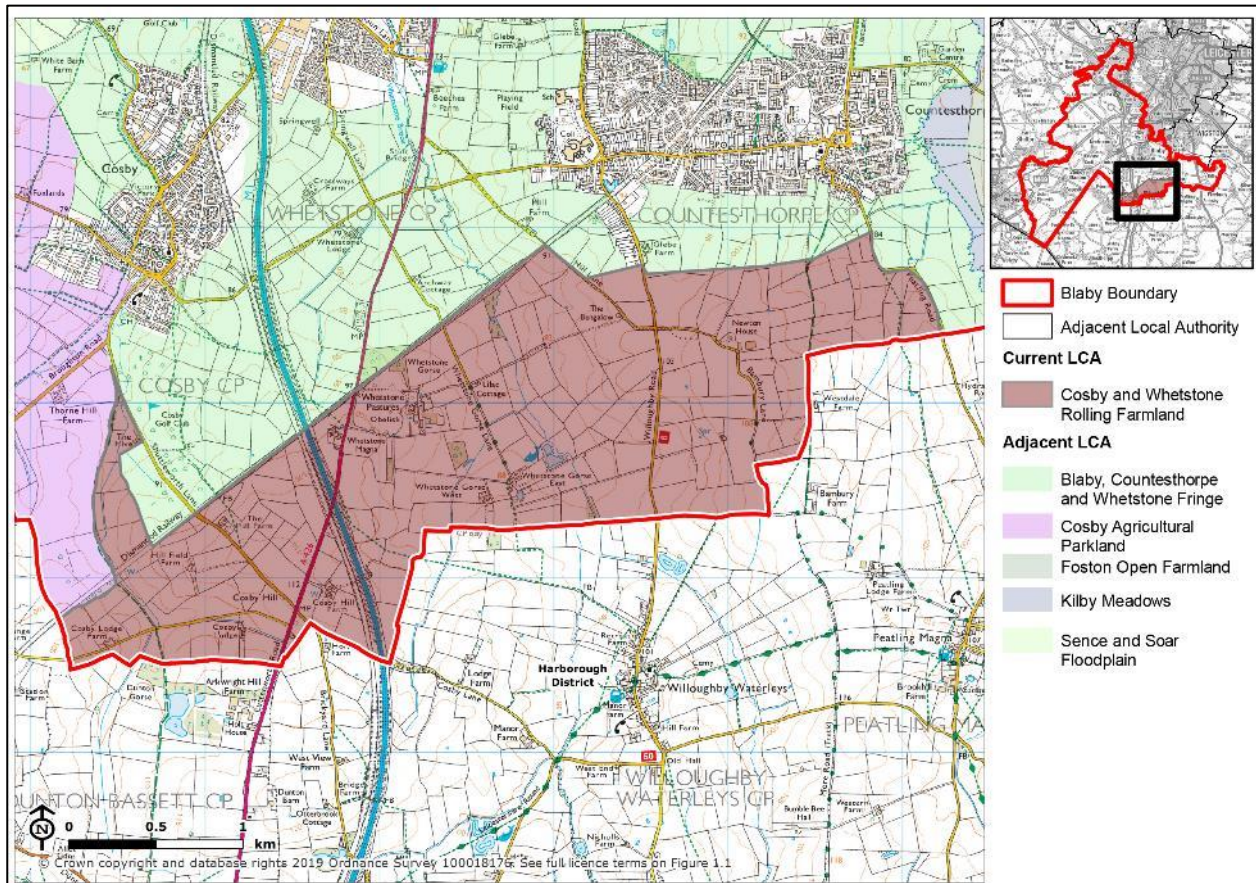
Guidance and opportunities for future development

Guidance and opportunities to consider for any future development within this Landscape Character Area include:

- Ensure new development avoids visually prominent slopes and exposed elevated areas such as the ridge following the centre of the LCA.
- Seek to conserve the uniform agricultural character of the landscape, and to preserve and protect hedgerow boundaries.
- Protect and conserve the distinctive deciduous woodland blocks within the character area, it may be beneficial to diversify species present within these woodlands to ensure their resilience to the spread of pests or diseases spread (particularly phytophthora pathogens).

- Conserve hedgerow field boundaries containing mature trees and seek to diversify the species present within them to create resilience to tree pests and diseases.
- Retain the rural unsettled character of the landscape ensure that if development does take place it is well concealed by the landform or vegetation.
- Conserve the long-distance views available from elevated ground by ensuring they are not impeded by new development or woodland/ mature hedgerows.
- Refrain from tall development that may mark and be distinctive on the otherwise undeveloped and naturalistic skylines.
- Protect and conserve the well-established network of public rights of way.
- Conserve and enhance the parkland character present near farm estates through maintaining avenues and in-field trees.
- Ensure that new development does not detract from the relative tranquillity provided by the undeveloped landscape.

Cosby and Whetstone Rolling Farmland



Representative photographs



Location and summary of overall character

The character area is situated in an area of rural rolling farmland to the south of the settlements of Cosby and Countesthorpe. The southern edge of the area is marked by the Blaby District boundary, while the northern boundary largely follows the route of the disused railway line. Built development within the character area is limited to scattered farms and the crossing of the M1, A426 and other more minor roads. The area has a particularly rural and removed character, distinctive of a working agricultural landscape.

Landscape character description

Key characteristics

Topography, geology and drainage

- Gently undulating topography, ranging from 80m AOD to 110m AOD.
- Whetstone Brook crosses the centre of the LCA. Several large ponds and small lakes (including a fishing lake) are located along the watercourse and are concentrated near Whetstone Gorse East.
- Underlying mudstone and limestone bedrock geology overlain by superficial glacial till.

Land use and field patterns

- Land use is a mixture of arable and pastoral agricultural land. Fields are medium scale with a regular pattern and bounded by well-maintained hedgerows. Many fields show evidence of re-organisation and amalgamation from their historic extent. Some fields in the east have been divided into smaller horse paddocks, such as along Peatling Road and at Cosby Hill Farm.

Semi-natural habitats and woodland cover

- Hedgerows are generally well-developed and in good condition although often low cut. Mature hedgerow trees are more frequent along lanes and often oak or ash, some of which are over-mature. In some parts of the LCA such as the south-west near Cottage Lane, hedgerows have become degraded or replaced with fencing.
- There are several small mixed woodland blocks and conifer shelterbelts. The northern edge of the character area is marked by the route of the historic Leicester and Rugby Branch Railway. The dismantled railway has a strip of mature deciduous woodland running along a high embankment.
- Riparian woodland and vegetation follow the sinuous route of Whetstone Brook.

Archaeology and cultural heritage

- Whetstone Pastures Residential Home is a Grade II listed building.
- The HLC indicates that fields in the east and west of the character area are re-organised piecemeal enclosure, whilst those in the centre following Whetstone Lane are planned enclosure.
- A small area at Whetstone Gorse has parkland characteristics and appears to be situated on the site of a historic estate. Distinct features include an Obelisk, avenues of mature trees surrounded by wooden fencing and some mature in-field trees.

Settlement, road pattern and rights of way

- Settlement is limited to farmsteads and clusters of properties which are relatively indistinct due to screening from vegetation around their boundaries. Residential buildings and farms often are red brick, whilst agricultural buildings are mostly large-scale corrugated metal barns.
- The character area is crossed by major roads including the M1 and A246. Minor rural lanes and access tracks also cross the landscape.
- Public rights of way are limited, with a small number of footpaths and bridleways crossing north-south through the area. Part of the National Cycle Network Route 6 follows Willoughby Road.

Views and perceptual qualities

- Low hedgerows and the undulating landform often enable long distance views across the LCA. These include views north towards Leicester and south towards Harborough District. The four (125m tall) wind turbines of Low Spinney Wind Farm are visible in views to the south.
- Skylines in the character area largely undeveloped, marked by mature hedgerow trees, particularly on lower ground. Limited built features are visible on in skylines, although some small-scale power lines cross the area.
- The area retains strong rural characteristics and high levels of tranquillity despite its proximity to development. Woodland along the disused railway track reduces intervisibility of urban fringe features to the north. Major transport routes such as the M1 and A426 produce localised noise and visual pollution although woodland strips reduce these impacts.

Landscape evaluation

Summary of current landscape condition

The current landscape is generally in a good condition, displaying a working agricultural landscape, with hedgerows and woodlands appearing to be well managed. The well wooded route of the dismantled railway on an embankment, screens the character area from urbanised influences to the north, isolating the rural landscape. There are some localised cases where hedgerows have become fragmented or replaced with fencing, which degrades the character of the area. In places the distinctive hedgerow trees are in decline, appearing over-mature. There are also some areas where fly-tipping is apparent or has been present in the past, marked by fly-tipping prosecution warning signs. Some large infrastructure routes such as the M1, fragment and compartmentalise the area, creating a lack of cohesion in the landscape.

Key pressures/forces for change

- Continued development pressure, including both new development and the conversion of existing agricultural buildings. This would alter the structure and character of the rural working agricultural landscape.
- Knock-on effects from an increase in population on the doorstep of the LCA particularly from the rapidly expanding settlements to the north as well as Broughton Astley in Harborough District to the south. This may include increased traffic and demand for countryside access impacting on tranquillity, as well as more frequent occurrences of fly-tipping.
- Loss of traditional grazing land to pony paddocks, with associated structures and features such as fencing replacing hedgerows and poached/tightly grazed land.
- Further amalgamation and/or sub-division of fields diluting or erasing existing field patterns.
- Uncertain future for agriculture (including levels of funding support and market prices for livestock), further threatening the viability of the remaining farms.
- Potential loss of mature hedgerow trees as a result of the spread of emergent tree diseases such as ash dieback as well as the natural loss of overmatured trees. This would have a significant influence on the character of this landscape.

Landscape sensitivity assessment

Criteria	Description	Rating
Physical character (including topography and scale)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gently undulating topography, ranging from 80m AOD to 110m AOD Moderate scale landscape pattern with regular field boundaries marked by well developed, but relatively low hedges creating a more open large-scale feel. The whetstone Brook runs through the landscape, with some large fishing lakes along its course. 	M
Natural character	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Land use is a mixture of arable and pastoral agricultural land. The area contains several small mixed woodland blocks. Thick woodland belts follow the M1 and the dismantled railway line. Hedgerows contain scattered mature trees often ash or oak. The route of Whetstone Brook is followed by riparian vegetation. Whetstone Brook passes through the LCA influence, followed by a line of riparian vegetation. 	M
Historic landscape character	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Whetstone Pastures Residential Home is a grade II listed building at Whetstone Pastures. The HLC indicates that fields of re-organised piecemeal enclosure and planned enclosure are present within the landscape character area. A small area with parkland characteristics is situated at Whetstone Gorse which appears to be a historic estate containing treed avenues, fenced in-field trees and an obelisk. 	L-M
Form, density and setting of existing settlement/development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The area is relatively unsettled, containing scattered farmsteads and clusters of properties, residential buildings are usually red brick and there is a presence of large-scale metal barns. Rural and isolated agricultural landscape, that has not been severely influenced by development. 	M-H
Views and visual character including skylines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Low hedgerows and the undulating landform result in open views across the character area. Skylines are largely undeveloped and marked by mature hedgerow trees. The turbines of the Low Spinney Wind Farm are visible on skylines in views to the south. 	M
Access and recreation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The character area is crossed by the major routes of the M1 and A246. Other roads comprise straight rural lanes and access tracks. Public rights of way include footpaths, bridleways and parts of National Cycle Network route 6. A private fishing lake is located at Whetstone Gorse East. 	L-M
Perceptual and experiential qualities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A relatively rural and removed landscape with limited influence from built development. The area has high levels of relative tranquillity despite the presence of detracting features such as the M1 which introduces traffic noise to the LCA. Woodland along the disused railway line limits intervisibility of urban fringe characteristics to the north. 	M

Overall assessment of landscape sensitivity to development scenarios

Development scenario	Sensitivity				
2-3 storey residential housing / transport infrastructure			M		
Small-scale commercial (B1/B2 use categories)				M-H	
Large scale commercial (warehousing – B8 use category)					H
Notes on any variations in landscape sensitivity					
To the west of the A426 the landscape is has a more pastoral character and hedgerows are often replaced with post and wire fences with fewer trees. This more open landscape would has increased sensitivity to all development types as development is likely to be more visually prominent.					

Special landscape qualities and key sensitivities

The following provides a summary of the special landscape qualities and key features/attributes that would be sensitive to change (e.g. as a result of development):

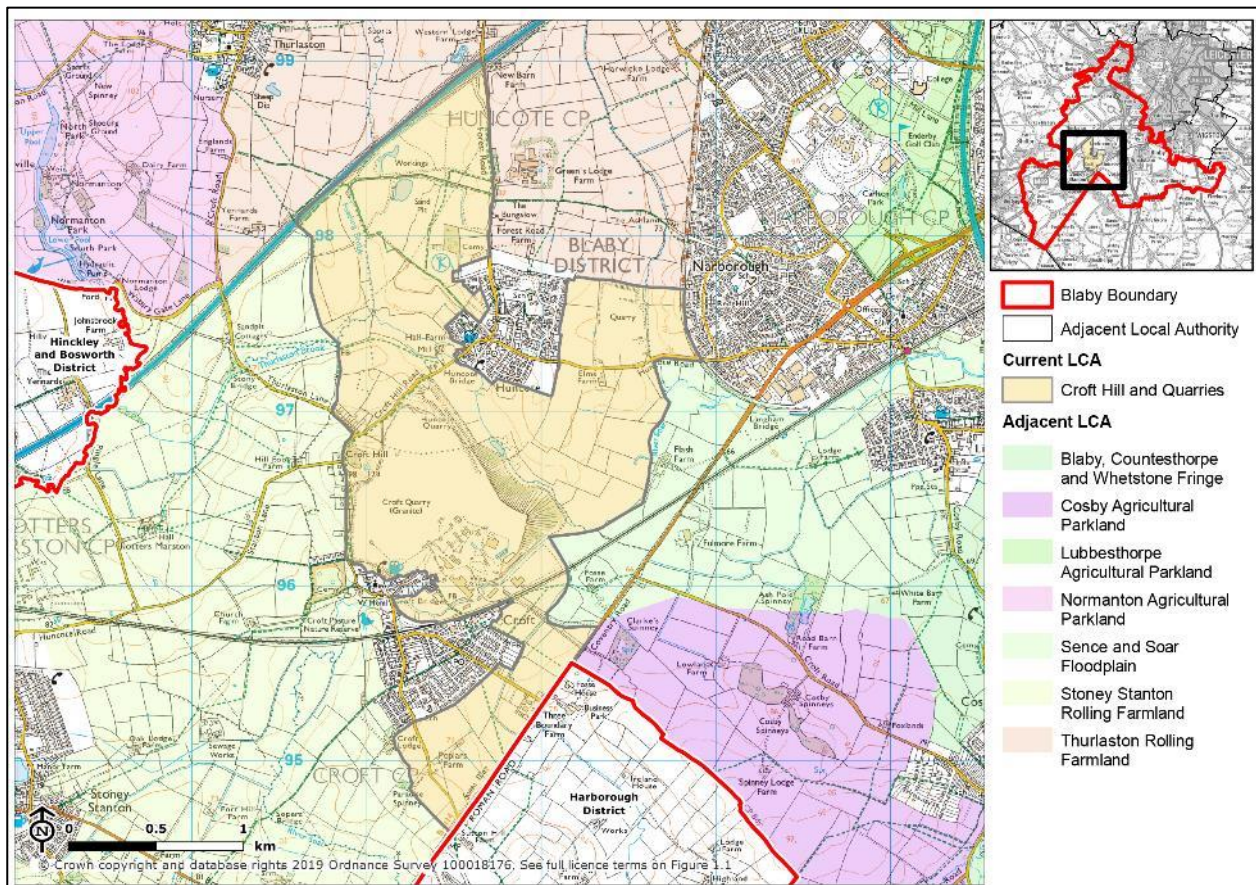
- The landscape's unsettled, agricultural character with open undeveloped skylines marked by hedgerows, mature ash and oak hedgerow trees and occasional in-field trees.
- Natural character provided by extensive deciduous woodlands particularly along linear features such as the disused railway and well-developed hedgerows.
- The relatively open and rolling character, providing many areas with long reaching views.
- A sense of relative tranquillity with the working agricultural landscape being removed from many urbanising features present in LCAs to the north.
- The provision of public rights of way including footpaths a bridleway and part of the National Cycle Network Route 6.

Guidance and opportunities for future development

Guidance and opportunities to consider for any future development within this Landscape Character Area include:

- Seek to maintain the working agricultural character of the landscape.
- Restore fragmenting hedgerows and improve the hedgerow condition. This should be achieved through new and infill planting. This should include native hedgerow trees such as oak and ash, as well as diversifying the species composition to improve the areas resilience to tree pests and diseases.
- Conserve existing hedgerow trees and woodlands. There is evidence of ageing trees with dead branches in some areas. In these locations new planting and management of trees should be undertaken. This will ensure the wooded features in the area are retained.
- Enhance connectivity between woodlands through planting of new woodland and hedgerows to retain linear woodland as landscape features and create wildlife corridors.
- Make use of the existing route of the dis-used railway to provide public rights of way such as a cycle route. This would create better connectivity between settlements as well as providing a recreational resource. It also has the possibly reducing road traffic, as an alternative commuter network.
- Respect and seek to conserve the surrounding rural character and high levels of tranquillity in the siting and design of any new development.

Croft Hill and Quarries



Representative photographs



Location and summary of overall character

This character area is located within the central part of the district adjacent to the settlements of Huncote and Croft, to the west of the M1 and immediately south of the M69. The LCA contains Croft Hill, a notable landmark within Blaby District. Past and present quarrying has had a significant influence on the landscape. The active Croft Quarry is a distinct feature of the LCA. Elsewhere, land use is primarily agricultural although there are areas of recreational use associated with the edges of settlements. The M69 forms the northern boundary of the LCA and impacts on tranquillity.

Landscape character description

Key characteristics

Topography, geology and drainage

- Croft Hill is a small rounded hill which rises to 128 metres AOD and is one of the higher points in Blaby District. The hill summit is characterised by small granite outcrops. The remainder of the LCA is relatively flat and lies between 70 metres and 75 metres AOD. Much of the landform has been strongly influenced and modified by past and present quarrying activity.
- Feeding Brook and Thurlaston Brook cross the LCA and drain into the River Soar, which forms the eastern boundary of the LCA.
- The underlying bedrock geology is mudstone and quartz, overlain by glacial and alluvial deposits. Most of the farmland is classified as Grade 4, with some pockets of Grade 3 land.

Land use and field patterns

- Land use is dominated by the large granite quarry at Croft Quarry. There are other smaller areas of past quarrying in the LCA. Agricultural land is characterised by mixed arable and pasture.
- The field pattern is varied, with enclosures generally being irregular in shape. Hedgerows enclose fields although these are fragmented in places. Hedgerow trees are frequent and are a mix of oak and ash.

Semi-natural habitats and woodland cover

- Croft Hill is designated as a SSSI. The site is nationally designated for the lowland acid grassland habitat which is scarce within Leicestershire.
- Mature woodland blocks tend to be small and are generally limited to the slopes of Croft Hill. Substantial new woodland planting has taken place within the character area on man-made mounds associated with the quarry. This planting is at varying stages of maturity. Riparian vegetation defines the watercourses.

Archaeology and cultural heritage

- Parts of the adjacent settlement of Croft are designated as a Conservation Area. Many of the historic buildings are constructed of granite. Listed buildings within the LCA include the Grade II Elms Farmhouse and Church of St Michael and All Saints.
- Fosse Way Roman Road (now part of the B4114) forms the south eastern edge of the LCA.
- This Historic Landscape Characterisation indicates that fields are a mixture of piecemeal and planned enclosure, which have undergone modern reorganisation.

Settlement, road pattern and rights of way

- The LCA is adjacent to Croft, Huncote and Narborough. The settlements tend to be well integrated into the landscape by mature vegetation. Predominant building materials across the character area are red brick with grey slate or clay tile roofs.
- Scattered farms are present within the vicinity of Croft Hill. Farms are generally sprawling in nature covering large areas and comprise a mixture of large metal frame agricultural buildings with little vegetation surrounding them. This increases their prominence in the landscape.
- The M69 forms the northern boundary of the LCA. The railway line is a distinctive linear feature crossing through the LCA.
- Footpaths are fairly limited within this character area. The majority are concentrated around the edge of Croft Hill along Croft Hill Road and to the south of Croft leading east towards Coventry Road. Bridleways are located to the north of Huncote.

Views and perceptual qualities

- Expansive panoramic views across the district from the elevated ground of Croft Hill due to its elevation and lack of vegetation on the summit. The prominence of the hill is emphasised by the flat landform in the remainder of the LCA and across the District as a whole. This includes long views towards the distinct landform of Charnwood Forest. A pylon line crossing the north of the LCA is prominent in views.
- The landscape generally has a sense of openness and expansiveness, although mature vegetation creates localised enclosure in places.
- The landscape retains its rural character despite the fragmented land uses. Traffic noise from the M69 and noise from the active quarry reduces tranquillity in the landscape.

Landscape evaluation

Summary of current landscape condition

This LCA is dominated by the influences of past and present quarrying and extractive activity, which have fragmented the agricultural landscape. Perceptual qualities in the north of the LCA are affected by the presence of the M69 corridor and electricity infrastructure. In places hedgerows have become fragmented and replaced with fencing. Recreational land uses on the edges of the settlements introduce an urban fringe character. The edges of the active quarry are characterised by tree planting of varying maturity. Cattle grazing on Croft Hill is used manage the grassland habitat which is nationally designated as a SSSI. The site is currently assessed as in favourable condition.

Key pressures/forces for change

- Fragmentation and isolation of farmland through future quarrying activities and urban expansion.
- Loss of hedgerow boundaries through a lack of management or removal to create larger arable fields.
- Alteration of the landform through quarry restoration resulting in large dominant man-made hills covered with relatively uniform grassland vegetation.
- Expansion of agricultural buildings and farmsteads increasing their prominence within the landscape.
- New woodland planting on the edges of the quarry will result in a change in the character as vegetation matures.
- Perceptual qualities influenced by the M69, with busy traffic impacting on levels of tranquillity in the north of the LCA.
- Uncertain future for agriculture (including levels of funding support and market prices for livestock), further threatening the viability of the remaining farmed land.
- Diversification of land uses to non-agricultural enterprises (i.e. residential) and small-holdings (e.g. pony keeping).
- Increased demand for recreational facilities on the edge of settlements.
- Climate change leading to more frequent flooding events along the River Soar in the south of the LCA.

Landscape sensitivity assessment

Criteria	Description	Rating
Physical character (including topography and scale)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mostly flat landscape which had been extensively influenced by past and present quarrying. Croft Hill is a small rounded hill which rises to 128 metres AOD and is one of the higher points in the District. The landscape is large-scale and expansive in places, due to enlarged fields divided by low hedgerows. 	L-M
Natural character	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Croft Hill SSSI is designated for lowland acid grassland habitat which is rare within Leicestershire. Woodland is located on the slopes of Croft Hill. Tree planting to screen quarrying also contributes to the wooded character. Linear vegetation along watercourses, roads and the railway line. 	L-M
Historic landscape character	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Fosse Way Roman Road (now the B4114) forms the south-eastern edge of the LCA. The historic core of Croft is designated as a Conservation Area. Several Grade II listed buildings are scattered throughout the LCA. Historic field patterns have been significantly altered in modern times, often as a result of quarrying activity. 	L-M
Form, density and setting of existing settlement/development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The LCA is adjacent to the settlements of Narborough, Huncote and Croft. The undeveloped land contributes to the sense of separation and distinct identity of the settlements. The settlements are well integrated into the landscape by mature vegetation. Scattered farms are located throughout the LCA. 	M
Views and visual character including skylines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There are long views from the elevated slopes and summit of Croft Hill, which also forms a prominent skyline feature for the surrounding lower ground. Some of the lower lying areas are visually enclosed by mature boundary vegetation. Pylons and overhead lines form prominent skyline features in the north of the LCA. 	M-H
Access and recreation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The M69 forms the northern boundary of the LCA. The Fosse Way (B4114) forms the southern boundary. Roads crossing the LCA and linking the settlements tend to be minor rural routes. A network of bridleways and footpaths link the settlements to the wider countryside. 	L-M
Perceptual and experiential qualities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Noise and movement associated with quarrying activity. Traffic noise from the M69 is a dominant feature in the north of the LCA. The landscape generally has a sense of openness and expansiveness, although mature vegetation creates localised enclosure in places. 	M

Overall assessment of landscape sensitivity to development scenarios

Development scenario	Sensitivity				
2-3 storey residential housing / transport infrastructure			M		
Small-scale commercial (B1/B2 use categories)			M		
Large scale commercial (warehousing – B8 use category)				M-H	
Notes on any variations in landscape sensitivity					
Croft Hill and areas which contribute to the setting of the Croft and Huncote have greater landscape sensitivity to all development scenarios.					
Areas of former quarrying are less sensitive and provide an opportunity to improve/restore the landscape in conjunction with development.					

Special landscape qualities and key sensitivities

The following provides a summary of the special landscape qualities and key features/attributes that would be sensitive to change (e.g. as a result of development):

- The visually prominent and distinctive landform of Croft Hill, with distinctive outcrops of granite.
- The nationally designated grassland habitats at Croft & Huncote Quarry SSSI, in addition to non-designated habitats including the River Soar and its tributaries, woodlands, meadows and former quarries.
- Long, sometime panoramic, views from elevated land across the adjacent countryside.
- Important heritage features including Croft Conservation Area and listed buildings including the Grade II Elms Farmhouse and Church of St Michael and All Saints.
- The function of the remaining rural, agricultural land in providing a setting to existing development and preventing the coalescence of settlements.
- Strong rural character and pockets of relative tranquillity throughout much of the LCA despite the fragmented land uses.

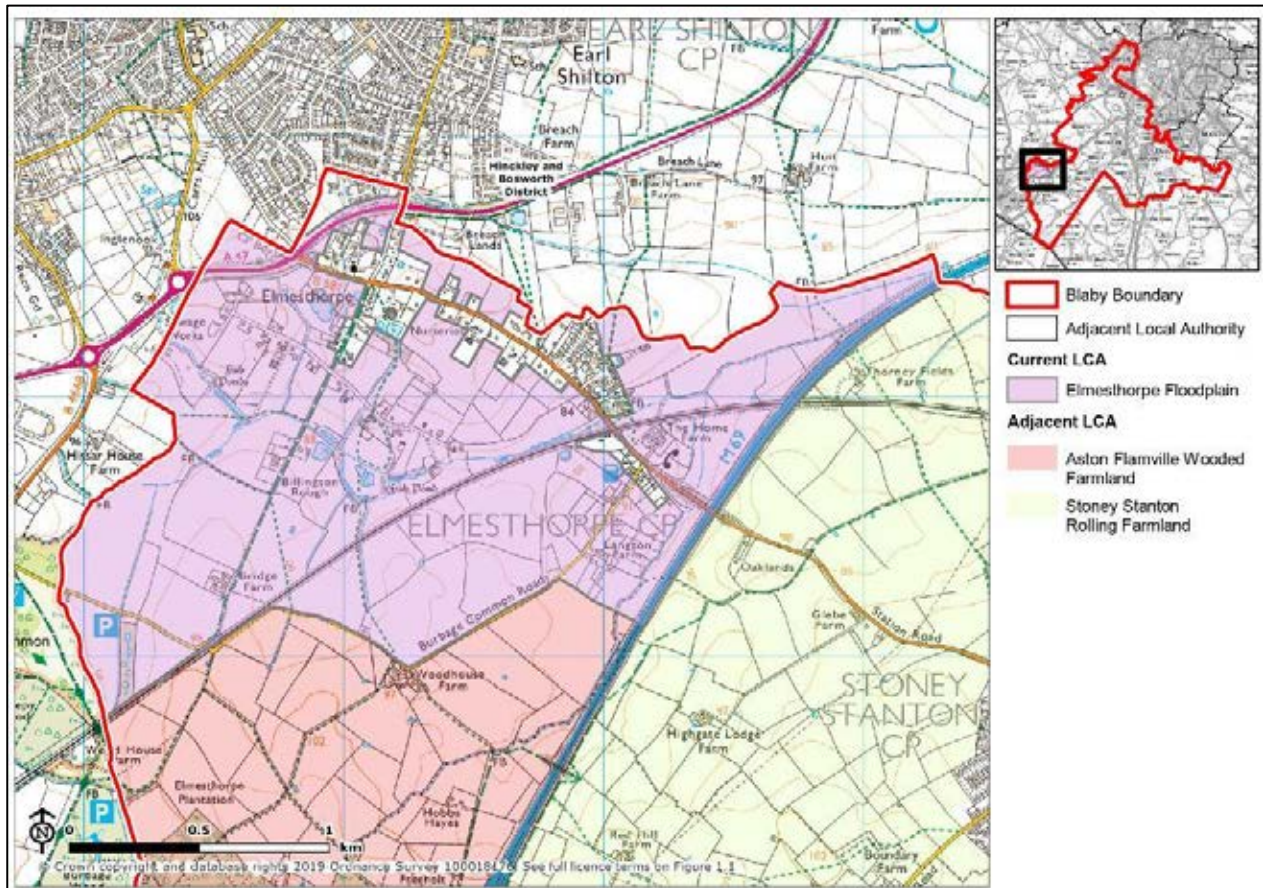
Guidance and opportunities for future development

Guidance and opportunities to consider for any future development within this Landscape Character Area include:

- Enhance green infrastructure into the wider countryside from settlements to recreational areas such as Croft Hill.
- Preserve the open unobstructed views across the district afforded by the open character at the summit of Croft Hill through restricting woodland planting on higher ground to slopes, providing open grassland on the summit and managing the height of slope vegetation.
- Restore the connectivity between farmland through reinstatement of farmland after quarrying activities and planting of new hedgerow boundaries.
- Retain existing trees on field boundaries and undertake new planting to diversify species in order to increase resilience against tree pests and diseases.
- Protect the natural character of Croft Hill and enhance future man-made mounding to reflect its character of open woodland and grassland to aid integration and unity within the character area.
- Restore woodland planting on slopes within the area, particularly adjacent to urban fringes and recreational areas to reduce the urban influence within the countryside.

- Protect and where possible enhance (including through new ecological connections) locally and nationally valued habitats, including woodlands, meadows and former quarries. Avoid development which could impact upon the Croft & Huncote Quarry SSSI.
- Conserve the setting and integrity of valued heritage assets, as well as historic buildings within Conservation Areas.
- Respect and enhance the strong character of the rural villages, ensuring new development complements existing context with regards to scale, form, materials and boundary features.
- Design-in the introduction of SuDS to any new development, addressing any changes in hydrology (and subsequent knock-on effects such as increased diffuse pollution from agricultural run-off). The LCA includes the parts of the River Soar.
- Explore further opportunities to restore former quarries and pits as safe and sustainable recreation/tourism destinations, particularly those near urban populations.

Elmesthorpe Floodplain



Representative photographs



Location and summary of overall character

This character area is situated towards the western edge of the district and extends to the south of Elmesthorpe. It shares some similar characteristics with the landscape to the immediate north and west beyond the district boundary. The village of Elmesthorpe is located on a ridgeline in the north of the LCA. Burbage Common is a distinctive area of woodland and wetland in the south west corner of the LCA which is managed for nature conservation and a popular destination for recreation. Most of the floodplain is characterised by pasture fields, divided by a mixture of ditches and hedgerows.

Landscape character description

Key characteristics

Topography, geology and drainage

- Flat or gently sloping topography, with elevation ranging between 85 metres and 105 metres AOD.
- A small watercourse flows through the character area and forms a division between the fringes of Elmesthorpe and the countryside. Several fishing ponds are located along its fringes although are not prominent within the landscape due to the surrounding mature vegetation.
- Underlying bedrock geology is Triassic mudstone, siltstone and sandstone overlain by alluvial deposits along the stream corridor. Agricultural land is classified as Grade 3.

Land use and field patterns

- The majority of the LCA is used for mixed arable and pastoral farming, with land uses becoming diversified on the edges of Elmesthorpe where smallholdings, stables and rough grassland occur. The southern edge includes an area of informal open space which lies on the outskirts of Burbage Common.
- Field pattern is mostly large irregular shaped fields although the pattern becomes smaller in fields associated with smallholdings along the fringes of Elmesthorpe.

Semi-natural habitats and woodland cover

- Tree species present in the character area are predominantly those tolerant of damp soils such as willow and poplar. Linear strips of vegetation follow ditches and watercourses, increasing their prominence within the LCA.
- Mixed native hedgerow boundaries containing trees are common, although variation in management affects their appearance. Hedgerows are predominantly hawthorn and blackthorn.
- Part of the Burbage Common Country Park is located within the LCA. The area of informal open space extends into Hinckley and Bosworth and comprises a series of large fields surrounded by dense woodland vegetation with ponds and ditches as focal features.

Archaeology and cultural heritage

- Elmesthorpe church, ruined nave and west tower Scheduled Monument is located to the west of Elmesthorpe. Other heritage features include medieval fish ponds along the watercourse.
- Grade II listed buildings within the LCA include the Church of St Mary, Wortley Cottages and The Wentworth Arms and adjoining stables.
- This Historic Landscape Characterisation indicates that fields are planned enclosure and re-organised piecemeal enclosure. Localised pockets of ridge and furrow are present across the character area.

Settlement, road pattern and rights of way

- Development at Elmesthorpe is set on rising topography with housing along Station Road on a localised ridgeline. Buildings are widely spaced and set within mature gardens. Dwellings are generally of red brick and clay tile construction.
- There are a few scattered farms within this character area. Most are fairly large but are well integrated into the landscape by mature vegetation.
- The B581 is the main road through Elmesthorpe and adjoins the A47 which is close to the northern boundary of the LCA. Other roads are primarily small country lanes and access tracks. The M69 forms the eastern boundary of the LCA. The railway also forms a significant linear feature crossing through the LCA.
- A number of footpaths and a bridleway extend into the countryside from Elmesthorpe and provide access to Burbage Common.

Views and perceptual qualities

- There are expansive views across the shallow valley from Bridle Path Road. Wider views are generally enclosed by the undulating topography and vegetation.
- Urban influences within the landscape, particularly along the fringes of Elmesthorpe are reduced by mature vegetation along garden boundaries, low density of housing and relatively few roads through the character area.
- Traffic noise and movement associated with the M69 and A47 impacts on the tranquillity and rural qualities of the landscape.

Landscape evaluation

Summary of current landscape condition

This LCA retains much of its traditional floodplain character, despite some modern intrusions on the fringes, including the Earl Shilton Bypass (A47) and M69. The B581 forms a busy route between villages. There is variation in hedgerow management throughout the LCA. The use of grazing land for horse paddocks around settlements has resulted in visual clutter due to the use of pony tape. Burbage Common is characterised by well managed semi-natural habitats including woodlands and wetlands. Traffic noise from the M69 and rail corridor has a detrimental impact on the otherwise strongly rural landscape.

Key pressures/forces for change

- The proposal for Hinckley National Rail Freight Interchange, if approved, will drastically alter the character of the landscape by introducing significant amounts of industrial and transport infrastructure.
- More intensive farming practice remove or cause loss of trees, waterside vegetation and habitats which would alter the natural character of this area.
- Highway improvements to the lanes and tracks within the area may bring removal of hedgerows and trees and introduce more urban influences.
- Infill development within Elmesthorpe could alter the distinct linear character of the village. This could also increase its prominence on the horizon and the urban influence within the character area.
- Perceptual qualities influenced by the M69, with busy traffic impacting on levels of tranquillity.
- New industrial and residential development leading to a decline in the rural character of the LCA.
- Changes resulting from climate change including alterations of hydrology within the LCA and changes to species composition of riparian habitats.
- Diversification of land uses to non-agricultural enterprises (i.e. residential) and small-holdings (e.g. pony keeping).
- Knock-on effects from an increase in population close to the LCA, including levels of traffic impacting on tranquillity and more demand for countryside access.
- Uncertain future for agriculture (including levels of funding support and market prices for livestock), threatening the viability of the farmed land.

Landscape sensitivity assessment

Criteria	Description	Rating
Physical character (including topography and scale)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Flat or gently sloping topography associated with the River Soar and its tributaries. Elevation ranges between 85 metres and 105 metres AOD. On the floodplain, the flat fields divided by low hedgerows create the perception of a larger-scale landscape. In the north, frequent trees create a sense of enclosure. 	M
Natural character	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parts of Burbage Common extend into the LCA. Burbage Common contains woodlands and wetlands managed for the benefit of wildlife conservation. Riparian vegetation is associated with the watercourse. Fields are divided by a mix of hedgerows and ditches. Poplar and willow trees are associated with the floodplain. 	M
Historic landscape character	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Heritage features include Elmesthorpe church, ruined nave and west tower Scheduled Monument and medieval fish ponds along the watercourse. There are also several Grade II listed buildings. This Historic Landscape Characterisation indicates that fields are planned enclosure and re-organised piecemeal enclosure. Localised pockets of ridge and furrow are present within fields. 	M
Form, density and setting of existing settlement/development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The main settlement is within the linear village of Elmesthorpe, which is in the north of the LCA on a ridgeline. Properties are well-integrated into the landscape by mature vegetation. Development is otherwise limited to isolated farms. The larger settlements of Barwell and Earl Shilton are adjacent to the north (within Hinckley and Bosworth Borough). 	M-H
Views and visual character including skylines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Views are limited by the flat landform and mature vegetation. From some elevated areas there are views across the floodplain, although longer views are limited by woodland. Skylines are generally undeveloped and marked by trees. Houses in Elmesthorpe are located on a ridgeline. 	M
Access and recreation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Burbage Common is a popular recreation destination. Several footpaths and a bridleway extend into the countryside from Elmesthorpe and provide access to Burbage Common. The LCA is crossed by major transport routes including the M69 and A47. The railway line also crosses the landscape. The B581 crosses through Elmesthorpe and is a busy route. Other roads are limited to minor rural lanes. 	M
Perceptual and experiential qualities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strongly rural landscape, despite the presence of traffic on the M69 and A47 which can detract from levels of relative tranquillity. The LCA is mostly self-contained, by the landform and mature vegetation. The floodplain has an expansive character due to the flat landform and ditches dividing the fields. 	M

Overall assessment of landscape sensitivity to development scenarios

Development scenario	Sensitivity				
2-3 storey residential housing / transport infrastructure			M		
Small-scale commercial (B1/B2 use categories)				M-H	
Large scale commercial (warehousing – B8 use category)					H
Notes on any variations in landscape sensitivity					
Higher ground in the north of the LCA has increased sensitivity to development due to the visual prominence of these areas.					

Special landscape qualities and key sensitivities

The following provides a summary of the special landscape qualities and key features/attributes that would be sensitive to change (e.g. as a result of development):

- Valued semi-natural habitats at Burbage Common which are sensitively managed for the benefit of wildlife conservation, including woodland, meadow and wetlands.
- The ridgetop location of the linear settlement of Elmeſthorpe, which is well integrated into the landscape by mature vegetation.
- Strong rural character with high levels of relative tranquillity, particularly away from the major transport routes.
- The rural setting the landscape provides to Elmeſthorpe and Earl Shilton (Hinckley and Bosworth Borough).
- Important heritage features including the Scheduled Monument at Elmeſthorpe Church, medieval fish ponds and several Grade II listed buildings.
- Areas of remaining ridge and furrow within the farmed landscape.
- The self-contained nature of the LCA, with the open and expansive views across the floodplain limited by the landform and woodland.

Guidance and opportunities for future development

Guidance and opportunities to consider for any future development within this Landscape Character Area include:

- Conserve the wetland habitats within the LCA and when opportunities arise seek to expand these to provide wetland links across the character area. Retain and enhance the lush dense vegetation associated with watercourse corridor for visual and wildlife benefit.
- Conserve the enclosed nature of the area through ensuring hedgerows are managed to retain appropriate height and through the sensitive location of new woodland planting to enhance the area.
- Design-in the introduction of SuDS to any new development, addressing any changes in hydrology (and subsequent knock-on effects such as increased diffuse pollution from agricultural run-off).
- Ensure any new development is sensitively sited, aiming to avoid significantly affecting areas of rural character with locally important levels of tranquillity.
- Respect and enhance the existing settlement character, ensuring new development complements existing context with regards to scale, form, materials and boundary features. Retain the rural and vegetated character of the fringes of Elmeſthorpe.
- Avoid development which could impact upon the valued semi-natural habitats at Burbage Common and semi-natural features within the agricultural landscape including ditches and trees.
- Protect the rural working agricultural setting the landscape provides to development. Avoid siting development on the more open, visible slopes and where ridge and furrow is evident.
- Explore opportunities to strengthen and increase the public rights of way network, linking settlements to strategic recreation destinations such as Burbage Common.

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View northeast from the bridleway to the south from Foston



This character area surrounds the small village of Foston, situated between the larger settlements of Kilby and Countesthorpe. The A5199 defines the eastern edge of the character area, while the floodplain of the River Sence marks the northern and western boundaries of this area. The arable landscape has a distinctive vast and exposed character as a result of the large field pattern with limited hedgerows and woodland. Existing settlement in this rural and working agricultural landscape is limited.

Landscape character description

Key characteristics

Topography, geology and drainage

- The landform is gently rolling and rises to a flat plateau around Foston. Topography ranges from the highest point of 110m AOD in the south to 75m AOD in the north. Localised undulations occur within fields at the location of historic field boundaries.
- The bedrock geology of the area is made up of a Blue Lias Formation of interbedded mudstone and limestone with superficial deposits of till. Loam and clay soils are slowly permeable and seasonally wet. The agricultural land classification of this area is Grade 3 (good to moderate).

Land use and field patterns

- Land use is primarily arable. Most fields are large-scale due to past field amalgamation. This combined with poorly managed or absent hedgerows creates an impression of vast swathes of arable land.
- Smaller rectilinear fields are located to the north of Foston Lodge Farm and south of Newstead Farm.

Semi-natural habitats and woodland cover

- Hedgerows are often scrubby and fragmented in appearance. A lack of field boundaries has resulted in few habitats and wildlife corridors across the area. Hedgerow species include of hawthorn with some elder and elm in places. There are scattered mature ash hedgerow trees.
- Woodland is sparse within this LCA, with some small deciduous woodland copses surrounding Foston and Chalybeate Spring in the south.

Archaeology and cultural heritage

- The village of Foston is sited on the location of a deserted medieval village. Some features including a Mill mound are visible, although these features are not formally designated.
- Foston contains the 10th century Church of St Bartholomew, which is Grade II* listed.
- The HER identifies the field pattern to be largely consisting of very large post-war fields with some re-organised piecemeal enclosure in the north between Foston Lodge Farm and Wayside Farm.

Settlement, road pattern and rights of way

- Settlement is relatively sparse with Foston village made up of a few small terraces, a large country house, a farm and the church of St Bartholomew. Scattered large farms are mostly present within the northern part of the character area where they are visible due to little boundary vegetation.
- Foston is located on a plateau but is well concealed by trees from the surrounding landscape, with Foston Hall Farm being visible from directly north and south. The wooded, enclosed nature of Foston is in strong contrast to the exposed nature of the surroundings.
- Houses and farmsteads are mostly red brick, while agricultural sheds tend to be constructed of metal. The church is the only stone building within the character area. One derelict red brick farm building lies in the middle of a field in the southeast of the LCA.
- There are relatively few roads within the character area. Welford Road (A5199) forms the boundary to the east and two smaller lanes run through the central part of the area and connect Foston to other villages in the district. Numerous footpaths and bridleways transect the area.

Views and perceptual qualities

- Views across the large arable fields are expansive due to the gentle landform, low hedgerows and limited woodland. Numerous telegraph poles are present in the landscape, crossing through fields although these are not prominent features. Pylons to the north of the LCA are visible on skylines.
- On the flat plateaux there are uninterrupted views towards the southern urban fringes of Countesthorpe in the west and Wigston (Oadby and Wigston District) to the north. These settlements are visually prominent due to the open character and slightly elevated landform.
- Some churches are also visible in distant views, including the Grade II listed church of St Andrew in Countesthorpe, the spire of the Grade I listed All Saints Church in Wigston to the north and the spire of the Grade I listed All Saints Church in Peatling Manor to the south.
- The area is rural and isolated with few roads intruding into the landscape. The open and vast character enhanced by the limited field boundary vegetation. Woodland creates a localised and strongly contrasting sense of enclosure at Foston.

Landscape evaluation

Summary of current landscape condition

The LCA is distinctively rural and open with a large-scale character. While some parts of the area have retained their historic character (e.g. the village of Foston), much of the landscape has been subject to agricultural intensification and enlargement. The area has experienced a decline and fragmentation of the hedgerow network, with long lengths suffering from a lack of management. Field boundaries are scarce compared to elsewhere in the district. To the southeast of Foston village is a large derelict building.

Key pressures/forces for change

- Continued decline of the existing hedgerows as a result of poor management would lead to a greater degree of exposure and openness of the landscape. The loss of hedgerow corridors could increase the degree of ecological isolation of the existing woodland blocks.
- Development or expansion of Foston would be highly visible within the open landscape and would remodel the character of the landscape, requiring considerable woodland screening to maintain its current character.
- Continued development pressure from adjacent urban areas such as Countesthorpe to the west, for new housing or other facilities such as schools or sports pitches. Countesthorpe is highly visible from the character area and further development and urbanisation could have adverse impacts on the LCA.
- Lack of, or poor hedgerow boundaries means that traffic on the A5199 creates localised sound and visual disruption, negatively impacting levels of tranquillity.
- Uncertain future for agriculture (including levels of funding support and market prices for livestock).
- Change in woodland/tree species composition as new pests/diseases spread (particularly phytophthora pathogens) this could be particularly damaging to mature ash hedgerow trees. Invasive species may also become more prevalent. Individual trees may become more susceptible to damage from more frequent and intense storm events.
- Potential changes to renewable energy subsidies and markets leading to increased demand for wind turbines within the more open and elevated landscapes in parts of the LCA.

Landscape sensitivity assessment

Criteria	Description	Rating
Physical character (including topography and scale)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gently rolling landform rising to a flat plateau around Foston with localised undulations. Topography ranges from 110m AOD to 75m AOD. Large scale open agricultural character, with limited hedgerow boundaries. 	M
Natural character	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Predominantly large-scale arable fields, which are generally bound by scrubby and fragmented hedgerows. Several hedgerow boundaries have been removed in the last century. Woodland is sparse, with some small copses of deciduous woodlands particularly surrounding Foston. Scattered mature hedgerow trees, which are mostly ash. Reed Pool Spinney is in the south of the LCA and contains Chalybeate Spring. Small brooks and streams passing through the character area have limited riparian vegetation. 	L-M
Historic landscape character	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The site of the Foston deserted medieval village is situated in the centre of the area. Foston contains the Grade II* designated Church of St Bartholomew. Some parts of the church originate from the 10th century. The HER indicates that most fields are very large post-war fields with some re-organised piecemeal enclosure in the north. 	M
Form, density and setting of existing settlement/development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Settlement is sparse. The village of Foston contains a few small terraces, a large country house and the church of St Bartholomew. Foston is enclosed by woodland and has limited intervisibility with the surrounding countryside. Large farms are mostly scattered in the north of the LCA. Houses and farmsteads are mostly red brick, the church is stone and agricultural sheds tend to be constructed of metal. There is intervisibility with the settlements of Countesthorpe to the west and Wigston to the north of the character area. 	M-H
Views and visual character including skylines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Views are expansive and open due to the large fields with low hedgerows. On the flat plateau there are uninterrupted views towards the southern urban fringes of Countesthorpe to the west and Wigston to the north. Pylons are visible on the skyline to the north. Woodland copses surrounding Foston form visual screening. A tall agricultural silo is the only development which breaks through the tree cover. 	M-H
Access and recreation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There are relatively few roads within the character area. Welford Road (A5199) forms the eastern boundary of the LCA and two smaller lanes run through the central part of the area, connecting Foston to other villages in the district. Numerous footpaths and bridleways transect the area, linking Foston to other settlements. 	L-M
Perceptual and experiential qualities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Open and expansive rural landscape, with limited built features, although there is intervisibility with development in adjacent character areas. Traffic on the A5199 creates localised sound and visual disruption, negatively impacting levels of tranquillity. This is intensified by a lack of screening from hedgerows. 	M

Overall assessment of landscape sensitivity to development scenarios

Development scenario	Sensitivity				
2-3 storey residential housing / transport infrastructure			M		
Small-scale commercial (B1/B2 use categories)					H
Large scale commercial (warehousing – B8 use category)					H
Notes on any variations in landscape sensitivity					
There are no major variations in sensitivity throughout the character area.					

Special landscape qualities and key sensitivities

The following provides a summary of the special landscape qualities and key features/attributes that would be sensitive to change (e.g. as a result of development):

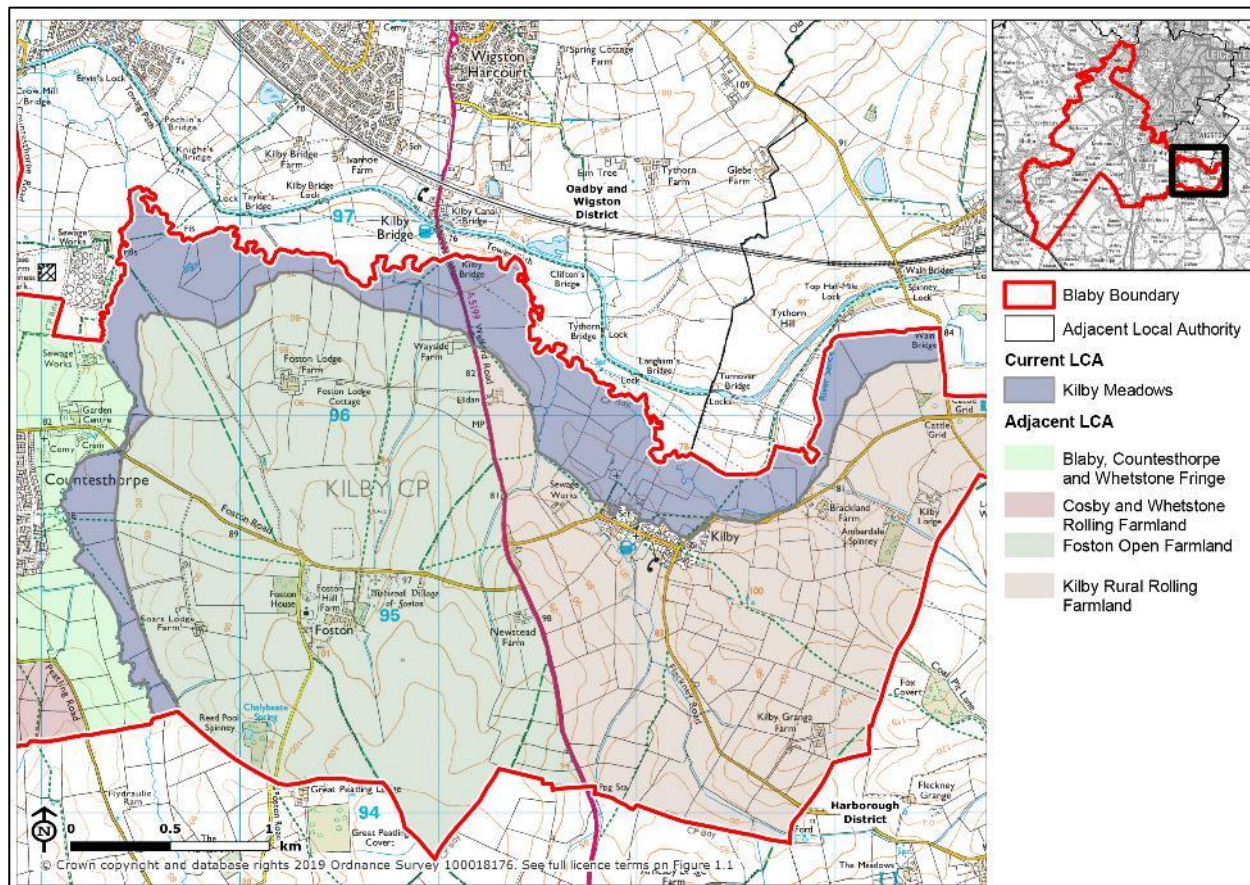
- Prominent open, expansive, rolling arable fields, with strong visual connections to the surrounding landscape.
- Localised high points such as the plateau Foston village is situated on and visible slopes including those along the western edge of the character area.
- Pockets of deciduous woodlands, especially surrounding Foston village. Hedgerow boundaries contain scattered mature trees, often ash.
- Historic associations including Foston deserted medieval village as well as the Grade II* designated Church of St Bartholomew.
- Sparse settlement which is well concealed by woodland where present.
- Open and expansive views with wide horizons, particularly from the more elevated land in the south.
- Small woodland areas and mature hedgerow and in-field trees punctuate the otherwise largely undeveloped skylines.
- A rural and working agricultural landscape with high levels of isolation and tranquillity, particularly away from main roads.

Guidance and opportunities for future development

Guidance and opportunities to consider for any future development within this Landscape Character Area include:

- Avoid development on visually prominent slopes and the elevated and exposed plateau near Foston.
- Promote better management of hedgerow boundaries and encourage the installation of new hedgerow boundaries where agriculturally viable. Improved management, possibly through agri-environmental schemes would add interest to the open landscape and could improve the wildlife value and aesthetic appearance of existing hedgerows.
- Conserve the open expansive views from high ground through ensuring new planting does not increase the enclosure of the landscape by planting isolated hedgerow trees and small copses on lower ground and around buildings.
- Planting to screen the visual impact of development in neighbouring LCAs should also be considered. Species used in woodland and hedgerow planting should be in keeping with existing species but should also be more diverse to ensure resistance against the spread of new pests/diseases spread.
- Development should avoid areas in which it may influence historic features of the landscape such as the Grade II* listed Church of St Bartholomew or the site of the deserted medieval village.
- Development should be in keeping with the current small and scale sparse settlement pattern, with any development screened with trees where possible.
- Protect and conserve perceptions of tranquillity away from busy roads.

Kilby Meadows



Representative photographs



Location and summary of overall character

The character area is a narrow strip of land following the flat southern floodplain of the River Sence (which forms the Blaby District boundary) and extending to follow a small tributary brook that runs to the east of Countesthorpe. The area has a naturalistic character in many parts, provided by the riparian vegetation following the watercourses, generally well managed hedgerows, low intensity agriculture and a relative absence of built development. Settlement within the character area is limited and the area has overall rural and self-contained qualities.

Landscape character description

Key characteristics

Topography, geology and drainage

- The character area follows the flat low-lying floodplain of the River Sence to the north and the course of a tributary to the west, with topography ranging from 75m to 80m AOD. The landform is level close to the river banks and rises towards the southern edges of the character area (north of Kilby).
- The bedrock geology of the area is made up of a Blue Lias Formation of interbedded mudstone and limestone. There are superficial alluvium deposits associated with the river.
- The Agricultural Land Classification identifies most soils here to be Grade 4 (poor quality). Soils are mostly loamy and clayey with naturally high groundwater.

Land use and field patterns

- Land use is agricultural with a mix of arable, rough grassland, horse paddocks and hay meadows. Many parts of the character area are cattle or sheep grazed.
- Fields tend to be large scale and irregular in shape, with boundaries often following the sinuous route of the River Sence. Field pattern becomes noticeably smaller adjacent to the northern fringes of Kilby where scrub establishment and mature hedgerows are common.
- Fields are mostly enclosed by riparian vegetation and mature hedgerows, with ditches a common boundary feature close to the river. Some hedgerows have been replaced by post and wire fences.

Semi-natural habitats and woodland cover

- There are frequent areas of wetland meadow within the agricultural landscape.
- The sinuous route of the River Sence is defined by riparian woodland with willow forming the predominant species. There are also some isolated copses of deciduous woodland.
- Hedgerow boundaries are generally well managed and species diverse with dominant species including ash, oak, willow and hawthorn. Hedgerow trees are more densely concentrated in the east and become less frequent as the field pattern becomes larger and less vegetated to the west.

Archaeology and cultural heritage

- The landscape includes and provides rural setting to two Grade II listed buildings; the Church of St Mary Magdalene and the barn behind the church.
- The HLC indicates that much of the field pattern is re-organised piecemeal enclosure with a localised area of very large post-war fields in the east.

Settlement, road pattern and rights of way

- The Church of St Mary Magdalene and the barn behind the church are the only buildings in the LCA. Despite the limited settlement, pylons are a dominant built feature.
- There is strong association with the traditional agricultural village of Kilby situated directly south of the LCA, whilst Countesthorpe to the west of the LCA is screened by riparian woodland.
- The LCA is mostly inaccessible by road. Foston Road, the A5199 (Welford Road) and Kilby Road briefly cross the LCA. Several footpaths and a bridleway cross through the LCA connecting surrounding settlements.

Views and perceptual qualities

- Views tend to be channelled along the long fields and the floodplain and are generally enclosed due to the low-lying topography and mature woodland and hedgerows.
- The rooftops of the village of Kilby are visible on the southern edge of the character area but are generally well screened by mature boundary vegetation.
- A line of pylons crosses the character area at localised points but is also visually prominent in skylines to the north of the LCA.
- The area has rural and naturalistic perceptual qualities influenced by semi-natural vegetation and sinuous watercourses. The lack of development creates an area of high tranquillity.
- There are limited and localised influences of traffic noise from the A5199 (Welford Road).

Landscape evaluation

Summary of current landscape condition

An area of well-managed agricultural land, containing frequent areas which are set-aside as wetland meadow. The LCA retains much of its traditional agricultural character with many field patterns remaining largely unchanged, particularly in the east. Riparian vegetation following the sinuous water courses, well managed hedgerows and low intensity agriculture all give the area a naturalistic feel. There are some localised areas of hedgerow replacement with post and wire fences in the west, which reduces enclosure and opens up views. Pylons are the most distinctive and intrusive built feature within the character area, marking skylines as well as being prominent in views to north of the LCA.

Key pressures/forces for change

- Potential increases in development along the settlement edges of Wigston, Countesthorpe or Kilby, or a decrease in screening the settlements may exert a more prominent urbanising effect on the LCA.
- Continued loss of field boundaries and replacement with post and wire fences would open the landscape and giving it a larger scale and reducing its ability to screen development in surrounding areas.
- The future spread of pests and diseases (particularly phytophthora pathogens) could alter the species composition woodlands and hedgerows, this could be particularly damaging to mature ash hedgerow trees.
- Diversification of agriculture may alter how the landscape is managed. This may become particularly evident if farms in the agricultural village of Kilby follow the current trend of conversion to residential properties.
- The landscape is floodplain and is likely to be subject to frequent flooding. Changes to river management and more frequent flooding as a result of climate changes could therefore alter the character of this area.
- Increasing development and population in nearby settlements will create increased recreational pressures on the landscape, particularly for the use of public rights of way.

Landscape sensitivity assessment

Criteria	Description	Rating
Physical character (including topography and scale)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Flat, low-lying river and stream floodplain. Elevation ranges from 75m AOD to 80m AOD. The character area follows the River Sence and one of its small stream tributaries. There is seasonal flooding in some parts of the LCA. The high level of enclosure provided by hedgerows and narrow woodlands create a small-scale landscape. 	L-M
Natural character	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mixed agricultural land use with rough grassland, horse paddocks, hay meadow and arable growing on fertile lowland. Narrow riparian woodland follows the route of the River Sence and its tributary stream in the south. There are also some more isolated woodland pockets. Hedgerows are well-managed and contain ash, oak, willow and hawthorn including scattered mature hedgerow trees. 	M-H
Historic landscape character	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rural setting provided to the Grade II listed buildings the Church of St Mary Magdalene and the barn behind the church. The HLC indicates most of the field pattern is re-organised piecemeal enclosure with an area of very large post-war fields in the east. Much of the landscape is managed as traditional meadowland pasture. 	M
Form, density and setting of existing settlement/development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The area is undeveloped, with the Church of St Mary Magdalene and the barn behind the church forming the only buildings in the LCA. Kilby is situated directly south of the LCA and is well integrated with the LCA, situated on lower-lying land. Whilst Countesthorpe directly west of the LCA, is screened by mature vegetation. Urbanising features include pylons, road infrastructure within the character area as well as intervisibility with surrounding settlements and a sewage treatment works. 	M-H
Views and visual character including skylines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Much of the area is enclosed by hedgerow boundaries however there is some intervisibility with surrounding landscape particularly the sloping valley sides. Views tend to be channelled along the floodplain, where not disrupted by hedgerows. The stream valley landform helps to further enclose this area from surrounding LCAs. Pylons mark the skylines where they cross into the LCA, as well as being visually prominent in views north. 	M
Access and recreation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Road access is limited. The A5199, Foston Road and Kilby Road briefly cross the LCA. Several footpaths and a bridleway cross through the character area. A playing field is located on the northern edge of Kilby. 	M
Perceptual and experiential qualities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The area has a strong rural agricultural character with naturalistic features such as riparian vegetation along the watercourse and mature hedgerows. There is minimal built development within the character area creating a sense of isolation and tranquillity. Intervisibility of pylons introduce an urbanising feature to this landscape and are visually intrusive. 	M

Overall assessment of landscape sensitivity to development scenarios

Development scenario	Sensitivity				
2-3 storey residential housing / transport infrastructure			M		
Small-scale commercial (B1/B2 use categories)					H
Large scale commercial (warehousing – B8 use category)					H
Notes on any variations in landscape sensitivity					
<p>Areas with high intervisibility with Kilby have a higher sensitivity to all development scenarios as the landscape provides rural setting to the historic village.</p> <p>In the northwest of the LCA where fields are more open there is an increased landscape sensitivity as there are fewer opportunities to screen development and a higher degree of intervisibility with the surrounding landscape.</p>					

Special landscape qualities and key sensitivities

The following provides a summary of the special landscape qualities and key features/attributes that would be sensitive to change (e.g. as a result of development):

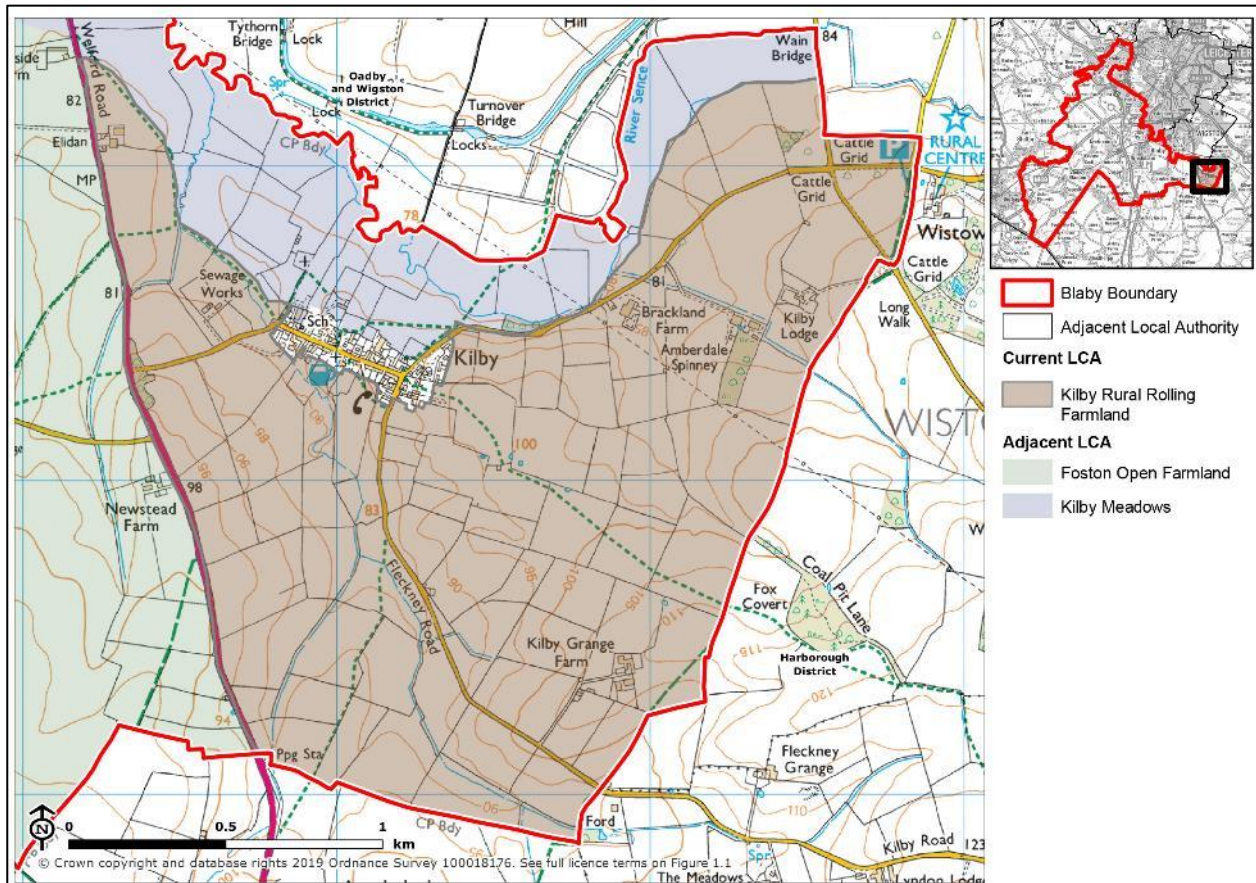
- Flat topography associated with the broad floodplain of the River Sence and one of its tributaries.
- The enclosed landscape character associated with smaller fields and mature hedgerow boundaries in the east near Kilby.
- The sinuous line of brooks and streams and their associated riparian vegetation as well as pockets of deciduous woodland provide an important ecological resource.
- Mature hedgerows containing a diverse range of species and frequent mature trees, particularly in the east and along the watercourse.
- Low intensity agriculture with rough grazing land and lowland meadows.
- Undeveloped rural landscape which provides a backdrop to the traditional village of Kilby.
- A rural and remote landscape character despite relative proximity to built development and the presence of pylons.

Guidance and opportunities for future development

Guidance and opportunities to consider for any future development within this Landscape Character Area include:

- Ensure development is of an appropriate scale for the relatively enclosed landscape, particularly in the east.
- Protect and conserve the existing ecological habitats including riparian vegetation and deciduous woodlands.
- Protect and enhance existing hedgerow boundaries, using them to screen development where possible.
- Ensure the traditional low-intensity management of the landscape is retained to protect the historic feel of the landscape.
- Ensure any future development is only placed where it can be suitably screened by vegetation or the landform.
- Protect and conserve the rural feel of the landscape by ensuring that new development is well placed and of a suitable scale for the landscape.

Kilby Rolling Rural Farmland



Representative photographs



Location and summary of overall character

The character area is situated to the south of Kilby, in the south-east of Blaby District. The A5199 (Welford Road) defines the western boundary of the character area, while the south and eastern boundaries follow the Blaby District boundary. The landform is gently rolling and locally influenced by watercourses. The village of Kilby is nestled within lower land along the northern boundary of the character area. The area is characterised by an irregular small-moderate scale field pattern with frequent mature hedgerow trees, small brooks and streams.

Landscape character description

Key characteristics

Topography, geology and drainage

- The topography is gently rolling with small streams and brooks influencing the topography of the area. Elevation ranges from 110m AOD in the south-east near Kilby Grange Farm to 80m AOD in the north.
- The bedrock geology of the area is made up of a Blue Lias Formation of interbedded mudstone and limestone. Superficial alluvium deposits are associated with streams and brooks.
- The Agricultural Land Classification identifies the land within the LCA as Grade 3 (good to moderate quality). Soils are loamy and clayey with impeded drainage.

Land use and field patterns

- The landcover is predominantly agricultural with a mix of rough grazing, meadow and arable farmland. There is a mixture of livestock present including cattle, sheep as well as some alpacas and horse grazing.
- Field pattern is small to moderate in scale and irregular in pattern, with some larger fields in the northeast near Wistow. Fields are enclosed by well-maintained hedgerows.
- A small pocket of parkland associated with the adjacent Wistow Estate (within Harborough District) is located on the north-eastern tip of the character area. This is characterised by avenues of specimen trees along roads, timber fences, cattle grids and free-roaming livestock on roads.

Semi-natural habitats and woodland cover

- Tree cover is varied with frequent hedgerow trees, clumps of woodland, and wetland vegetation around small ponds and streams. There is a small area of young planted woodland directly south of Kilby.
- Isolated mature trees in the middle of fields and mature hedgerow trees (predominantly ash) are characteristic of the area. Numerous horse chestnut and oak avenue trees are located along Wistow Road and contribute to a parkland character in the east.
- Hedgerows are of varying height and contain diverse species including blackthorn and hawthorn. They often appear to be well-managed; however this is less apparent on higher ground. Wide field margins are associated with the streams.

Archaeology and cultural heritage

- Historic designations within the character area include Grade II listed buildings located in Kilby as well as the Grade II listed Kilby Lodge.
- The HLC indicates that the field pattern is a mix of re-organised piecemeal enclosure, very large post-war fields and planned enclosure containing ridge and furrow.
- In the northeast, the parkland influences from Wistow (east of the LCA) have a localised effect on character, with features such as avenues of trees giving the area a strong sense of time depth.

Settlement, road pattern and rights of way

- Built form is mostly restricted to the village of Kilby, a small village with a linear settlement pattern, nestled within the landform. The village has a distinctive building vernacular; the dominant building material is red brick with a mixture of slate and dark grey tile roofs. Large farmsteads are scattered throughout the surrounding landscape.
- The road network is minimal, some have a country estate character with avenues of mature trees and gated entrances. The A5188 (Welford Road) forms the western boundary of the LCA
- Several footpaths radiate from Kilby into the surrounding area. A bridleway follows the LCA's eastern edge.

Views and perceptual qualities

- Views vary across the character area with long distance views towards Kilby Meadow LCA, and over the lower-lying land in the south of the LCA. Views on lower ground tend to be restricted by localised undulations and mature trees.
- Pylons cross the character area near Brackland Farm in the north-east. Pylons are often set on lower ground and backgrounded by woodland, minimising their impact on the landscape.
- The area has a remote, rural and peaceful character these combined features give the area a highly tranquil perceptual character.
- There are some localised intrusions from although busy traffic on Welford Road (A5199) introducing sound pollution.

Landscape evaluation

Summary of current landscape condition

The area is a generally well maintained rural and traditional landscape. The landscape is divided by hedgerows containing mature trees, which are frequent and in good condition. On higher ground hedgerows appear less intensively managed. There are localised areas of horse keeping particularly near Kilby, which can detract from the landscape character through the subdivision of fields. The settlement pattern within the area maintains historic connections to agriculture and has retained its traditional building vernacular, despite the conversion of many agricultural buildings to residential.

Key pressures/forces for change

- Changing agricultural practices could alter land use and landcover, particularly field expansion to create larger enclosures for arable farming.
- Pressure for housing developments, conversion of farm buildings to dwellings and unsympathetic expansion of Kilby could alter the character of the village and the surrounding landscape. This could weaken its strong association with farm buildings and traditional vernacular, as well as increasing prominence of the settlement in the landscape.
- Knock-on effects from an increase in population close to the LCA, including levels of traffic impacting on tranquillity and demand for countryside access.
- Loss of individual trees around Wistow Estate could dilute the sense of time-depth and reduce the connections of the LCA with the parkland.
- Evidence of farm diversification to non-agricultural enterprises (i.e. residential) and small-holdings (e.g. pony keeping).
- Exposed in-field trees may become more susceptible to damage from more frequent and intense storm events as a result of climate change. These may also be less likely to be replaced if lost.
- Change in woodland/tree species composition as new pests/diseases spread (particularly phytophthora pathogens). This could be particularly damaging to mature ash hedgerow trees which are characteristic of this LCA and the horse-chestnut trees associated with the Wistow Parkland.

Landscape sensitivity assessment

Criteria	Description	Rating
Physical character (including topography and scale)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gently rolling topography with localised small-scale intrusions from streams and brooks. Elevation ranges from 110m to 80m AOD in the north. Field pattern gives the area a small to moderate scale, with well enclosed irregular fields. 	M
Natural character	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mixed pastoral and arable land. Most fields are small-medium scale and bound by well managed hedgerows. Some small blocks of deciduous woodlands are found in the area. Semi-natural features include woodland blocks, wide field margins following streams, mature hedgerow and in-field trees and well managed diverse hedgerows. In the north-east is a small area with parkland character. 	M
Historic landscape character	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The landscape provides setting for some Grade II listed buildings. The field pattern includes planned enclosure containing ridge and furrow, as well as areas of very large post-war fields near Wistow and re-organised piecemeal enclosure. The parkland estate character near Wistow introduces time-depth to the north eastern part of the LCA. 	M
Form, density and setting of existing settlement/development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The small village of Kilby has a linear settlement pattern and is nestled within the lower lying landform. The area is predominantly rural with large farmsteads scattered across the character area. Buildings have a traditional red brick vernacular with a mixture of slate and dark grey tile roofs. 	M-H
Views and visual character including skylines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Views from the higher undulating land in the north are open and expansive, extending across the valley of the River Sence to the north. Pylons mark the otherwise undeveloped skylines within the character area. Mature trees, both within fields and hedgerows as well as woodland blocks create wooded skylines in the area. 	M
Access and recreation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is a minimal road network, with Wistow Road being the only source of significant traffic. Multiple public footpaths cross through the area, mostly connecting roads. A bridle path follows the eastern edge of the character area. 	M
Perceptual and experiential qualities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The area has a rural and isolated character, with few modern influences, this gives the area a high tranquillity Features such as traffic noise from Wistow Road and the pylon route detract from the perceptual character of the landscape although their influence on the landscape is minimal. 	M-H

Overall assessment of landscape sensitivity to development scenarios

Development scenario	Sensitivity				
2-3 storey residential housing / transport infrastructure			M		
Small-scale commercial (B1/B2 use categories)				M-H	
Large scale commercial (warehousing – B8 use category)					H
Notes on any variations in landscape sensitivity					
<p>Lower lying ground, particularly along streams and on the settlement edge of Kilby has a higher coverage of vegetation and is more nestled within the landform. These areas could possibly screen small, sensitively-designed residential developments.</p> <p>Elevated and exposed sloping land such as that near Kilby Grange Farm (among other areas) has elevated sensitivity to all development scenarios as it is more visually prominent.</p>					

Special landscape qualities and key sensitivities

The following provides a summary of the special landscape qualities and key features/attributes that would be sensitive to change (e.g. as a result of development):

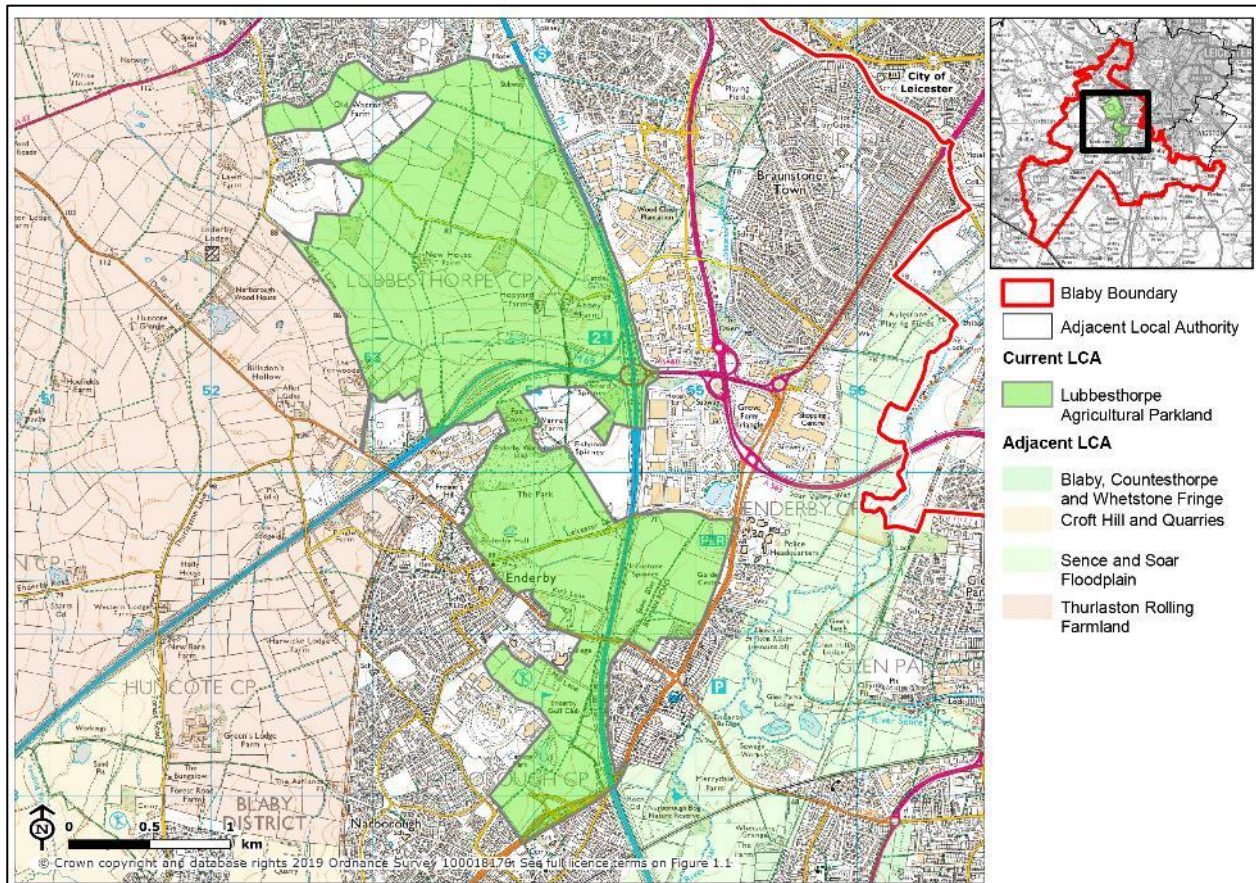
- Undulating farmland with a mixture of arable and grazing land, with thick, well-maintained hedgerows and scattered trees.
- Areas of remaining ridge and furrow located within the agricultural landscape.
- Woodland blocks, wide field margins following streams, mature hedgerow and in-field trees and well-managed hedgerows.
- A sense of time-depth associated with the landscape close to the Wistow estate due to the presence of avenues of trees and estate fencing.
- The village of Kilby nestled into the landscape, situated on lower topography. The LCA provides an undeveloped rural setting to this settlement which contains several listed buildings.
- Wooded skylines as a result of frequent mature in-field and hedgerow trees.
- Tranquil rural area with a relatively undeveloped road network.

Guidance and opportunities for future development

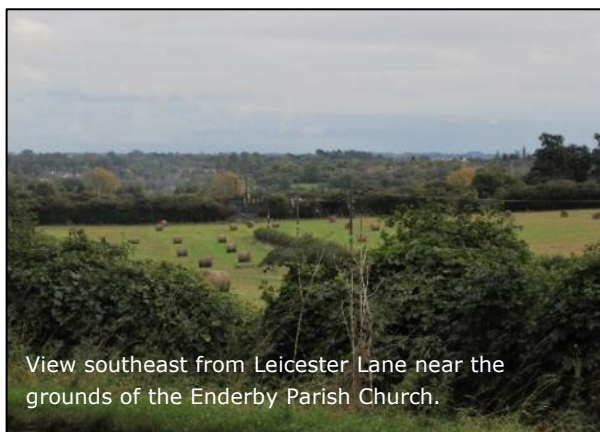
Guidance and opportunities to consider for any future development within this Landscape Character Area include:

- Conserve existing levels of woodland and tree cover through new planting and management where necessary. This will ensure vegetation which is characteristic of the area does not become over-mature and removed, and overall tree coverage levels do not fall.
- Preserve good quality hedgerows. Farming practice has a significant impact on the landscape character; ensuring good practices continue will assist in retaining the well managed and thick hedgerows in this character area.
- Conserve the small, rural and nestling character of Kilby. Retain the agricultural character of the village by ensuring conversions and new development have key agricultural features such as courtyards
- Protect and where appropriate restore tree planting within fields to enhance the parkland characteristic in the eastern part of the character area.
- Conserve the generally wooded horizon through maintenance of the existing woodland resource and selective replanting around field boundary fringes.
- Preserve the rural, removed and tranquil character of the landscape by ensuring that intrusive or visually prominent development is avoided.

Lubbesthorpe Agricultural Parkland



Representative photographs



Location and summary of overall character

Note: This is the site of New Lubbesthorpe, a sustainable urban extension of approximately 4,000 new dwellings and associated facilities, situated between the M1 and Beggars Lane. The first Phase of the development commenced in 2014. A strategic employment site on the land to the north of Leicester Lane, Enderby was permitted in 2017 and is partially built. The land to the east of the M1 is allocated for employment. This LCA is located towards the north of Blaby District. It is an agricultural landscape largely enclosed by built form, lying between the settlements of Leicester Forest East to the north, Enderby to the south and Braunstone to the east. Topography is gently undulating and overlain by mixed agricultural land uses. Significant blocks of woodland, the parkland setting of Enderby Hall and a sparse network of roads combine to make this a distinctly rural landscape, despite the urban influences from the edges of this LCA and the presence of the M69 and M1.

Landscape character description

Key characteristics

Topography, geology and drainage

- The topography is gently undulating, ranging from 70m AOD to the east of the Fosse Way Roman road in the east of the LCA to 105m AOD along the edge of Leicester Forest East.
- Underlying bedrock is primarily Triassic mudstone, siltstone and sandstone, overlain by glacial till. The disused Enderby Warren Quarry is of national importance for its geological features and is designated as a Special Site of Scientific Interest.
- A stream flows to the north of the M69 and has minimal influence on landscape character, despite being prone to flooding. There are several in-field ponds scattered around the LCA, some of which are in the parkland associated with Enderby Hall.

Land use and field patterns

- Land use is predominantly mixed agriculture. The field pattern tends to be regular in shape, but sizes vary, with fields around Enderby Hall being significantly larger.
- Field enclosure at Enderby Hall is created by mature woodland planting and topographical changes on the former quarry and landfill site at Enderby Warren Quarry.

Semi-natural habitats and woodland cover

- Blocks of native deciduous woodland occur throughout the LCA, and tend to be located on higher ground. In some pasture fields along the stream there is semi-improved grassland priority habitat. Mature specimen trees within grazing land create a strong parkland setting around Enderby Hall and mark the boundary between Enderby and Leicester. There are also scattered mature oak and ash hedgerow trees.
- Hedgerow field boundaries are generally well maintained, although low in height, consisting mostly of hawthorn with elder and sparse hedgerow trees.

Archaeology and cultural heritage

- There is a Scheduled Monument near Abbey Farm; Lubbesthorpe Medieval Settlement. The remaining surface level evidence limited to earthworks and some evidence of ridge and furrow agricultural remains. The Fosse Way public footpath follows the route of a Roman Road.
- The HLC identifies the field pattern as mostly piecemeal enclosure and planned enclosure, although there are patches of other pattern types including an area of ridge and furrow in the south of the LCA.
- Enderby Conservation Area is located in the south of the LCA and extends into The Park within the LCA. The Grade II* listed Church of St John the Baptist is situated on the southwest edge of the character area and has some intervisibility with the landscape. Land associated with The Grade II listed Enderby Hall retains a notably rural feel and exerts a strong parkland influence over the landscape.

Settlement, road pattern and rights of way

- A significant proportion of the north of the character area is part of a new residential development, which commenced in 2014. Once complete the development will be an urban extension, known as New Lubbesthorpe. The LCA provides a sense of rural separation between the surrounding settlements of Leicester Forest East to the north, Braunstone Town to the east and Enderby to the south.
- The LCA is crossed by the M1 and M69 motorways.
- The accessibility of the LCA is supported by a network of footpaths including part of the Fosse Way and a bridleway which runs in a northerly direction from Leicester Lane. Publicly accessible land is limited to the cemetery and church grounds of Church of St John the Baptist.

Views and perceptual qualities

- Views are mostly restricted to short-to-medium distances and are often limited by large industrial development, rolling landform and vegetation.
- Localised high points provide long views and open countryside punctuated by woodland blocks which form focal points and the urban fringe of Leicester to the northeast.
- Mature vegetation associated with the M1, screens views outside the LCA to the east. Traffic on the M1 and M69 cause considerable disruption to this LCA.
- Several pylon routes cross the LCA, converging in the west of the LCA, this is visually prominent throughout much of the character area. Turbines to the northwest of the LCA are also visible in distant views.

Landscape evaluation

Summary of current landscape condition

This LCA is fragmented by the M1 and M69, with the noise and movement of traffic exerting a strong influence on the landscape. The north west of the character area retains a more rural character and the influence of major roads on the landscape is reduced. The building of New Lubbesthorpe commenced in 2014 with the new town situated in the north of the character area. Despite its urban surroundings and influences, the primary land use is still agriculture.

Key pressures/forces for change

- Plans for the urban extension of New Lubbesthorpe and its associated strategic employment site will dramatically alter the character of the landscape due to a significant change in land use for much of the area, with the construction of significant amounts of residential and employment development. The development of the employment land allocation to the west of the B4114 would also alter views and landscape character.
- In addition to the built development, New Lubbesthorpe also aims to include 325 acres of new parklands, with over half of the site planned to be open space. The plans also seek to conserve and enhance wildlife habitats.
- Knock-on effects from an increase in population in the LCA, including levels of traffic impacting on tranquillity and more demand for countryside access.
- Uncertain future for agriculture (including levels of funding support and market prices for livestock), potentially leading to changes in management or land use.
- Further diversification of land uses to non-agricultural enterprises, with associated loss of traditional landscape features such as the remaining hedgerow network and in-field ponds.
- Already sparse hedgerow trees and mature trees such as those in the parkland around Enderby Hall may become more susceptible to damage from more frequent and intense storm events as a result of climate change. The remaining stock will need replacing in the coming years to maintain their presence as key landscape features in the longer term.

Landscape sensitivity assessment

Criteria	Description	Rating
Physical character (including topography and scale)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gently undulating topography with the highest elevation at 105m AOD and its lowest point being 70m AOD. The disused Enderby Warren Quarry is designated as a SSSI for its geological features. The irregular field pattern creates localised variations in scale with a mixture of small to large fields being present. 	L-M
Natural character	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agriculture is the dominant land use. Mature woodland is located throughout the area, particularly associated with Enderby Hall. Habitats include pockets of deciduous woodlands and semi-improved grasslands. There are scattered oak and ash hedgerow trees and mature specimen trees near Enderby Hall. A stream crosses the LCA to the north of the M69. Several in-field ponds are located within the LCA. 	M
Historic landscape character	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Lubbesthorpe Medieval Settlement Scheduled Monument lies to the north of the M69. The HLC indicated the field pattern is mostly piecemeal enclosure and planned enclosure although there is an area of ridge and furrow in the south. There is localised intervisibility with the Grade II* listed Church of St John the Baptist in the west of the LCA. Enderby Hall exerts a parkland character north of Leicester Lane. The Fosse Way follows the route of a Roman Road. 	M
Form, density and setting of existing settlement/development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The LCA provides a rural sense of separation between surrounding settlements, with Leicester Forest East to the north, Braunstone Town to the east and Enderby to the south. The landscape area is experiencing considerable ongoing development. Phase one of the development of New Lubbesthorpe commenced in 2014. In the south lies a large business park centred on the distinctive Santander Building and new warehouses in the Leicester Commercial Park. 	M
Views and visual character including skylines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Long distance views are limited to localised areas of higher ground, elsewhere views are restricted by large industrial developments, woodland blocks and the rolling landform. Pylons which cross the LCA near the M69 are visually prominent and intrusive on skylines. Newer residential and commercial developments are visually prominent and create hard urban edges. Woodland blocks are distinctive on skylines and contrast the otherwise lack of mature trees. 	L-M
Access and recreation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The road infrastructure within the LCA is well developed, with two motorways (the M1 and M69) crossing the area. The road network has been altered in the north to accommodate New Lubbesthorpe. A limited number of public rights of way cross the LCA including a bridleway and the Fosse Way following an old Roman Road. There is a considerable amount of recreational land including playing fields and golf courses. However, a small proportion of this is publically accessible. 	L-M
Perceptual and experiential qualities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The M1 and M69 motorways introduce significant noise to the LCA. Pylons are visually prominent and intrusive on skylines. Warehouses and business parks are visually prominent and detract from the agricultural character. Land near Enderby Hall retains its localised parkland character with mature in field specimen trees. 	L-M

Overall assessment of landscape sensitivity to development scenarios

Development scenario	Sensitivity				
2-3 storey residential housing / transport infrastructure		L-M			
Small-scale commercial (B1/B2 use categories)			M		
Large scale commercial (warehousing – B8 use category)			M		
Notes on any variations in landscape sensitivity					
The area to the north of Leicester Lane has an elevated sensitivity to development due to its parkland characteristic features.					

Special landscape qualities and key sensitivities

The following provides a summary of the special landscape qualities and key features/attributes that would be sensitive to change (e.g. as a result of development):

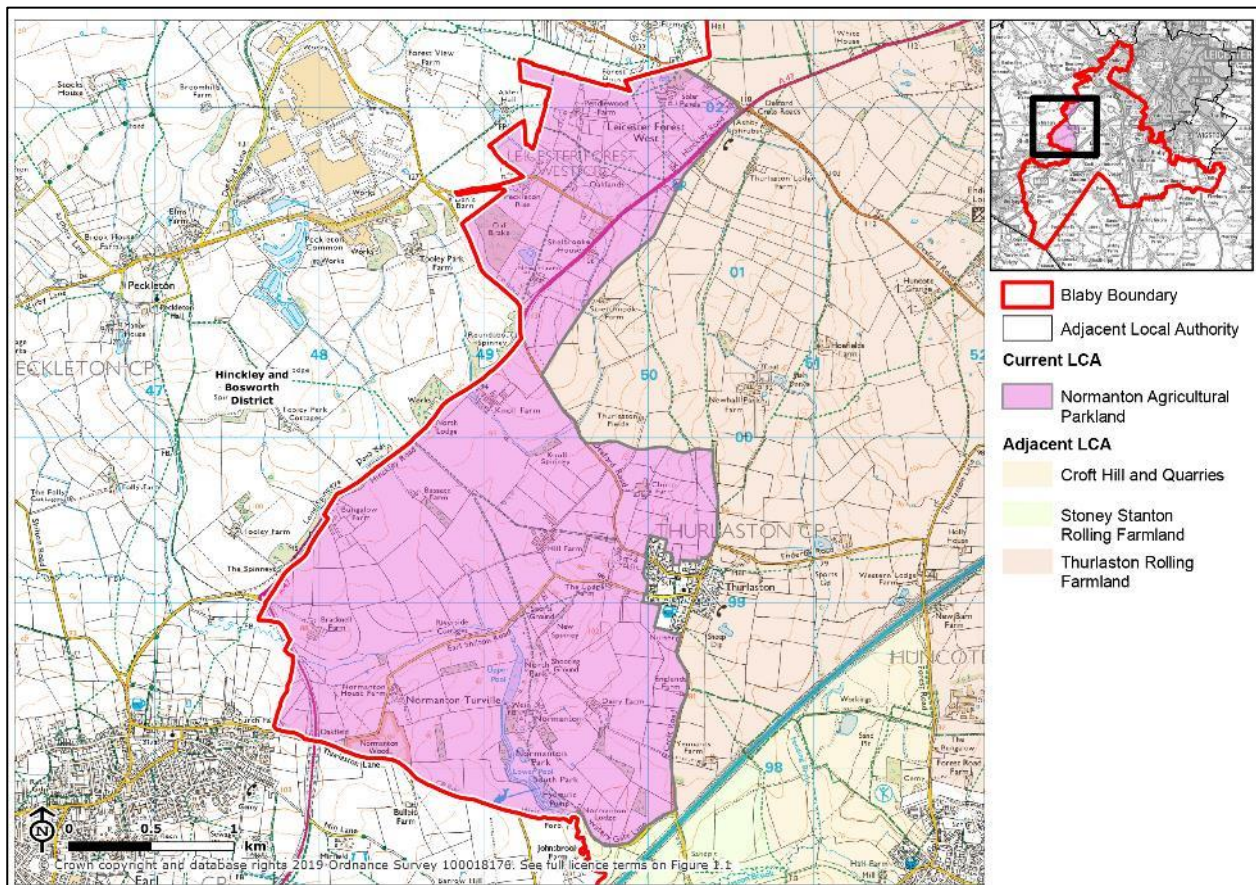
- Gently undulating landform, with prominent woodland blocks on higher ground giving a perceived wooded character.
- Enderby Warren Quarry SSSI is an area of national geological significance.
- Areas with distinctive parkland character around Enderby Hall which include mature specimen trees.
- Features of historic interest including Lubbesthorpe Medieval Settlement Scheduled Monument, the Fosse Way Roman Road, the Grade II* listed Church of St John the Baptist and remnant ridge and furrow.
- The sense of separation the landscape maintains between the surrounding settlements.
- Public rights of way including a bridleway and the Fosse Way.

Guidance and opportunities for future development

Guidance and opportunities to consider for any future development within this Landscape Character Area include:

- Site new development in areas where it would not be visually prominent, or where it can be screened by existing woodland blocks.
- Conserve and protect important geological sites such as the nationally significant Enderby Warren Quarry SSSI.
- Retain the areas of agricultural and parkland character by encouraging the maintenance of field boundaries and conservation of characteristic in-field trees.
- Seek to conserve and protect the historic features present within the character area including the scheduled monument, areas of ridge and furrow, the Grade II* listed Church of St John the Baptist and parkland areas, as well as their landscape setting.
- Retain the landscape's function as an area of rural separation between existing settlements by ensuring that any new development does not connect existing settlements and detract from their distinct identities.
- Retain and enhance existing woodland and hedgerow boundaries as well as encouraging woodland planting, to more sensitively accommodate existing newer development of warehouses and New Lubbesthorpe within the landscape. To ensure that they do not become the dominant features of the area, detracting from its agricultural and parkland character.
- Protect and conserve public rights of way and require the development new publicly accessible open spaces to accommodate for growing populations and their associated recreational pressures.

Normanton Agricultural Parkland



Representative photographs



Location and summary of overall character

This LCA is located to the western edge of the district to the east of Earl Shilton. It includes land on the western fringes of Thurlaston and adjoins the Thurlaston Rolling Farmland Landscape Character Area. The area extends from Leicester Forest West to the north to the M69 motorway corridor which forms the southern boundary. The area has a sense of time-depth due to the remnant estate character associated with the former site of Normanton Hall.

Landscape character description

Key characteristics

Topography, geology and drainage

- Rolling landform which becomes more elevated in the east of the LCA. The land rises to a maximum of 102 metres AOD to the south west of Thurlaston.
- Natural and man-made waterbodies are located in Normanton Park, where there are a series of linear lakes. Smaller pools are used for fishing. A small natural watercourse flows across in a deep ford across Watery Gate Lane into the parkland area of Normanton Park.
- Underlying bedrock geology is Triassic mudstone, siltstone and sandstone overlain by glacial till. The land is Grade 3 in the Agricultural Land Classification.

Land use and field patterns

- The LCA contains a mixture of agricultural farmland, both rough grazing and arable. Grazing tends to be located around properties in the north of the LCA. Arable farmland covers much of the other areas.
- Fields are regular shaped and boundaries are marked by well managed hedgerows and/or timber post and rail fences. Hedgerows are generally kept low between arable fields, enabling long views. This contrasts with grazing land where hedgerows form wooded belts around fields.

Semi-natural habitats and woodland cover

- Mixed deciduous and coniferous woodland blocks include Old Brake, located in the north of the LCA. Around the lakes at Normanton Park numerous smaller belts create the perception of a well-wooded landscape. Individual oak and horse chestnut trees are scattered throughout Normanton Park and the landscape surrounding Oakland. Around buildings ornamental trees and conifers are a feature.
- Hedgerows are mostly hawthorn but become slightly more species-rich with increased evergreen content such as holly in the north.

Archaeology and cultural heritage

- Parkland around Normanton Turville and Normanton Park has a strong localised influence on the character of this area through the presence of large specimen trees in fields, open grazing and the long driveway to the main house.
- This Historic Landscape Characterisation indicates that most fields are planned enclosure or re-organised piecemeal enclosure. Ridge and furrow is evident to the west of Thurlaston. Some fields have been enlarged in the past century.

Settlement, road pattern and rights of way

- Thurlaston lies partially within the character area and is well integrated into the landscape by mature vegetation. Large country houses with associated estate and farm buildings provide a parkland influence in the landscape and include The Holt, Normanton and the Oaklands.
- Hinckley Road (A47) cuts diagonally across the character area. The minor rural lanes for Desford Road and Earl Shilton Road provide access. There are also access tracks to the parkland at Normanton Park and at Oaklands and Old Brake woodland, often with cattle grids to contain free roaming livestock.
- Public footpaths provide access to Normanton Park. Normanton Wood is an area of Open Access Land managed by the Woodland Trust. Recreational areas are concentrated in the south of the character area around Normanton Park, which includes fishing pools.

Views and perceptual qualities

- Views from within the character area tend to be channelled and over short distances. Glimpses of the surrounding area are framed between large trees and woodland. Views are generally open within parkland areas but are contained by woodland and topography restricting views over longer distances. Thick hedgerows and woodland create an enclosed character.
- Restricted and enclosed views mean that there are few urban influences. Glimpses of movement along the A47 can be seen from some areas. Pylons cross the western part of the character area and form intrusive skyline features.
- There are some expansive views across fields, characterised by a backdrop of woodland (e.g. from Desford Road). The southern parts of the LCA are overlooked from Earl Shilton (Hinckley and Bosworth District).

Landscape evaluation

Summary of current landscape condition

The well-managed estate parkland evokes a strong sense of time depth although Normanton Hall no longer exists. Outside of the parklands the LCA is a uniform agricultural landscape. Field boundaries are generally in good condition, although some hedgerows have become scrubby through lack of management. Others have been replaced by post and wire fencing. Normanton Wood is a small area of deciduous woodland managed by the Woodland Trust. The influences of transport and electricity infrastructure on the landscape are particularly evident around Normanton Park where pylons/overhead lines and nearby M69 motorway detract from the rural character. Fly tipping is also an issue

Key pressures/forces for change

- Alteration of existing management regime such as the introduction of enclosure within open or parkland landscapes by stock proof fencing and hedgerows.
- Removal and/or decline of individual parkland trees. This could be exacerbated by a rise in tree pests and diseases, accelerated by climate change.
- Expansion of areas for recreational activities, may result in increased activity and visual impact within rural setting.
- Felling and or removal in part of older trees within woodlands as a result of issues regarding health and safety.
- Removal or change in management of roadside vegetation.
- Introduction of new elements and impact of these such as new residential development / conversion of existing buildings in prominent locations.
- Perceptual qualities in the south of the LCA influenced by the nearby M69, with busy traffic impacting on levels of tranquillity.
- Changes resulting from climate change including alterations of hydrology within the LCA and changes to species composition of wetland habitats.
- Uncertain future for agriculture (including levels of funding support and market prices for livestock), further threatening the viability of the remaining farmed land.
- Diversification of land uses to non-agricultural enterprises (i.e. residential) and small-holdings (e.g. pony keeping).

Landscape sensitivity assessment

Criteria	Description	Rating
Physical character (including topography and scale)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rolling landform which becomes more elevated in the east of the LCA. The land rises to a maximum of 102 metres AOD to the south west of Thurlaston. Frequent trees and woodland associated with the parkland areas create an intimate, human-scale landscape. These contrast with the large, expensive fields to the south of Hinckley Road (A47). 	M
Natural character	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agriculture comprises mixed arable and grazing land. The landscape is well-wooded with small spinneys scattered throughout the farmland. Specimen trees associated with parkland. There are natural and man-made lakes in Normanton Park. Normanton Wood is an area of mature woodland managed by the Woodland Trust. 	M
Historic landscape character	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parkland around Normanton Turville and Normanton Park creates a sense of time-depth in the landscape. The HLC indicates that fields are planned enclosure or re-organised piecemeal enclosure. Ridge and furrow is evident to the west of Thurlaston. 	M
Form, density and setting of existing settlement/development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The village of Thurlaston (adjacent to the east) is well integrated into the landscape. The LCA provides part of the wider setting to Earl Shilton (Hinckley and Bosworth) The landscape is mostly unsettled with occasional farm complexes scattered throughout the LCA. 	M-H
Views and visual character including skylines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Views from within the character area tend to be channelled and over short distances. Skylines are often marked by trees or woodland. Pylon lines are prominent on otherwise undeveloped skylines. The LCA is overlooked from Earl Shilton to the west. 	M
Access and recreation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Several footpaths provide access to the countryside. Normanton Wood is a small area of Open Access Land managed by the Woodland Trust. A shooting club and fishery are located in Normanton Park. 	L-M
Perceptual and experiential qualities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Thick woodland and mature hedgerows create a sense of enclosure. Strongly rural with high levels of tranquillity although traffic noise from the nearby transport corridors of the A47 and M69 can detract from these qualities. 	M

Overall assessment of landscape sensitivity to development scenarios

Development scenario	Sensitivity				
2-3 storey residential housing / transport infrastructure			M		
Small-scale commercial (B1/B2 use categories)	N/A				
Large scale commercial (warehousing – B8 use category)	N/A				
Notes on any variations in landscape sensitivity					
The parkland areas have increased landscape sensitivity due to the strong sense of time-depth in these locations which is vulnerable to loss from new development.					

Special landscape qualities and key sensitivities

The following provides a summary of the special landscape qualities and key features/attributes that would be sensitive to change (e.g. as a result of development):

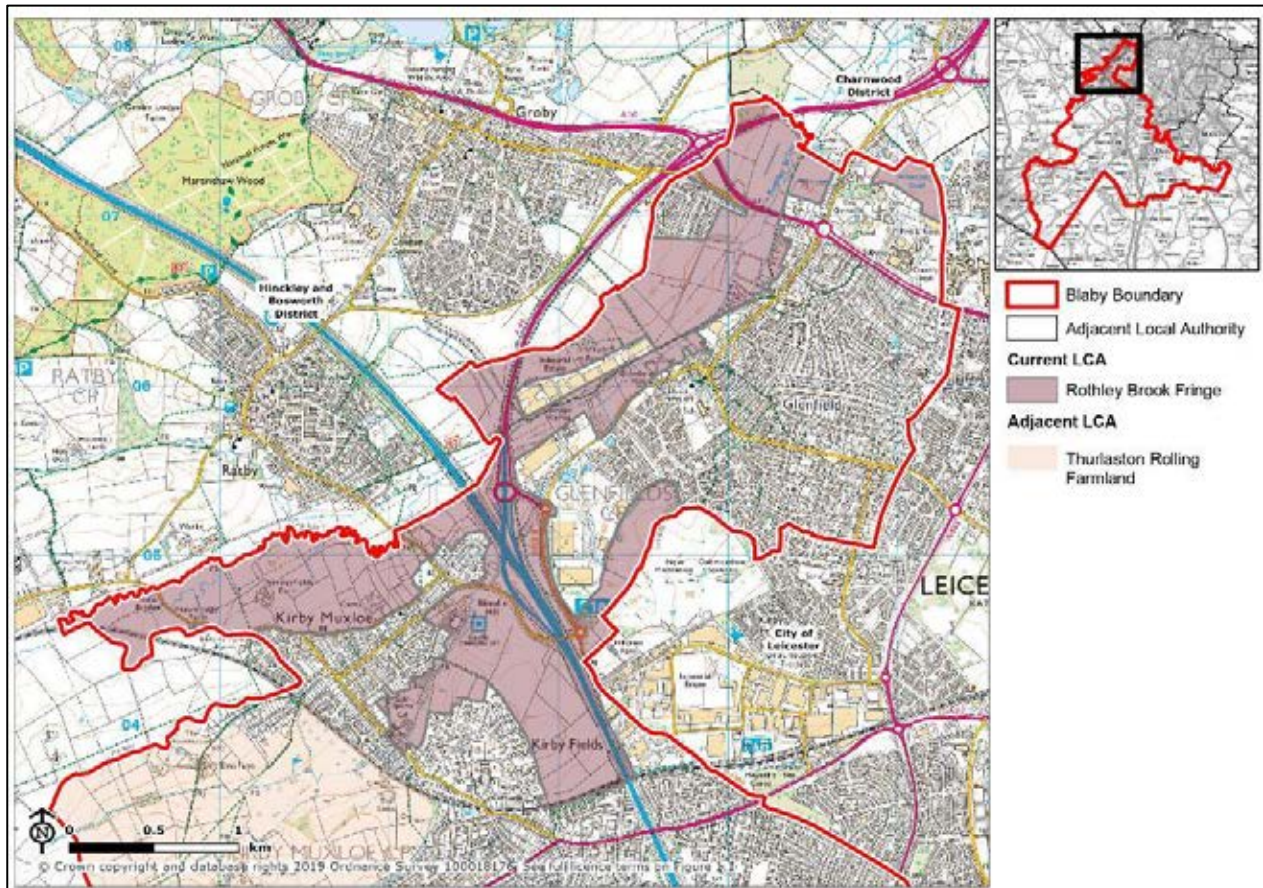
- Strong sense of time depth associated with the parkland estate character at Normanton Park and Oaklands.
- Well-wooded character due to the presence of mixed deciduous and coniferous woodland belts/blocks and parkland trees.
- The rural and enclosed character of the landscape, with high levels of relative tranquillity.
- Fields containing surviving ridge and furrow.
- The unsettled character of the landscape, with limited existing urban influences.
- Man-made and natural waterbodies within the parklands, which are a valued semi-natural habitat amongst the farmed landscape.
- The undeveloped backdrop that the LCA provides to the village of Thurlaston.

Guidance and opportunities for future development

Guidance and opportunities to consider for any future development within this Landscape Character Area include:

- Retain and enhance the wooded character of the area. Seek to conserve existing levels of woodland coverage and enhance areas of woodland where practical particularly to screen urban influences such as busy roads or recreation areas.
- Conserve parkland landscapes at Normanton and Oaklands, to retain the individual character of these areas.
- Protect and conserve mature specimen trees and roadside trees. Seek to encourage responsible management of mature and veteran trees, also where possible ensure a programme of replacement.
- Protect the rural character of the area through the retention and expansion of woodland belts on the edge of Thurlaston and through careful placement and restrictions on the expansion of the village along its western fringes.
- Respect and enhance the rural character of Thurlaston, ensuring new development complements existing context with regards to scale, form, materials and boundary features.
- Protect the mixture of open gently rolling farmland with expansive views and enclosed areas.
- Protect and where possible enhance (including through new ecological connections) semi-natural habitats including woodlands, waterbodies, meadows, semi-improved grasslands.
- Ensure any new development is sensitively sited, aiming to avoid significantly affecting areas of rural character with locally important levels of tranquillity.
- Design-in the introduction of SuDS to any new development, addressing any changes in hydrology (and subsequent knock-on effects such as increased diffuse pollution from agricultural run-off).

Rothley Brook Fringe



Representative photographs



Location and summary of overall character

This LCA is located on the northern edge of Blaby District and is centred on the Rothley Brook. This is an urban fringe landscape adjacent to Kirby Muxloe and Glenfield. Land use is predominantly agricultural land although urban fringe uses including former golf courses, sport pitches and pony paddocks also influence the landscape. Major transportation routes and electricity infrastructure are dominant features. The landscape is overlooked from elevated land to the west of Ratby (in Hinckley and Bosworth District).

Landscape character description

Key characteristics

Topography, geology and drainage

- Rothley Brook meanders through the landscape from north-east to south-west. The brook is contained within a shallow valley. Topography ranges between 70 metres and 95 metres AOD. Land to the east of Kirby Muxloe (known as Blood's Hill) has a steeper profile compared to the rest of the character area.
- The underlying bedrock geology is mudstone. Superficial alluvium deposits are associated with Rothley Brook. The agricultural land classification indicates that all land within the LCA is Grade 3.

Land use and field patterns

- Primary land use is a mix of arable and pasture agriculture. Equestrian uses are common in locations adjacent to urban area. Rough grassland is a feature adjacent to Rothley Brook.
- Field patterns are varied throughout the area. Small fields are located around the fringes of Kirby Muxloe, while larger fields are located in the north of the LCA and around Kirby Fields. Fields are enclosed by a mixture of hedgerows and drainage ditches.
- The landscape contains parts of the now closed Western Golf Course adjacent to Glenfield.

Semi-natural habitats and woodland cover

- Lush mature vegetation follows the watercourses and drainage ditches, which are marked by frequent willow and poplar trees.
- Clumps of trees, copses and hedgerow trees create a wooded character although there are no significant blocks of woodland.
- Priority habitats within the LCA include floodplain grazing marsh along the course of Rothley Brook and pockets of deciduous woodland.

Archaeology and cultural heritage

- There are two Scheduled Monuments within the LCA; Kirby Muxloe Castle and the moated site and garden enclosure at Glenfield. Both assets are set within mature woodland and not visually prominent within the landscape.
- The LCA contains and provides part of the undeveloped setting to Glenfield and Kirby Fields Conservation Areas.
- The landscape provides an undeveloped backdrop to the Grade II* Listed Church of St Bartholomew in Kirby Muxloe and the Grade II* Listed Old Tudor Rectory in Glenfield.
- This Historic Landscape Characterisation indicates that fields are a mixture of piecemeal and planned enclosure, which have undergone modern reorganisation.

Settlement, road pattern and rights of way

- The LCA is surrounded and influenced by adjacent urban development in Glenfield and Kirby Muxloe. The village fringes tend to be well-vegetated and integrated into the landscape. The LCA provides separation between the settlements. Buildings are constructed from a mixture of red brick and render.
- Large industrial estates at Mill Lane and Optimus Point, Glenfield comprise large, blocky buildings which contrast with the adjacent residential development.
- Numerous major transport routes cross through the LCA including the M1 motorway running north-south (Junction 21a) and the A46/A50. The M1 is well screened by vegetation. A single-track railway is located on the southern edge of the character area.
- A dismantled railway line is now a bridleway crossing between Glenfield and Ratby and is also an off-road section of National Cycle Route 63. Several public footpaths and a further bridleway provide access to the LCA from Glenfield and Kirby Muxloe.

Views and perceptual qualities

- Views are channelled along the level ground adjacent to Rothley Brook. A sense of enclosure is often created by the mature vegetation and trees located along watercourses and within field boundaries.
- There are long views from the elevated ground to the east of Kirby Muxloe (known as Blood's Hill) which include the city of Leicester and the distinct landform of Charnwood Forest (including Bradgate Park). A sense of openness and expansiveness is also experienced in this area.
- The LCA is overlooked from higher ground to the north close to Ratby (in Hinckley and Bosworth Borough).
- Traffic noise and views of adjacent urban development have a significant influence on the perceptual qualities of the landscape. Pylons and overhead gantries on the M1 are a prominent feature on skylines.

Landscape evaluation

Summary of current landscape condition

This is a discordant landscape which is interrupted by road and energy infrastructure. The primary land use is still agricultural, although this is under pressure from new development and alternative land uses. Clumps and copses of trees create a well-wooded character although actual woodland cover is low. Noise from the major roads is a dominant influence on the perceptual qualities of this landscape.

Key pressures/forces for change

- Perceptual qualities influenced by the M1, with busy traffic impacting on levels of tranquillity.
- New industrial and residential development leading to a decline in separation between the settlements.
- Loss or reduction of significant areas of natural vegetation and trees through increasing intensity of land management (e.g. intensification of arable farming).
- Loss of traditional grazing land to pony paddocks, with associated structures and features such as fencing replacing hedgerows, and the potential for overgrazed land.
- Development pressure within and outside the LCA, including potential for new development on the former Western Golf Course.
- Knock-on effects from an increase in population close to the LCA, including more demand for countryside access.
- Uncertain future for agriculture (including levels of funding support and market prices for livestock), further threatening the viability of the remaining farmed land.
- Diversification of land uses to non-agricultural enterprises (i.e. residential) and small-holdings (e.g. pony keeping).
- Recreational pressures from adjacent urban areas.
- Changes resulting from climate change including alterations of hydrology within the LCA and changes to species composition of riparian habitats.

Landscape sensitivity assessment

Criteria	Description	Rating
Physical character (including topography and scale)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The LCA is centred on the shallow meandering valley of Rothley Brook. Topography ranges between 70 metres and 95 metres AOD. Steeper slopes are located to the east of Kirby Muxloe. The scale of the landscape is varied. Some areas are enclosed by mature vegetation and the landform, creating an intimate and small scale landscape. In other areas, large-scale transport and industrial infrastructure is a dominating feature. 	L-M
Natural character	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agriculture is mixed arable and pasture, with some equestrian uses. Mature vegetation is associated with watercourses and drainage ditches. Clumps of trees, copses and hedgerow trees create a wooded character although there are no significant blocks of woodland. Priority habitats include floodplain grazing marsh along the course of Rothley Brook and pockets of deciduous woodland. 	L-M
Historic landscape character	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Kirby Muxloe Castle and the moated site and garden enclosure at Glenfield are both Scheduled Monuments. Kirby Muxloe Castle is also a Grade I listed building and is surrounded by a moat. The LCA provides part of the landscape setting to the castle. The LCA contains and provides part of the undeveloped setting to Glenfield and Kirby Fields Conservation Areas. The landscape provides an undeveloped backdrop to the Grade II* Listed Church of St Bartholomew in Kirby Muxloe and the Grade II* Listed Old Tudor Rectory in Glenfield. Most fields within the LCA have been enlarged in post-war years or modified by transport corridors or industrial development. 	M-H
Form, density and setting of existing settlement/ development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The LCA is strongly influenced by urban, industrial and infrastructure developments, particularly related to the city of Leicester. Large industrial estates at Mill Lane and Optimus Point, Glenfield are visually prominent and contrast with the adjacent residential development. Residential buildings tend to be constructed with a mixture of red brick and render. The LCA contributes to the sense of separation between settlements including Kirby Muxloe and Ratby (Hinckley and Bosworth Borough) and Glenfield and Groby (Hinckley and Bosworth Borough). 	M
Views and visual character including skylines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Views are channelled along Rothley Brook. The low-lying character of the area and frequent mature boundary vegetation often restrict views. From higher ground there are long views across Leicester and towards the distinct landform of Charnwood Forest. The LCA is overlooked from higher ground to the north, close to Ratby (in Hinckley and Bosworth District). Pylons and overhead gantries on the M1 are prominent on skylines. Mature vegetation and trees often characterise skylines, creating a well-wooded appearance. 	M
Access and recreation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A dismantled railway line is now a bridleway crossing between Glenfield and Ratby and is also an off-road section of National Cycle Route 63. Several public footpaths and a further bridleway provide access to the LCA from Glenfield and Kirby Muxloe. Recreational facilities including sports pitches are often associated with edges of settlements. 	L-M
Perceptual and experiential qualities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Traffic noise and views of adjacent urban development have a significant influence on the perceptual qualities of the landscape. Mature vegetation and trees located along watercourses and within field boundaries creates a localised sense of enclosure. 	L-M

Overall assessment of landscape sensitivity to development scenarios

Development scenario	Sensitivity				
2-3 storey residential housing / transport infrastructure		L-M			
Small-scale commercial (B1/B2 use categories)		L-M			
Large scale commercial (warehousing – B8 use category)			M		
Notes on any variations in landscape sensitivity					
The elevated land to the east of Kirby Muxloe has increased landscape sensitivity due its relative elevation, long views and setting provided to the Kirby Castle Scheduled Monument and Kirby Fields Conservation Area.					

Special landscape qualities and key sensitivities

The following provides a summary of the special landscape qualities and key features/attributes that would be sensitive to change (e.g. as a result of development):

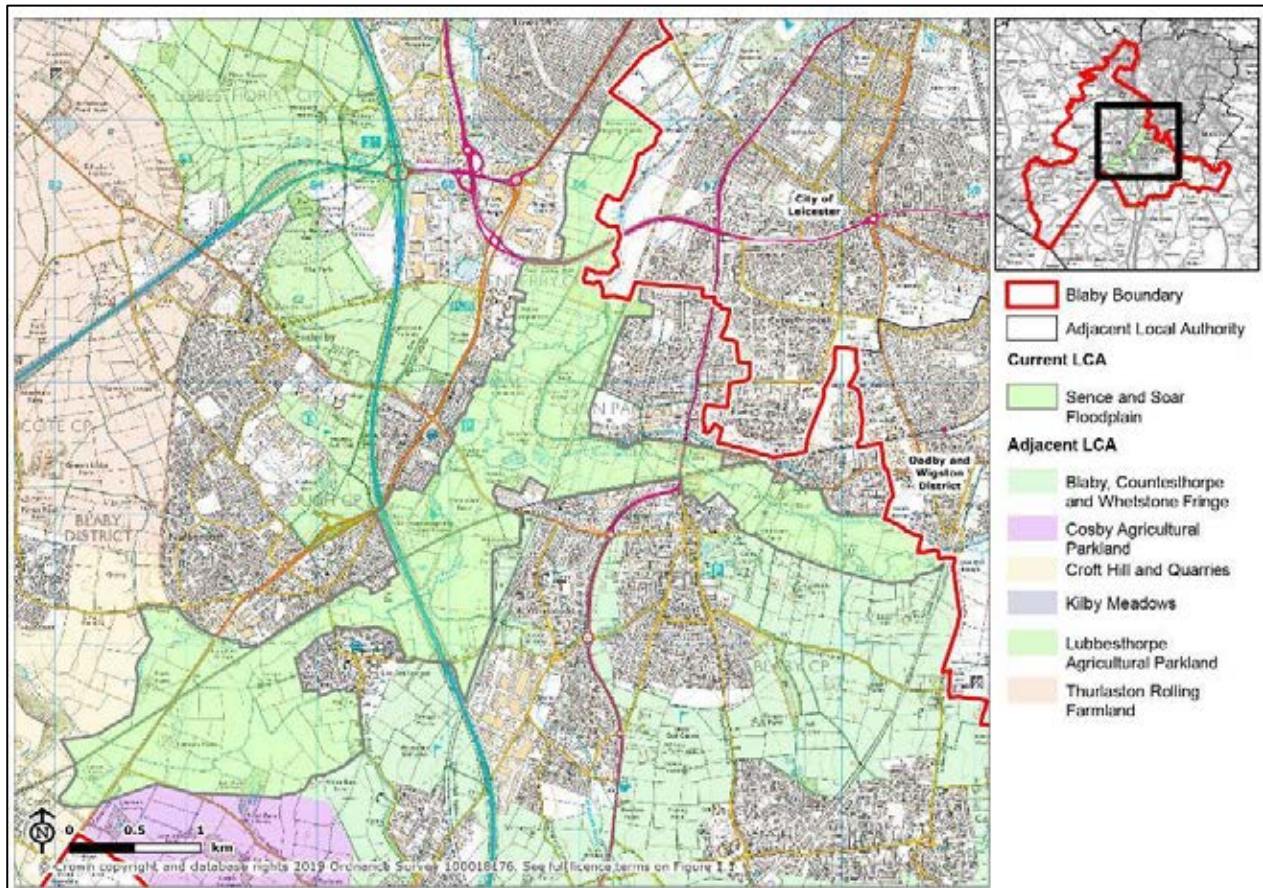
- The elevated, sloping land to the east of Kirby Muxloe. This part of the LCA is locally prominent with long views, particularly focused to the north and east.
- The undeveloped setting provided to the Kirby Muxloe Castle and the moated site and garden enclosure at Glenfield Scheduled Monuments, as well as the Kirby Muxloe and Glenfield Conservation Areas.
- Semi-natural habitats including deciduous woodland and wetland habitats along the Rothley Brook valley.
- The importance of the landscape as a recreation destination for local communities.
- Pockets of relative tranquillity within the landscape, particularly along the river corridor, despite the impact of significant transport, energy and industrial infrastructure.
- The function of the undeveloped land in preventing the coalescence of settlements including Kirby Muxloe and Ratby (Hinckley and Bosworth Borough) and Glenfield and Groby (Hinckley and Bosworth Borough).

Guidance and opportunities for future development

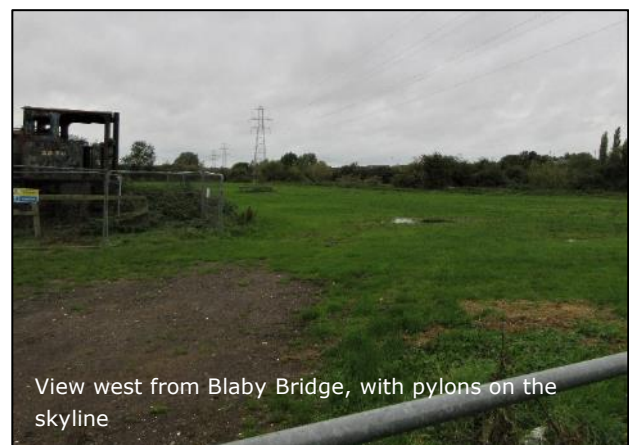
Guidance and opportunities to consider for any future development within this Landscape Character Area include:

- Avoid development on the sloping land at Blood's Hill to the east of Kirby Muxloe which is locally prominent.
- Prevent the further coalescence of settlements, ensuring those that remain separate retain their own identities and landscape settings.
- Conserve the rural setting the landscape provides to valued heritage features including the Kirby Muxloe Castle and moated site at Glenfield Scheduled Monuments and Conservation Areas at Kirby Fields and Glenfield.
- Protect and conserve remaining semi-natural habitats and features including deciduous woodland and wetlands.
- Ensure any new development is sensitively sited and screened to avoid significantly affecting areas of rural character with locally important levels of tranquillity.
- Design-in the introduction of SuDS to any new development, addressing any changes in hydrology (and subsequent knock-on effects such as increased diffuse pollution from agricultural run-off).
- Protect valued open spaces within and on the edge of settlements. Explore opportunities to strengthen and increase the public rights of way network to encourage walking and cycling.
- Increase woodland planting along transport corridors and around large-scale development (such as the warehouses to the east of the LCA) to better integrate these features into the landscape while also increasing the coverage of semi-natural habitats.

Sence and Soar Floodplain



Representative photographs



Location and summary of overall character

This character area is large and varied, following the narrow floodplain of the Soar and Sence rivers which flow between the settlements to the south-west of Leicester including Enderby, Blaby, Glen Parva, Narborough, Littlethorpe and Braunstone Town. The character area is a low-intensity managed landscape with a naturalistic feel shaped by riparian vegetation and well-developed hedgerows. The edges of the character area are defined by urban development, which can detract from the landscape where there are hard urban edges.

Landscape character description

Key characteristics

Topography, geology and drainage

- Relatively flat floodplain landform which follows the meandering course of the Sence and Soar rivers. Elevation ranges from 60m AOD to 70m AOD.
- In addition to the two watercourses other water features include a series of large ponds from past quarrying works, scattered across the character area.
- Soils are loamy and clayey floodplain soils. The agricultural land is mostly classed as Grade 4 (poor) along watercourses with some Grade 3 land on the edges of the LCA.

Land use and field patterns

- Land use is mixed with primary uses including agricultural land and pockets of open space located adjacent to the urban fringe. Agriculture tends to be dominated by rough grazing, horse paddocks with a limited amount of intensive arable farming to the north east of Littlethorpe.
- Field pattern is generally uniform and relatively small scale. Most fields are enclosed by mature hedgerows. Near Whetstone and where the M1 crosses the LCA, the field pattern becomes larger with low hedgerows. Electric and timber fences become a common feature along field boundaries in the east.

Semi-natural habitats and woodland cover

- Narborough Bog is an important wetland habitat designated as a SSSI and contains a regionally scarce peat bog. There are also two Local Wildlife Sites in the north of the area; Aylestone Meadows and Glen Parva.
- Watercourses, wetlands and wetland meadows are a characteristic feature. The LCA is defined by the meandering routes of the Rivers Sence and Soar, the varied banks and a mix of woodland and open meadows. Former quarries provide wetland habitats which are important for birds.
- The area is well-vegetated and contains pockets of riparian woodlands with poplar, willow and alder. Although blocks of woodland are limited there is a perceived wooded character created by the frequency of hedgerow trees and riparian vegetation.
- Hedgerows are mostly hawthorn with some mature ash and elder. Willow and alder are present within hedgerows near the rivers and in lower lying areas which are prone to frequent flooding.

Archaeology and cultural heritage

- The Grand Union Canal is a historically significant man-made feature and is designated as a Conservation Area.
- The Site of St John's Church, Aldeby, Enderby Mill Bridge and Moat and hut circle at Glen Parva, are Scheduled Monuments. The Manor Restaurant is a Grade II listed building.

Settlement, road pattern and rights of way

- The LCA is strongly associated with the adjacent urban areas. The few buildings within the LCA are generally well-screened by woodland. Neighbouring urban development is generally well screened by woodland, with only a limited selection of areas having intervisibility with surrounding settlement.
- The character area contains significant transport infrastructure, including the intrusive M1, A563 and the railway line.
- The towing path follows the section of the Grand Union Canal within the character area and is a public footpath and traffic free cycle route, whilst the Great Central Way footpath (also part of National Cycle Route 6) follows the historic route of the dismantled railway line. Other footpaths tend to be concentrated within open areas where there are localised opportunities to walk along the river banks.

Views and perceptual qualities

- Views are generally limited to short distances and are restricted by mature vegetation along the rivers and field margins.
- Despite being near the urban fringes, most of the area retains a rural character. Some urban edges are well integrated in to the landscape and are visually screened by mature vegetation while others form a hard urban edge (e.g. Fosse Park retail park).
- Visibility of transport routes is limited due woodland screening; however, they often introduce sound pollution. The route of the M1 is prominent with limited screening and is a visual detractor. Pylons run through much of the narrow character area and form prominent skyline features.
- The spire of the Grade I listed Church of St Peter in Whetstone is prominent on skylines to the east of the LCA, being particularly visible from the M1 bridge over the River Soar.

Landscape evaluation

Summary of current landscape condition

Human influences have a pronounced effect on the area, particularly on the settlement edges where there is little screening. In places the hedgerow boundaries are becoming slightly fragmented and the majority are no longer stock proof, with gaps appearing close to ground level. Some field margins have become overgrown with scrub vegetation, emphasising the importance of low intensity management. Informal open spaces tend to be sympathetically managed for wildlife value. Water quality is poor in some areas. The encroachment of typical urban fringe land uses including sports pitches, reduces the effectiveness of this area as a rural green wedge between existing settlement. Some areas have significantly high levels of intervisibility with neighbouring urban influences including warehouses in Narborough and Whetstone and the M1 which are poorly screened. There are some urban fringe detractors including litter and vandalism, including in areas along the Grand Union Canal (designated as a Conservation Area).

Key pressures/forces for change

- Loss of field boundary vegetation within the south west of the character area reduces the intimate and enclosed scale of the character area enabling more open views through the area and to the urban edge.
- Pollution resulting in poor water quality in the River Sence.
- Changes resulting from climate change including alterations of hydrology within the LCA and changes to species composition of wetland habitats.
- Loss of waterside vegetation, copses and vegetation along urban edges would significantly alter the character of this area, potentially opening views of industry and the urban edge and reducing the rural character of the area.
- Pressure for new housing developments around settlement edges increasing urbanising influences in the landscape. Expansion would also increase the risk of coalescence of settlements surrounding the character area. However, the potential for coalescence is limited due to the risk of flooding in much of this area.
- Increasing populations in surrounding settlements has knock-on effect, increasing pressures on the undeveloped area including levels of traffic reducing tranquillity and demand for countryside access.
- Uncertain future for agriculture (including levels of funding support and market prices for livestock), further threatening the viability of the remaining farms, particularly those supporting low intensity grazing.
- Loss of character from further diversification to non-agricultural enterprises (i.e. residential) and small-holdings (e.g. pony paddocks).
- Change in woodland cover and tree species composition as new pests/diseases spread (particularly phytophthora pathogens) and invasive species become more prevalent. Loss of mature trees would have a severe impact on the wooded character of the LCA.

Landscape sensitivity assessment

Criteria	Description	Rating
Physical character (including topography and scale)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The character area is defined by the floodplains of the meandering Sence and Soar rivers and generally has a flat landform. Elevation ranges from 60m AOD to 70m AOD. A generally small-scale area, as a result of the of the enclosure provided by tall hedgerows and woodland strips. 	L-M
Natural character	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mixed land use of rough grazing, horse paddocks, open space and small areas of intensive arable cropping. The area contains the Narborough Bog SSSI, a wetland situated to the east of the M1 containing a regionally scarce peat bog. There are two Local Wildlife Sites in the north. Localised areas of semi-natural habitats including pockets of deciduous woodland, semi-improved grassland, floodplain grazing marsh, reedbeds, wet woodland and lowland meadows. The LCA has a wooded character despite limited woodland areas, due to the frequency of hedgerow trees and riparian vegetation. Common tree species include poplar, willow and alder in riparian areas and gappy hawthorn elsewhere. 	M-H
Historic landscape character	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Grand Union Canal Conservation Area runs through the centre of the character area. The Site of St John's Church, Aldeby, Enderby Mill Bridge and Moat and hut circle at Glen Parva, are Scheduled Monuments. There is one Grade II listed building in the character area; The Manor Restaurant. 	M-H
Form, density and setting of existing settlement/ development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Most of the character area is undeveloped. The LCA forms an important gap preventing the coalescence of surrounding settlements. The area provides a rural backdrop to existing settlements including, Littlethorpe, Glen Parva and parts of Narborough and Whetstone. Buildings within the character area are heavily screened by vegetation. Major transport infrastructure including the M1, A563 and railway line crosses the LCA. There is also a pylon route passing through a large proportion of the area. 	M
Views and visual character including skylines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The area is well contained by woodland and hedgerow boundaries, limiting long distance views and intervisibility with surrounding settlement and urbanising features. A high frequency of hedgerow trees and small hedgerow areas create wooded skylines. Pylons are locally prominent on skylines. The spire of the Grade I listed Church of St Peter (Whetstone) is prominent on skylines to the east of the LCA. 	L-M
Access and recreation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some public rights of way cross through the area often following the route of watercourses. A footpath and traffic free cycle route follows the Grand Union Canal tow path. Great Central Way footpath and part of National Cycle Route 6 follow the route of the dismantled railway line. There are several open access areas for public recreation as well as parks and sports grounds. These include Jubilee Park. Transport infrastructure crossing the area includes the M1, A563 and a railway line. 	M
Perceptual and experiential qualities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parts of the area have strong rural perceptual qualities, despite the proximity development. This is due to the high level of enclosure provided by vegetation including tall hedgerows and woodland strips. Sound pollution from major transport infrastructure detracts from localised areas of tranquillity. There are localised visual intrusions including pylons. 	M

Overall assessment of landscape sensitivity to development scenarios

Development scenario	Sensitivity				
2-3 storey residential housing / transport infrastructure			M		
Small-scale commercial (B1/B2 use categories)	N/A				
Large scale commercial (warehousing – B8 use category)	N/A				
Notes on any variations in landscape sensitivity					
Areas where the gap between settlements is particularly narrow have an increased sensitivity to all scenarios, as development in these locations would reduce the sense of separation between settlements and promote their coalescence.					

Special landscape qualities and key sensitivities

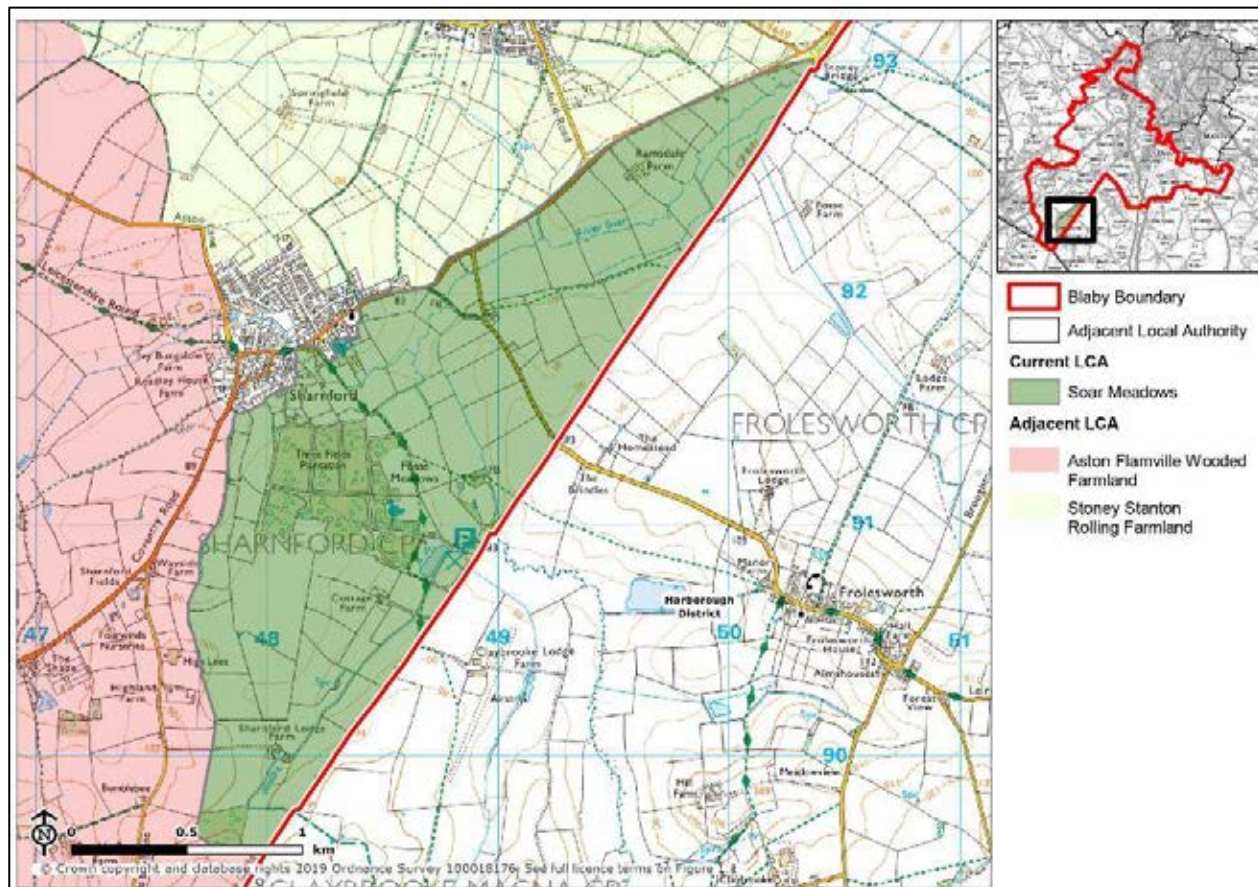
<p>The following provides a summary of the special landscape qualities and key features/attributes that would be sensitive to change (e.g. as a result of development):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distinctive floodplain landscape associated with the Rivers Sence and Soar. • Low intensity of management and the frequent watercourses creates a relatively natural character with a diverse range of habitats including many areas of riparian vegetation. • Wetland meadow and vegetation typical of wetland environments including the nationally designated Narborough Bog SSSI and Aylestone Meadows and Glen Parva Local Wildlife Sites. • Woodland vegetation concentrated along rivers, canal and the urban edge. • The high concentration of historic designations features including three Scheduled Monuments and the Grand Union Canal which is designated as a conservation area. • Largely unsettled rural area, providing a rural gap and preventing the coalescence of surrounding settlements. • Localised views are contained by mature hedgerow boundaries, hedgerows trees and small clumps of woodland, which also provide a perceived wooded character. • A rural and self-contained character despite proximity to development, due to enclosure of the landscape by mature vegetation.

Guidance and opportunities for future development

<p>Guidance and opportunities to consider for any future development within this Landscape Character Area include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote and enhance woodland planting along the periphery of the character area and to soften the appearance of the urban edge. Woodland species selected should be native and contain an element of willow, alder and poplar to reflect the woodlands present within the area. • Provide better connection between areas of existing woodland through localised planting to ensure better interconnectivity between existing habitats and therefore a higher quality ecological resource. • Protect existing hedgerows through appropriate management to ensure that further fragmentation is prevented and restore current gappy hedgerows. • Conserve and enhance the existing wetland habitats through the creation of new wetlands, reed beds and scrapes.
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- Conserve the mix of wooded and open areas along river banks through selective vegetation removal, particularly vigorous or invasive species, to retain the varied habitats present along the river.
- Encourage low intensity agricultural management such as pasture grazing to safeguard the rural and naturalistic character of the landscape.
- Continue the sensitive management of the recreational areas for the benefit of nature conservation. New open spaces should be designed to reflect the naturalistic characteristics of other open spaces within the area.
- Seek to link up the public rights of way network. The route of the dismantled railway line provides an opportunity to better connect Leicester and its peripheral settlements through the installation of a public right of way, such as a cycle path to better link the existing Great Central Way/National Cycle Route 6.

Soar Meadows



Representative photographs



Location and summary of overall character

Soar Meadows is a small LCA situated to the east of Sharnford. The landscape is strongly influenced by the River Soar and other associated watercourses which meander through a wide and shallow valley that rises towards the edges of the LCA. The LCA boundary on the edge of Blaby District is marked by the Fosse Way, a Roman Road. The road forms part of the Leicestershire Round, a long distance footpath which bends round to the west and traverses through the LCA. There is a large area of public open space within the Soar Meadows LCA, the Fosse Meadows Nature Area.

Landscape character description

Key characteristics

Topography, geology and drainage

- The landform is low-lying, gently rising from the floodplain of the River Soar towards the edges of the LCA. Elevation ranges between 80 and 100 metres AOD.
- The River Soar courses through the north of the landscape, together with its tributaries draining the surrounding landscape and defining the landform. Parts of the valley surrounding the Soar and one of its tributaries are prone to flooding.
- Underlying bedrock geology is mudstone. Superficial alluvial deposits are associated with the watercourses.

Land use and field patterns

- Land use is a mix of arable and pasture agricultural farmland. There is a large area of open space, Fosse Meadows Nature Area, at the centre of the LCA. The area is managed for its ecological value and its character has a strong influence over the area.
- The field pattern is relatively regular with fields tending to be medium scale and rectilinear. Fields along the river corridor have retained their historic character, while many on the valley sides have been modified in the 20th century.

Semi-natural habitats and woodland cover

- Meandering watercourses including the River Soar flow through the character area. Strips of woodland and wetland meadow are associated with watercourses. Grasslands and wetlands are concentrated within Fosse Meadows Nature Area, with some smaller field ponds scattered throughout the area. Wetland species such as water mint and soft rush are frequent within these areas.
- Hedgerow trees are abundant across the LCA, both alongside roads and within field-facing boundaries. Roads are bordered by a mixture of mature, species-rich hedgerows and long, thin strips of woodland. In the south of the LCA hedgerows are lower resulting in more open views.
- Apart from the plantation woodland at Fosse Meadows Nature Area, there is one other significant block of woodland at the southern tip of the LCA. Woodland tends to be a mix of deciduous and coniferous species. Mature oak and ash trees are located along the Fosse Way.

Archaeology and cultural heritage

- The Fosse Way, a Roman road of cultural significance and historic value, runs along the edge of the LCA which is concurrent with the edge of the Blaby District boundary.

Settlement, road pattern and rights of way

- Settlement is sparse, with just a few farmsteads located within this agricultural landscape. Little urban influence is experienced within the LCA, but it is flanked to the north west by the village of Sharnford. There are a few roads and routes tend to be limited to rural lanes on the edge of the LCA.
- Public rights of way are limited, although parts of the Leicestershire Round cross the LCA and link Sharnford to the Fosse Meadows Nature Area.

Views and perceptual qualities

- The low-lying topography and frequently tall field boundary vegetation generally limit views to individual fields, particularly in the north of the LCA. From the Fosse Way there are long views across the LCA to the north.
- Skylines tend to be wooded and rarely feature built form. The church spire in Sapcote is visible on skylines in views to the north. Pylons are also visible on skylines to the north, while wind turbines are visible to the south.
- The landscape is very rural with high levels of tranquillity. Enclosure varies throughout the LCA; mature hedgerows bounding long, narrow fields create a sense of enclosure in the northern part of the LCA, while the amalgamation of fields in the south of the area has created an open, expansive character.

Landscape evaluation

Summary of current landscape condition

This LCA has strong riverine influences, resulting in a significant portion of it being subject to flooding. Some areas of wetland meadow adjacent to watercourses and field margins are also prone to waterlogging. Along the course of the river the historic field pattern is mostly intact, although there has been some boundary loss on higher ground. Fosse Meadows Nature Reserve contains grassland, woodland and wetland habitats which are sensitively managed for the benefit of wildlife. Few roads run through the LCA and there is minimal disruption to tranquillity from nearby roads beyond its boundaries. The village of Sharnford does not currently exert a strong urban influence upon its surroundings. Fly tipping is an issue along remote rural roads including the Fosse Way. A reclamation yard at Kingfisher Farm introduces visual clutter into the landscape. This area is screened from Coventry Road but is visible from the Fosse Way.

Key pressures/forces for change

- Loss of significant areas of vegetation including waterside trees and plants through intensification of management e.g. field expansion leading to loss of habitat for wildlife and a weakening sense of enclosure and reduced screening e.g. of telegraph poles.
- Further amalgamation of fields leading to a weakened sense of enclosure, loss of visual character, and loss of wildlife corridors associated with species-rich hedgerow boundaries.
- Potential expansion of Sharnford impacting upon the rural qualities of the LCA e.g. extension of the urban fringe reducing the sense of remoteness experienced from within the Fosse Meadows Nature Area.
- Uncertain future for agriculture (including levels of funding support and market prices for livestock), further threatening the viability of the remaining farmed land.
- Loss of traditional floodplain meadows e.g. due to agricultural expansion.
- Changes resulting from climate change including alterations of hydrology within the LCA, which may become more prone to flooding, and changes to species composition of riparian habitats.
- Knock-on effects from an increase in population close to the LCA, including levels of traffic impacting tranquillity and increased demand for countryside access.
- Demand for domestic and community-scale renewable energy installations such as solar panels, wind turbines and ground-source heat pumps.
- Potential impact of tree diseases including the loss of mature ash trees which characterise the roads and field boundaries within the LCA.
- Increased population in the local area leading to recreational pressure at Fosse Meadows Nature Area which could have an adverse impact on nature conservation at the site.

Landscape sensitivity assessment

Criteria	Description	Rating
Physical character (including topography and scale)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Riparian landscape with a wide and shallow valley which rises towards the edges of the LCA. Fields tend to be medium to large scale. The perceived scale of the landscape varies depending on hedgerows. The north of the LCA is relatively intimate and enclosed. Low cut hedgerows result in long views across fields and increase the scale of the landscape in the south of the LCA. 	M
Natural character	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The LCA is strongly influenced by the River Soar and other associated watercourses. Riparian woodland, ponds and wetland meadows feature along the watercourses. Roads are bordered by a mixture of clipped and more mature, species-rich hedgerows and long, thin strips of woodland. Towards the south intensive management has resulted in lower hedgerows. Hedgerow trees are abundant across the LCA, both alongside roads and within field-facing boundaries. Ash is the dominant species, with a small number of oak present. Grasslands and wetland meadows are a feature of the Fosse Meadows Nature Area which is an important site for wildlife, particularly birds. 	M
Historic landscape character	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Fosse Way, a Roman road, runs along the edge of the LCA. This section of the route is noted as retaining much of its original character. Fields along the river corridor have retained their historic character, while many on the valley sides have been modified in the 20th century. 	L-M
Form, density and setting of existing settlement/development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Settlement is sparse, with farmsteads scattered within a predominantly agricultural, riparian landscape. Little urban influence is experienced within the LCA but it is flanked to the north-west by the village of Sharnford. The settlement edge of Sharnford is well integrated into the landscape by vegetation. 	M-H
Views and visual character including skylines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Views are often restricted by the mature boundary vegetation but become more open in the south of the LCA. There are long views north across the LCA from the Fosse Way. Skylines tend to be wooded and rarely feature built form. The church spire in Sapcote is visible on skylines in views to the north. Pylons are visible on skylines to the north, while wind turbines are visible to the south. 	M
Access and recreation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Fosse Meadows Nature Area is a popular destination for recreation. Footpaths are sparse but include parts of the Leicestershire Round which links Sharnford to the Fosse Meadows Nature Area. 	M
Perceptual and experiential qualities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A strong sense of enclosure is derived from the low-lying landform and from long strips of woodland and mature hedgerows which border roads and long, narrow fields, particularly in the north of the LCA. A distinct lack of development visible within and beyond the boundaries of this LCA and the infrequent scattering of farmsteads set among hedgerow-bound, lowland agricultural fields contribute to a strong sense of remoteness and rural character. 	M-H

Overall assessment of landscape sensitivity to development scenarios

Development scenario	Sensitivity				
2-3 storey residential housing / transport infrastructure				M-H	
Small-scale commercial (B1/B2 use categories)				M-H	
Large scale commercial (warehousing – B8 use category)					H
Notes on any variations in landscape sensitivity					
Areas which contribute to the setting of the historic core of Sharnford have greater landscape sensitivity to all development scenarios considered as part of this assessment.					
The Fosse Meadows Nature Area would be sensitive to all development which may cause a loss of the valued semi-natural habitats in this area.					

Special landscape qualities and key sensitivities

The following provides a summary of the special landscape qualities and key features/attributes that would be sensitive to change (e.g. as a result of development):

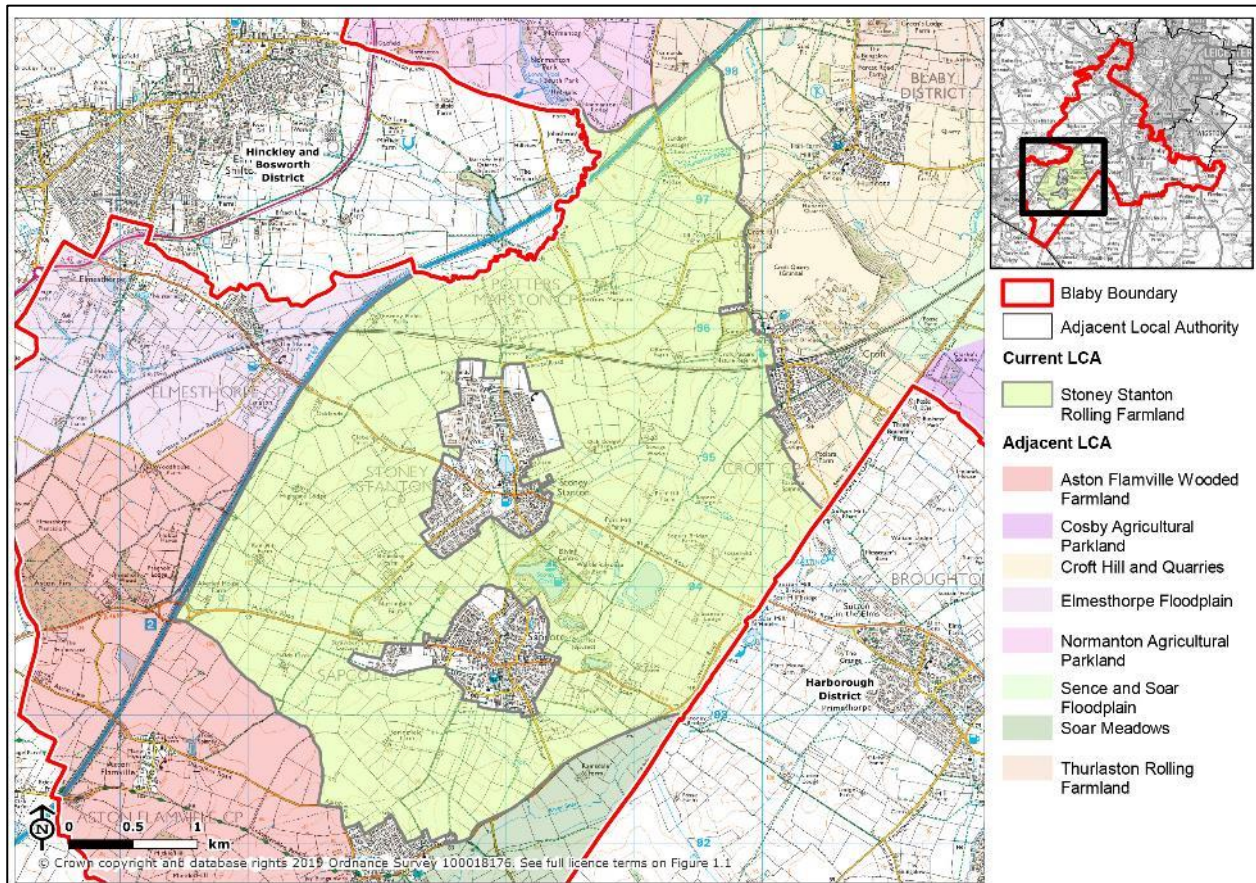
- The riparian landscape with associated habitat such as water meadows and wet woodland.
- Fosse Meadows Nature Area, area of good quality semi-improved grassland, plantation, developing woodland, arboretum and significant tract of public open space offering opportunities for recreation and recognised as a route of importance for its concentration of public rights of way.
- The Leicestershire Round Long Distance Path traverses the LCA, crossing through Fosse Meadows and providing a pedestrian link between the Fosse Way and Sharnford.
- The strong sense of enclosure created by mature hedgerows bounding long, narrow fields and low-lying landform.
- Pockets of relative tranquillity associated with the Soar river corridor and its tributaries, the rolling farmland surrounding settlements, woodlands and open water/wetlands.
- A strong rural character can be experienced in this LCA, associated with the distinct lack of development which can be perceived both within and beyond its boundaries and the infrequent scattering of farmsteads set among hedgerow-bound, lowland agricultural fields.
- The historic route of the Fosse Way, part of a Roman Road. This section is noted as retaining much of its original character.

Guidance and opportunities for future development

Guidance and opportunities to consider for any future development within this Landscape Character Area include:

- Avoid development on locally prominent valley slopes, particularly in the south of the LCA.
- Protect and conserve important semi-natural habitats/features, such as the range of woodland, wetland and meadow habitats in Fosse Meadows Nature Area, wetland habitats along the river corridor and hedgerows with mature trees within the farmed landscape.
- Design-in the introduction of SuDS to any new development, addressing any changes in hydrology (and subsequent knock-on effects such as increased diffuse pollution from agricultural run-off).
- Ensure the overall rural character and high levels of tranquillity within the LCA are retained.
- Ensure that any new development has appropriate screening to integrate it into the landscape.
- Retain the historic character of the section of the Fosse Way Roman Road which runs along the southern boundary.
- Explore opportunities to strengthen and increase the public rights of way network to encourage walking and cycling, link up to the Leicestershire Round Long Distance Path where possible.
- Retain existing trees on field boundaries and undertake new planting to diversify species in order to increase resilience against tree pests and diseases.

Stoney Stanton Rolling Farmland



Representative photographs



Location and summary of overall character

This LCA is located towards the south western tip of the district. The M69 marks its northern boundary. The settlements of Stoney Stanton and Sapcote are enclosed within the LCA. Landform is gently rolling and land use is predominantly arable agriculture, with some grazing and pony paddocks close to the urban fringe. Former quarrying activity influences the landscape, with water-based activities often now occupying the associated manmade lagoons. The landscape is relatively settled with several large villages. The low-cut hedgerows and undulating landform results in relatively open views which have a mixture of rural and urban influences.

Landscape character description

Key characteristics

Topography, geology and drainage

- The landform is very gently rolling. Elevation ranges from 70 metres AOD to 105 metres AOD, generally rising from the east to the west. Small streams influence local topography although few watercourses flow through the character area.
- Underlying bedrock geology is Triassic mudstone, siltstone and sandstone overlain by glacial till with localised alluvial deposits. There are several disused quarries located between Stoney Stanton and Sapcote. Agricultural land is mostly classified as Grade 3, with some limited areas of Grade 4 land.

Land use and field patterns

- Land use is predominantly agricultural and mostly arable with some grazing land present. There are often areas of horse keeping on the urban fringes.
- There is a concentration of deep man-made lagoons which are a legacy of former quarrying activity between Stoney Stanton and Sapcote. Many of these lagoons are depressed into the ground and surrounded by sharp, almost vertical rock slopes such as at Stoney Cove.
- Field pattern varies across the LCA with field size becoming larger towards the north.

Semi-natural habitats and woodland cover

- Hedgerows tend to be relatively low and clipped, becoming taller and scrubbier towards the urban fringe. Hedgerow trees are occasional features.
- Woodland is relatively scarce and tends to be restricted to small belts around manmade waterbodies and at Croft Pasture Nature Reserve, a SSSI with multiple habitats managed mainly by grazing with livestock. The watercourses and railway line which run through the LCA are well vegetated.

Archaeology and cultural heritage

- Heritage features include several Grade II listed buildings and structures such as Soper's Bridge, two farmhouses and Potters Marston Hall. Croft Conservation Area partially extends into the LCA.
- Although they are not visually prominent, man-made ponds associated with former quarrying activity are a significant legacy of the former industrial uses of the LCA.

Settlement, road pattern and rights of way

- Stoney Stanton, Sapcote, Sharnford and Croft are located on high ground. Numerous farms with large metal agricultural buildings are scattered throughout the LCA. Most buildings are a mix of red brick, render and clad buildings with some older structures constructed of granite.
- Villages, particularly Stoney Stanton and Sapcote, retain their separate identities through the orientation of buildings around prominent church spires and towers within each village.
- Numerous roads traverse the LCA, with most linking the settlements. The M69 marks the northern boundary of the LCA. The mainline railway runs from east to west, north of Stoney Stanton.
- The LCA is well-supported by a network of public rights of way and bridleways which extend from settlements into the surrounding countryside.

Views and perceptual qualities

- Relatively open, long distance views are a feature of the LCA due to a combination of topography, low hedgerows and a general absence of mature vegetation and woodland blocks. Views are characterised by a mix of rural and urban activities.
- Pylons are a common feature of the LCA, tending to be located on higher ground. The general lack of mature woodland vegetation means that they are visually prominent.
- This is a settled landscape, although it retains many rural qualities and pockets of tranquillity. The M69 and pylon lines are intrusive modern features.

Landscape evaluation

Summary of current landscape condition

This LCA retains a robust rural character with agriculture continuing to be the predominant land use. Hedgerows are generally well managed and there has been less recent hedgerow loss in this LCA compared to other parts of the district. The general absence of mature vegetation and woodland trees emphasises the influence of adjacent settlement. Former quarrying activity has left a legacy in the landscape between Stoney Stanton and Sapcote although these are generally well screened and their influence on the condition of the LCA is limited. Traffic noise, particularly associated with the M69, has a significant influence on the landscape in parts. Numerous pylon lines also impact on the rural qualities of the LCA.

Key pressures/forces for change

- Further loss of already scarce hedgerow trees.
- The proposal for Hinckley National Rail Freight Interchange to the west of the LCA, if approved, would lead to an increase in road and rail traffic travelling through the landscape.
- Potential for further fragmentation of rural character by the pressure of increased urban influence on the fringes of villages which are already prominent in the landscape.
- Development between Stoney Stanton and Sapcote could lead to the merging of the two settlements, accompanied by a loss of local identities and distinctiveness.
- Perceptual qualities influenced by the M69, with traffic noise and congestion impacting on levels of tranquillity.
- Increased use of the water-based recreational facilities available at the lagoons between Stoney Stanton and Sapcote leading to increased pressure on the road network.
- Further amalgamation of fields will alter the field pattern and reduce the presence of wildlife corridors through the landscape.
- Uncertain future for agriculture threatening the viability of farmed land.
- Loss or reduction of already scarce significant areas of vegetation and trees through increasing intensity of management.
- Changes resulting from climate change including alterations of hydrology within the LCA and changes to species composition of riparian habitats.

Landscape sensitivity assessment

Criteria	Description	Rating
Physical character (including topography and scale)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Undulating landform ranging between 70 metres AOD to 105 metres AOD, with the higher ground located in the west of the LCA. Although field sizes are relatively small, the low-cut hedgerows with limited trees create an open, larger-scale landscape. 	L-M
Natural character	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lagoons are located within former quarries, particularly to the east of Stoney Stanton and Sapcote. Croft Pasture Nature Reserve is nationally designated as a SSSI. Woodland within the agricultural landscape is generally scarce, with occasional mature hedgerows trees. Linear vegetation follows watercourses and the railway. 	M
Historic landscape character	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There are several Grade II listed buildings. Croft Conservation Area partially extends into the LCA. Numerous disused quarries provide evidence of the past industry of the area. 	M
Form, density and setting of existing settlement/development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The large villages of Stoney Stanton and Sapcote are located within the LCA, while Croft and Sharnford are located on its edges. The LCA contributes to the sense of separation between distinct settlements, as well as forming an undeveloped rural backdrop. Outside of the settlements, development comprises scattered farms and industrial development close to the edges of settlements. 	M
Views and visual character including skylines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Relatively open, long distance views are a feature of the LCA due to a combination of topography, low hedgerows and a general absence of mature vegetation. Several pylon lines cross the LCA with pylons often forming prominent skyline features which are visible above the trees. Occasional mature hedgerow trees punctuate the often expansive skylines. Development is a frequent feature within views. 	M
Access and recreation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Footpaths and bridleways cross the LCA, often linking between settlements. A small area of open access land is located to the west of Croft. Roads tend to be relatively straight and link up the various settlements. The M69 and mainline railway cross the LCA. 	L-M
Perceptual and experiential qualities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The LCA retains many of its rural characteristics, although it is also influenced by the adjacent villages which create a settled character. The M69 and pylon lines are intrusive modern features which detract from the rural perceptual qualities 	M

Overall assessment of landscape sensitivity to development scenarios

Development scenario	Sensitivity				
2-3 storey residential housing / transport infrastructure		L-M			
Small-scale commercial (B1/B2 use categories)			M		
Large scale commercial (warehousing – B8 use category)				M-H	
Notes on any variations in landscape sensitivity					
Areas which make a significant contribution to the sense of separation between settlements have increased sensitivity to development.					

Special landscape qualities and key sensitivities

The following provides a summary of the special landscape qualities and key features/attributes that would be sensitive to change (e.g. as a result of development):

- The rural setting the landscape provides to adjacent settlements and the sense of separation it maintains between distinct settlements, in particular Stoney Stanton and Sapcote.
- Mature hedgerow trees which add interest to the agricultural landscape and provide ecological habitats.
- The SSSI-designated habitats at Croft Pastures.
- Valued heritage features, including parts of Croft Conservation Area and several Grade II listed buildings/structures.
- The wide and open views enabled by the undulating landform and limited mature vegetation.
- Pockets of relative tranquillity within the landscape.
- Popular recreational facilities including Stoney Cove Diving Centre, as well as numerous public rights of way used for informal recreation.

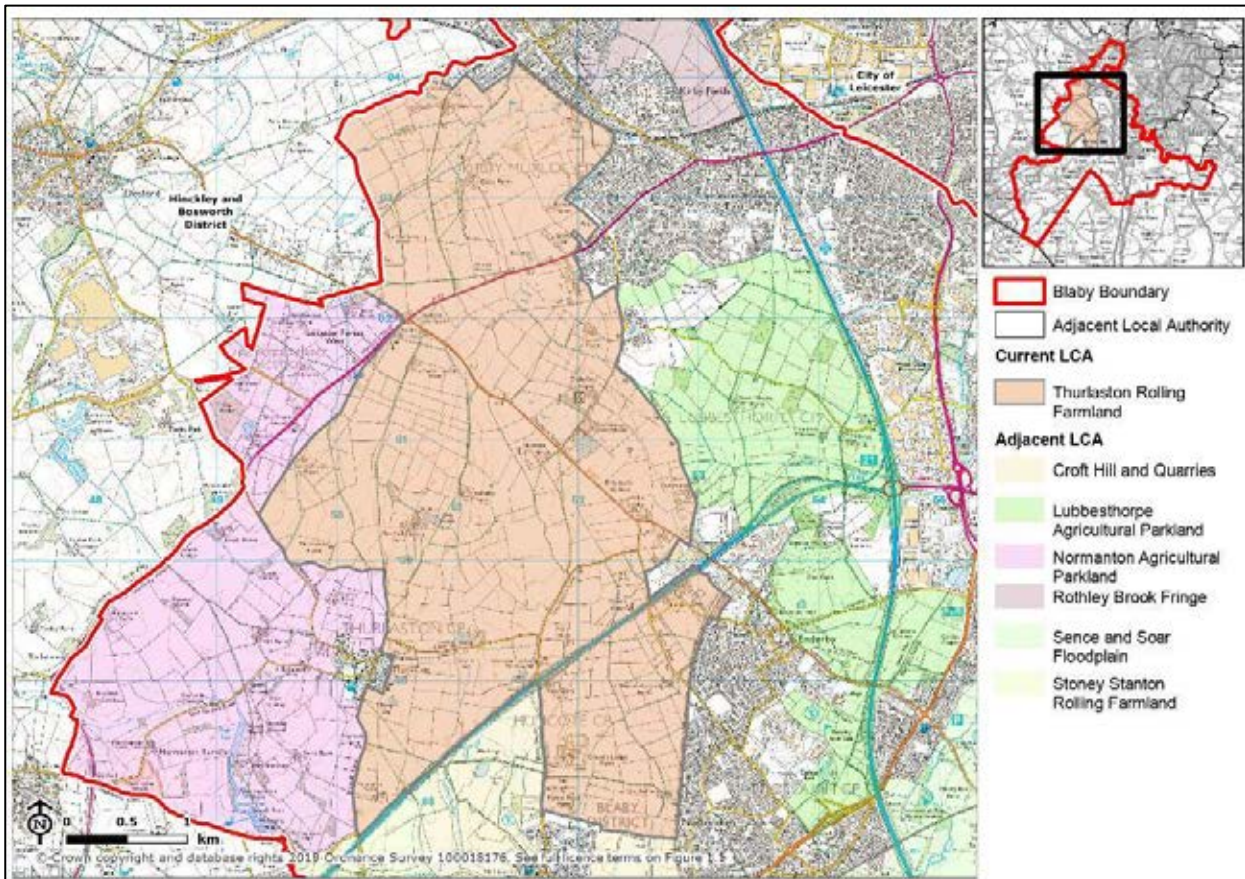
Guidance and opportunities for future development

Guidance and opportunities to consider for any future development within this Landscape Character Area include:

- Restore the scarce hedgerow trees through allowing natural establishment and planting of appropriate new species such as ash and oak. Species chosen should reflect those present within the surrounding fields.
- Conserve the fringe grasslands and wooded watercourses to retain important habitat corridors through farmland.
- Introduce planting the screen farm storage yards, large agricultural barns and urban edges to reduce their prominence in the landscape.
- Prevent the further coalescence of settlements, ensuring those that remain separate retain their own identities and landscape settings.
- Avoid development which could impact upon valued semi-natural habitats, including the nationally designated Croft Pastures SSSI.
- Conserve the setting and integrity of valued heritage assets, as well as historic buildings within Conservation Areas.
- Protect the rural working agricultural setting the landscape provides to development.

- Ensure any new development is sensitively sited, aiming to avoid significantly affecting areas of rural character with locally important levels of tranquillity.
- Respect and enhance the character of the rural villages, ensuring new development complements existing context with regards to scale, form, materials and boundary features.
- Design-in the introduction of SuDS to any new development, addressing any changes in hydrology (and subsequent knock-on effects such as increased diffuse pollution from agricultural run-off).
- Explore further opportunities to open up former quarries and pits as safe and sustainable recreation/tourism destinations.
- Explore opportunities to strengthen and increase the public rights of way network, including linking settlements to each other and to recreation destinations.

Thurlaston Rolling Farmland



Representative photographs



Location and summary of overall character

The landscape character area is located in the western part of the district to the west of Kirby Muxloe and Leicester Forest East. It extends towards the M69 in the central part of the district. The LCA is primarily arable agriculture, with pasture fields located close to settlements and farms. The low cut hedgerows and undulating landform often enables long views across the landscape. To the east, the LCA is bounded by significant amount of urban development, although this is relatively well contained by boundary vegetation. The M69 motorway and several pylon lines detract from the otherwise rural character.

Landscape character description

Key characteristics

Topography, geology and drainage

- Gently rolling landform which becomes flatter around Kirby Muxloe and adjacent to the M69. Steeper slopes are associated with the land around Hoefields Farm. Elevation ranges between 80 and 118 metres AOD.
- Several small watercourses cross the landscape, carving shallow valleys into the landform.
- The underlying bedrock is Triassic mudstone, siltstone and sandstone overlain by glacial deposits. Land is classified as Grade 3 in the Agricultural Land Classification.

Land use and field patterns

- Arable farming is the predominant land use. Pasture fields tend to be located close to villages and adjacent to farmsteads.
- The field pattern is varied, with fields tending to be larger on higher ground. Fields around urban fringes and farmsteads tend to be smaller. Fields are enclosed by a network of low hedgerows, which have been replaced by fencing in places.
- Kirby Muxloe Golf Course is located in the north eastern corner of the LCA, adjacent to the village.

Semi-natural habitats and woodland cover

- Tree coverage is sparse. There are no significant blocks of woodland in the LCA. There are occasional mature hedgerow and in-field trees the main species being oak and ash. There are pockets of deciduous woodland on Kirby Muxloe Golf Course.
- Riparian vegetation is located along the watercourses. Field ponds are also common features.

Archaeology and cultural heritage

- Remnant ridge and furrow is visible within fields.
- Scheduled Monuments within the LCA include an Iron Age enclosure, a moated site at New Hall and a Rabbit warren 180m north east of The Lawn.
- Historic churches within settlements form prominent landmarks, including the Grade II* Church of All Saints in Thurlaston.
- Huncote Grange and Oaks Farmhouse are Grade II listed buildings.

Settlement, road pattern and rights of way

- There is sparse settlement within the LCA although it is located on the fringes of larger settlements in the north and east of the LCA including Kirby Muxloe, Leicester Forest East, Narborough and Enderby. Settlements tend to be well integrated into the landscape by mature boundary vegetation. There is some industrial development adjacent to the M69 (outside of the LCA).
- Farm buildings are characterised by cream or white painted render. Modern farm buildings tend to be large-scale and of metal construction.
- Roads include the A47 and B582. The M69 crosses the LCA to the south of Thurlaston. There is limited road access to large parts of the LCA. Several minor rural roads cross the LCA, including Thurlaston Lane, Enderby Road and Forest Road.
- A network of footpaths and bridleways provides access to the countryside from the surrounding villages.

Views and perceptual qualities

- There are long views across the LCA because of the gently rolling topography, limited mature vegetation and low hedgerows with few trees.
- The LCA generally has a strong rural character. Noise and movement from transport corridors reduces the sense of tranquillity in the landscape.
- Overhead electricity lines and pylons form prominent skyline features in the north and east of the LCA. There are two wind turbines at Huncote Grange (74 metres and 67 metres to tip) which are also distinct skyline features.

Landscape evaluation

Summary of current landscape condition

The landscape retains a strong rural character despite the urban influences from adjacent development and busy roads and electricity infrastructure which fragment the landscape. Most of the agricultural land is well managed, although there are some areas where hedgerows have been lost and replaced by fencing. Other urban-fringe issues such as fly tipping also impact on the aesthetic quality of the landscape.

Key pressures/forces for change

- Removal or loss of field boundary and roadside hedgerows and trees could result in a more simple and open landscape.
- Urban pressures along the fringes of settlements could reduce the distinction between urban and rural areas. There is a housing allocation of 750 dwellings to the north of Hinckley Road (A47) adjacent to Kirby Muxloe.
- Increased urban influences from new roads and developments could degrade the rural character of the LCA.
- Expansion of fringes of Thurlaston into the landscape may increase its visual prominence and reduce its small village character.
- Knock-on effects from an increase in population close to the LCA, including levels of traffic impacting on tranquillity and more demand for countryside access.
- Perceptual qualities influenced by the M69 and A47, with busy traffic impacting on levels of tranquillity.
- Uncertain future for agriculture (including levels of funding support and market prices for livestock), further threatening the viability of the remaining farmed land.
- Diversification of land uses to non-agricultural enterprises (i.e. residential) and small-holdings (e.g. pony keeping).
- On-going demand for renewable energy installations including wind turbines and solar panels.

Landscape sensitivity assessment

Criteria	Description	Rating
Physical character (including topography and scale)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The landform is very gently rolling with localised flatter areas around Kirby Muxloe and along the M69 corridor. Steeper slopes are located to the north-east of Thurlaston. Elevation ranges between 80 and 118 metres AOD. This is a relatively large scale landscape with open views over smooth rolling topography. 	L-M
Natural character	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tree coverage is sparse and limited to occasional mature trees within hedgerows or along watercourses. Fields are generally have low cut hedgerows. In places, hedgerows have been replaced by fencing. Intensively farmed, primarily arable landscape, with small pockets of semi-natural habitat located within the agricultural land. 	L-M
Historic landscape character	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scheduled Monuments include an Iron Age enclosure, a moated site at New Hall and a Rabbit warren 180m north east of The Lawn. Remnant ridge and furrow is visible in some fields. Huncote Grange and Oaks Farmhouse are Grade II listed buildings. 	M
Form, density and setting of existing settlement/ development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The LCA is generally undeveloped and rural, with occasional farm complexes. The LCA is adjacent to settlements including Enderby, Thurlaston, Kirby Muxloe, Huncote and Leicester Forest East. It forms part of the rural setting to these settlements. Settlements and farmstead tend to be well-integrated into the landscape by mature vegetation. Farm buildings are generally white/cream painted render, although modern farm buildings tend to large and constructed of metal. 	M-H
Views and visual character including skylines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gently undulating landform and sparse vegetation result in long distance views across the LCA. The church spire in Thurlaston is prominent on skylines. Wind turbines at Huncote Grange (74 metres and 67 metres to tip) are also distinct skyline features. Pylons and overhead lines are prominent skyline features in the north east of the LCA. 	M
Access and recreation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Footpaths and bridleways provide access from settlements into the surrounding countryside. Recreational uses are restricted to village fringes and include a number of golf courses and a sports ground in the northern part of the character area. 	L-M
Perceptual and experiential qualities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sense of openness and expansiveness due to the gentle landform and limited boundary vegetation and trees. Large areas of the LCA are inaccessible by roads or rights of way, creating a sense of isolation. Transport corridors including the M69 and A47 introduce noise and movement which can detract from the rural qualities of the landscape. Pylons and overhead lines also have an urbanising influence. 	M

Overall assessment of landscape sensitivity to development scenarios

Development scenario	Sensitivity				
2-3 storey residential housing / transport infrastructure			M		
Small-scale commercial (B1/B2 use categories)	N/A				
Large scale commercial (warehousing – B8 use category)	N/A				
Notes on any variations in landscape sensitivity					
The steeper landform located close to Hoefields Farm (north-east of Thurlaston) has increased landscape sensitivity due to the increased visual prominence of the land in this area.					

Special landscape qualities and key sensitivities

The following provides a summary of the special landscape qualities and key features/attributes that would be sensitive to change (e.g. as a result of development):

- Localised areas of steep landform including to the south of Hoefields Farm.
- Features which contribute to the natural character of the landscape including mature hedgerow trees and frequent in-field ponds.
- The rural character of the area which provides an undeveloped backdrop to existing settlements.
- Important heritage features with Scheduled Monuments including an Iron Age enclosure, a moated site at New Hall and a Rabbit warren 180m north east of The Lawn.
- Fields containing surviving ridge and furrow.
- Open and expansive views across the countryside enabled by the undulating landform and low hedgerows.
- Pockets of relative tranquillity within the agricultural landscape, often valued as an informal recreation destination by people within the adjacent urban areas.

Guidance and opportunities for future development

Guidance and opportunities to consider for any future development within this Landscape Character Area include:

- Enhance hedgerow management to restore the quality and condition of existing hedgerows, which are fragmented in some areas. Increase the numbers of hedgerow trees, to improve diversity in the landscape and to improve ecological and aesthetic value.
- Protect views of the church as a prominent feature on the skyline of the village of Thurlaston.
- Protect the mixture of open gently rolling farmland with expansive views and localised enclosed areas through the appropriate siting of new woodland. The creation of small copses and linear belts of planting to follow the contours of the landscape could enhance aesthetic and biodiversity value.
- Prevent the coalescence of settlements (e.g Huncote and Narborough), ensuring that they retain their own identities and landscape settings.
- Avoid siting development on the more open, visible slopes and where ridge and furrow is evident.
- Ensure any new development is sensitively sited, aiming to avoid significantly affecting areas of rural character with locally important levels of tranquillity.
- Respect and enhance the character of the adjacent rural villages, ensuring new development complements existing context with regards to scale, form, materials and boundary features.
- Explore opportunities to strengthen and increase the public rights of way network, particularly to provide links between settlements.

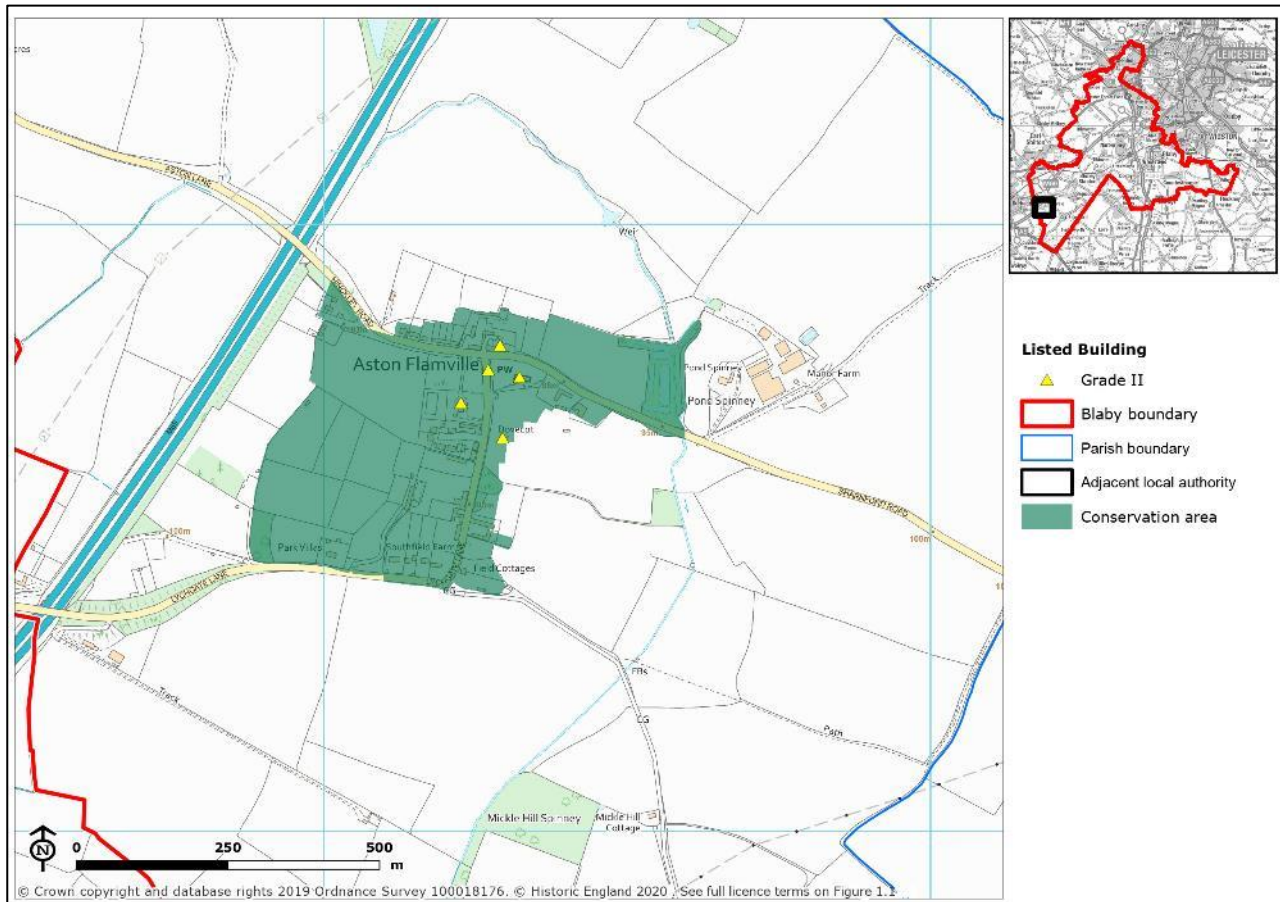
5 Settlement Character Area profiles



5 Settlement Character Area profiles

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Aston Flamville



Representative photographs



Location and context

Aston Flamville is a small village located within the Aston Flamville Wooded Uplands LCA, situated close to the southwest boundary of the district. The M69 motorway corridor is located to the northwest of the village. The village is situated on slightly higher ground than the nearby motorway which helps to filter road noise, mitigating against a reduction in levels of tranquillity.

The village is designated as a Conservation Area. Planning restrictions and control have ensured that the historic village characteristics have been preserved and it exhibits a strong local vernacular.

Key settlement characteristics

- Small linear village focused around the Manor House and Church of St Peter, with a strong association with agriculture.
- Well-vegetated fringes comprising small belts of woodland which screen the development in view from the west and north.
- Views from the settlement over open rolling countryside.
- Predominantly residential settlement with no shops or local facilities.
- Buildings often reflect the agricultural origins of the village.
- Limited provision of public open space however there is easy access to the surrounding countryside via public rights of way.
- Approaches to the village are enclosed by mature vegetation, creating a sense of isolation.

Description

Built form and settlement pattern

The settlement pattern is strongly linear following the route of the Lychgate Lane and Hinckley Road which cross through the settlement. Most buildings in the village form the historic core.

The village generally is well screened from the wider landscape by mature vegetation. It contains the Grade II listed Church of St Peter, a manor house and several residential properties. Both the churchyard and Manor House grounds contain large mature trees which create enclosure around the properties and restrict views of the buildings from the surrounding area.

Buildings are often within substantial gardens and most are set back from the road with grass verges to the front. The village has developed around the central Manor House opposite the village church. Many of the surrounding houses are substantial cottages, farmhouses and converted farm buildings within courtyards, indicative of the agricultural associations of the village. Modern development is not intrusive in the village and has respected its small-scale rural character although of a typical modern architectural style.

A Grade II listed brick pigeoncote stands alone within an open field opposite the Manor House forming a significant landscape feature and historical reference within Aston Flamville. The structure is marked with the date 1715 giving an indication of the minimum age of settlement around The Manor.

Buildings are low in height and do not exceed two storeys. The church tower is the tallest structure. The church is enclosed by substantial trees and is not visually prominent beyond the village.



Houses along Lychgate Lane front onto the

Architectural style

The village contains a mixture of building styles, including cottages, detached and semi-detached dwellings and converted farm buildings. Several houses have attractive architectural detailing to the facades, gables and roofs.

The Manor House at Lychgate Lane/Burbage Lane marks the centre of the settlement and dates from the late 16th century. It is constructed from brick with plain tile and slate roofs and contains elements of stone and granite rubble. It has gated access and is enclosed by red brick walls and vegetation.



St Peter's Church is the most prominent building in the settlement

A modern housing development has been incorporated into the village adjacent to the Manor House. This reflects the local character and built form of the settlement. The dwellings have views of the brick pigeoncote and surrounding countryside to the east of the settlement. The siting of the houses to the roadside respects the existing building line and they face on to the road as do adjoining cottages. Further houses to the rear are accessed via a road between the two frontage buildings. Although these modern houses lack some of the architectural detailing which can be seen in the facades of the adjoining buildings, they are constructed of a mixture of red and brown shades of brick with dark roof tiles, which is complementary to the existing colour palette.

Properties tend to be enclosed by low red brick walls. The front gardens of some houses are marked by timber garden fences and/or ornamental planting. Modern houses tend to lack brick walls. Mature hedgerows, trees within gardens and belts of woodland contribute to the well vegetated character of the village.

Buildings are predominantly constructed from red brick with dark slate or tiled roofs. Woodwork and timber detailing are often painted white. There is one thatched building in the village which is rendered and painted cream. St. Peter's church is constructed from local granite.

Public Realm and green space

The village contains no specifically allocated public open space, play facilities or recreation ground. However, there is easy access to the immediate countryside via several public rights of way including parts of the Leicestershire Round long distance route. Mature trees are frequently associated with properties and create a green setting to the village.

The village benefits from views onto open countryside from various locations along public roads. The village roads are narrow and only Sharnford Road adjacent to Church Farm has a roadside footpath. Most roadsides are bounded by well-maintained grass verges.



Gateway features

The entrance to the village from the north is characterised by dense overhanging vegetation along Sharnford Road. Mature trees and vegetation cover the roadside on both sides restricting views, creating a sense of enclosure and increasing the perception of a remote and rural location.

A line of large modern detached properties denote the entrance to the village from the west. These properties overlook Mickle Hill Spinney. A row of coniferous trees is located adjacent to this entrance.

The thatched building in the north of the village is a distinctive property and the first to be seen on entering the village through the vegetated entrance on Sharnford Road.

The village contains a red painted and glazed panel telephone kiosk which stands outside the church at the junction of Lychgate Lane and Hinckley Road. This kiosk is a Grade II listed Type K6 designed 1935 by Sir Giles Gilbert Scott. It is visually prominent opposite the thatched cottages forming a further gateway feature on entering the village.



Capacity for change along the settlement edge

Aston Flamville is distinctive within Blaby District as it contains a largely intact rural village character throughout. The small scale linear street pattern is retained and almost all buildings have a close association with the street. Any development should be required to reflect this character through low boundaries and parking hidden behind properties.

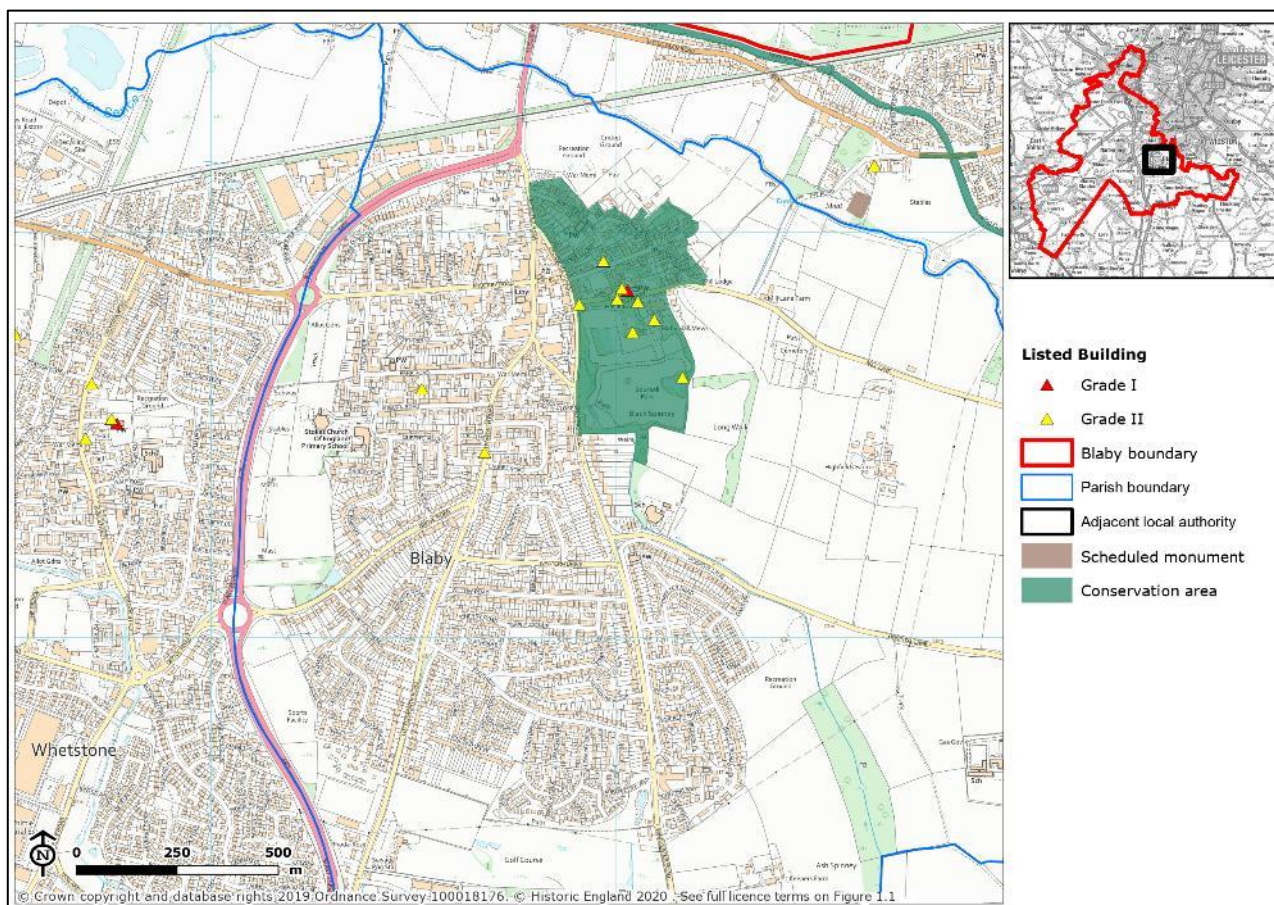
Expansion of this village in any direction could alter and erode the strong historic linear pattern of this settlement. Any changes within this settlement and Conservation Area must have regard to the character of the setting. In the event of new development, houses should front on the road and have minimal front garden space. Where driveways are required these should be designed to give the impression of a small farm courtyard or archway into a central hidden courtyard to retain the active frontage of buildings.

The village edges are sensitive to change, particularly to the south and east where open views should be retained and any impact of built form on the wider landscape should be minimised.

Recommendations

- Preserve the rural characteristics of this village through limiting expansion and the careful design and siting of any new buildings to retain the small linear nature and association with agriculture.
- Conserve the distinct vegetated entrance into the village along Sharnford Road.
- Conserve and protect the historical landscape and built features of the village such the brick pigeoncote and thatched cottage.
- Conserve the strong roadside presence of buildings through maintaining low boundary walls and small front gardens.
- Conserve and protect the open aspect and wide views of rolling countryside, particularly to the south and east of the village.
- Protect the strong association of the settlement with the surrounding landscape.
- Establish new planting to screen the visual impacts of the proposed Hinckley Rail Freight interchange (if approved) and associated infrastructure. This should include planting along the motorway corridor.

Blaby



Representative photographs



Location and context

Blaby is situated within the central part of the district to the east of the M1 and south of the River Sence and the railway line. The town centre is based on the junction between Enderby Road, Leicester Road, Sycamore Street and Welford Road. Whetstone is located to the west of the settlement on the other side of the A426, while Glen Parva is located to the north of the settlement.

The historic core of the village is designated as a Conservation Area and is situated to the north east around the Church of All Saints. The settlement originally developed as a result of its links to industry, including hosiery and more recently the manufacture of shoes. The most significant expansion occurred during the early 1960-70s and today the settlement is largely residential.

Key settlement characteristics

- The historic Conservation Area, with narrow walled streets and a high concentration of listed buildings, including artisan cottages, thatched buildings and some buildings of granite rubble.
- A modern commercial centre characterised by flat roofed 2-3 storey buildings and small paved precincts.
- Residential areas characterised by semi-detached buildings often set within mature landscape surroundings.
- A mixed building vernacular with a high proportion of red and tan brick buildings and a mix of flat and pitched roofs.
- Lack of defined entrances into the settlement and a limited sense of separation from other surrounding settlements.
- Bouskell Park is a historic parkland located along the eastern boundary, containing medieval ridge and furrow and estate planting.
- A relatively verdant settlement, particularly in more residential areas, with front gardens, mature vegetation and several large parks.

Description

Built form and settlement pattern

There is a mixed settlement pattern in Blaby as a result of expansion around the commercial centre from a range of different periods. The overall layout of the settlement is triangular in form, branching off Lutterworth Road and Welford Road.

The historic village core is designated as a Conservation Area and is clustered around the Grade II listed All Saints Church. This area is isolated from the modern commercial centre and has a distinctive village character. Small walled roads with buildings fronting directly onto the road are characteristic, although modern infill has fragmented this built form slightly.

The commercial centre has wide pavements and buildings set back from the road which create a more open character. Some of the streets leading off the main centre are comparatively narrow, with smaller terraced shops and houses fronting directly onto narrow pavements. Few shops are vacant, and most are used by local businesses, although there is a presence of some larger retail companies.

The residential roads are generally wide with most properties set behind small front gardens which become larger to accommodate driveways towards the edges of the settlement. There are also some roads with large green verges further opening the settlement character of more residential areas. To the north and west buildings tend to be semi-detached with some short rows of terraced housing. Most have small front gardens. Mature vegetation and trees lining property boundaries and roads create a vegetated character within residential parts of the settlement. The roofline within the settlement is relatively varied due to the mix of building heights and roof styles.

The settlement contains a small area of commercial properties to the north, which are part of the Winchester Road Business Park, shared with Whetstone. This is separated from the rest of the settlement by the A426 dual carriageway.



Looking west from Mill Lane into the Conservation Area, with the spire of the Church of All Saints marking the skyline, surrounded by mature trees.

Architectural style

There is no overriding common building material present within the settlement. Modern development has not reflected traditional building styles or materials, although where it is constructed in red brick with grey roofs it integrates well. There is a well-defined retail centre including a terraced two storey properties

with shops on the ground floor and some private flats with dormer windows. Shops are usually flat roofed 1960-70s development set within small precincts. Newer infill development creates some variety in architectural style although the variation in shop frontage style, age and condition has a fragmented character. There are several listed buildings, most of which are concentrated in the older part of the settlement to the north-east.

The older part of the village to the north-east is characterised by artisan cottages interspersed with large town houses and villas and some timber framed thatched cottages such as the Olde Bakers Arms pub. Older buildings including the Grade I listed Church of All Saints are granite rubble with welsh slate roofs.



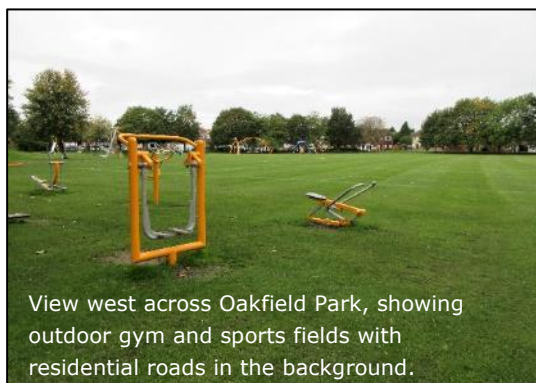
Looking north up Welford Road from Sycamore Street, showing mixed architectural styles and mature vegetation

Residential areas also have mixed vernacular with Victorian terraces, pre and post war semi-detached houses and private and former Council properties⁹. Older terraced buildings around the commercial centre are relatively large and mostly constructed out of red brick with windows generally painted white, although there are some areas of lighter tan coloured bricks. There are scattered painted or rendered white buildings providing some variation. Roofs are generally dark grey, although they are paler in the centre. Roofs range in style from flat roofs to shallow and steeply pitched roofs and some newer buildings which incorporate a gentle curve.

Public Realm and green space

The settlement has a relatively well vegetated character away from its centre with mature trees on streets, wide grass verges and front gardens. There are large grassy verges with mature trees in the centre of Winchester Road and Lutterworth Road. In the centre there is very limited green space, although there is a pedestrian precinct and areas with wider pavements.

There are several open access areas, the most significant of which is Bouskell Park. This is the location



View west across Oakfield Park, showing outdoor gym and sports fields with residential roads in the background.

of a medieval village and the outlines of plots, raised ground of the old manor house and ridge and furrow field patterns are visible. As part of the historic grounds of Blaby Hall it has a strong parkland character, with mature wooded boundaries. Blaby Oaks situated to the southeast of Blaby is a millennium woodland owned by the Woodland Trust is more naturalistic open space.

Other green spaces include Oakfield Park in the south east, Northfield Park, Crescent Park and a small play area on Tarry Close. These parks contain a variety of facilities including play areas, playing fields and gym equipment. The settlement is surrounded by sports pitches, allotments and golf courses however these have limited public access.

Gateway features

Most entrances to the settlement are marked with welcome signs, although these are absent in the east.

The gateway features along roads from other settlements including Countesthorpe and Whetstone are poorly defined, with a limited sense of separation. This lack of separation is particularly pronounced along Lutterworth Road, here carparks club houses and fences associated with the Leicester Lions RFC and Blaby Golf Centre, have an urbanising effect, despite the relatively large amount of green space. The entrance from the north on Leicester Road is dominated by a roundabout and traffic, although the railway bridge acts as a gateway feature.



The northern entrance on the A426, showing a welcome sign.

Capacity for change along the settlement edge

The urban edges of Blaby are relatively well defined by roads and the vegetated railway along the northern boundary. Development along the north connects Whetstone and Blaby and the individual settlements would benefit from improved gateways to reinforce their separate identities. Development beyond the railway should be avoided as it would compromise the gap between Blaby and Glen Parva.

The western edge of Blaby is particularly sensitive as it has limited open land between the settlement edge and Whetstone forming an important undeveloped buffer. There is little scope for expansion along this edge, despite relatively well vegetated the A426.

Continued expansion to the south of the settlements and the recreational use of the land as a golf course reduce the feeling of separation of Blaby from Countesthorpe and Whetstone, diluting their individual identities. The south eastern edge of the settlement is more urban in character. However, Blaby Oaks provides screening of this edge in views from the wider countryside.

The eastern boundary of Blaby is formed by Bouskell Park and land around Blaby Hall which provide a well vegetated and relatively rural setting to the edge of the settlement. The evergreen woodland of Long Walk provides a strong linear feature to the edge. Expansion beyond this point should be resisted.

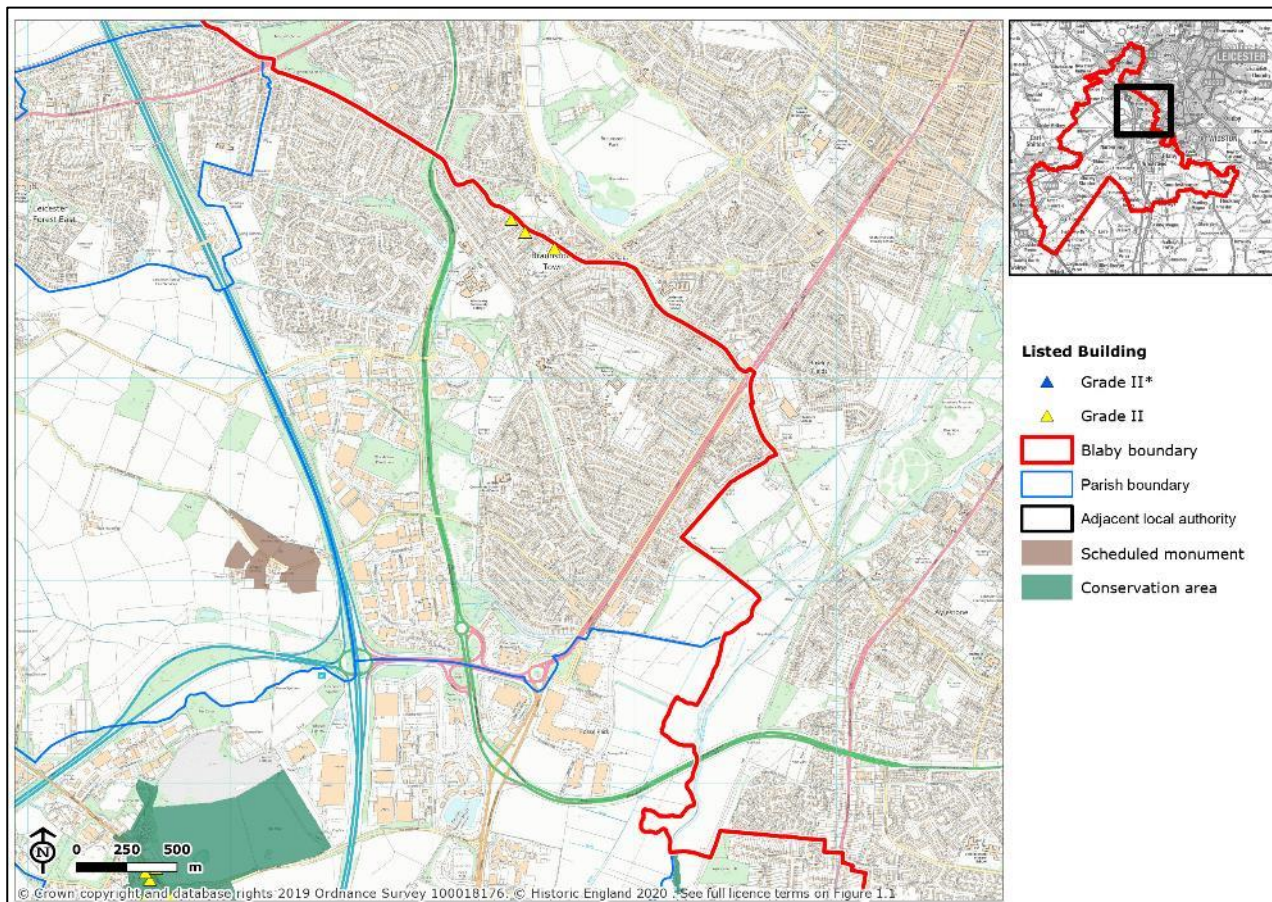
Recommendations

- Restore the connection between the commercial centre, older core and Bouskell Park through appropriate signage, improved public realm and defined pedestrian links between the areas.
- Enhance gateway features to retain the sense of separation and distinctiveness of settlements through appropriate development, landscape treatments and signage. This is particularly important from entrances off the A426 and along Lutterworth Road to the south.
- As stated in the Neighbourhood Plan¹⁰, future development should be concentrated within the settlement boundary, this will encourage the use of brownfield sites and ensure Blaby remains a discrete settlement with clear separation from adjoining settlements.
- Infill development in the west should be resisted to prevent further coalescence with Whetstone.
- Future changes in development or land management would also need to respect the rural parkland character of Bouskell Park to protect and enhance its setting to retain its perceived connection with the wider countryside This is in line with the objectives of the Neighbourhood Plan to 'Protect and enhance existing open spaces and amenities'.
- Enhance public realm and shop frontages within the commercial centre to create a distinctive character for the settlement through a consistent design theme along the main roads through the settlement.
- On-going contraction in the retail sector may lead to numerous building vacancies. In this case, innovative uses of commercial premises should be explored, and retailing could be focused in a smaller part of the town centre.
- Consider planting in the centre of the settlement to create a more verdant character in the largely paved retail areas.
- Conserve and enhance the mature trees within residential areas and encourage replacement planting and tree planting within new development schemes.

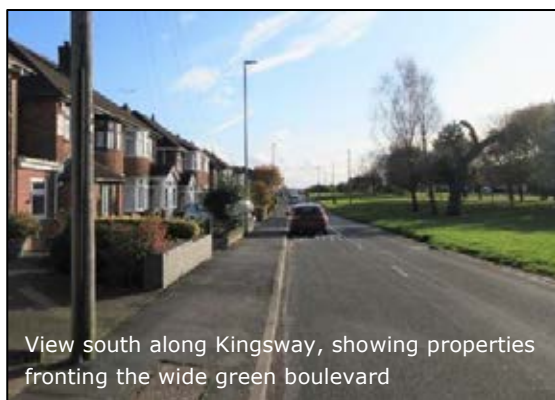
⁹ Blaby Neighbourhood Plan (2019), Blaby District Council

¹⁰ Blaby Neighbourhood Plan (2019), Blaby District Council

Braunstone Town



Representative photographs



Location and context

Braunstone Town is a large residential suburb to the west of Leicester city centre. The majority settlement lies between the route of the M1 and the A5460. Directly to the north lies Braunstone/Rowley Fields with the route of Braunstone Lane forming a boundary between the two areas.

Most of the settlement developed as a substantial but separate extension to Braunstone during the mid-20th century. The historic settlement of Braunstone is located outside of Blaby District to the north of the settlement, centred on St Peter's Church. Suburban development in the 19th century led to coalescence with the southern boundary of Leicester and the historic village of Braunstone. Further development in the 20th and 21st centuries has left limited remaining green space between Braunstone and surrounding settlements.

Key settlement characteristics

- Predominantly a residential suburb with employment and leisure areas at Meridian Business Park and Meridian Leisure.
- Braunstone Lane forms the boundary between Braunstone Town and the western fringes of Leicester.
- High density and uniform settlement pattern with streets often running parallel to each other. There is a more irregular and sinuous settlement pattern in Thorpe Astley to the northwest.
- Large boulevard with groups of mature trees along Kingsway is a distinctive landmark and green corridor through the centre of the settlement.
- Narborough Road South (A5460) dual carriageway cuts through the eastern section of the area, with its fenced edge acting as a distinctive barrier between the two parts of the settlement.
- Relatively consistent use of red brick building materials with dark brown tiles.
- A relatively green character provided by vegetation in front gardens, grass verges and interspaced green spaces.
- Distinctive corner buildings are features at road junctions, providing an open entrance to streets.
- There is no retail core and facilities are dispersed throughout the area, with shops and commercial buildings reflecting the surrounding building styles.

Description

Built form and settlement pattern

The area is uniform in character with roads generally being relatively wide with semi-detached housing set behind front gardens and driveways. There is subtle variation between roads and built form where development has been undertaken by different housing developers and at different times.

Most streets within the town are relatively straight, with a uniform character and with a high density of properties running parallel to each other. However, in Thorpe Astley to the north-west, the settlement pattern is more irregular with curved roads on right angles and more areas of informal open space. At road junctions, corner buildings tend to be locally distinctive, particularly along the central boulevard of Kingsway.

Shopping facilities are dispersed throughout the settlement, with no central core. Shops tend to match the style of the surrounding buildings and where these are two storeys, they often have retail on the ground floor and private flats above. St Crispin's Church provides a localised landmark. Although of modern construction, the church has a different architectural style to other building within the area. Its distinctive architecture, height and prominent location on the intersection of Turnbull Drive and Edward Avenue make it a landmark building. Meridian Leisure Park is a large, self-contained area, located to the east of Lubbesthorpe Way. It offers leisure, entertainment and restaurant facilities. To the west of Lubbesthorpe Way is the Meridian Business Park, which contains a mixture of employment development.

Narborough Road South (A5460) dual carriageway runs through the east of the settlement and creates a barrier between the eastern section of the settlement and the rest of Braunstone Town. The settlement is also bisected by Lubbesthorpe Way (A563) beyond which is a large area of housing at Thorpe Astley and Meridian Business Park. The wide grass verge through the centre with roads either side (Kingsway) is a distinct feature of the town. This provides an expansive boulevard through the suburb and provides a landmark feature to enable orientation which other residential roads in the suburb lack.

Braunstone Town is on slightly higher ground than the surrounding landscape, providing a gently rising roofline. However, there are no distinctive taller features, resulting in a relatively uniform skyline.



View west towards the distinctive St Crispin's Church and local retail facilities.

Architectural style

Most buildings are semi-detached properties, although the style varies depending on their age. In Thorpe Astley the building style is more modern featuring some three-story town houses and a mixture of detached and semi-detached properties.

Building materials are mostly brick in light and dark brown colours. Some houses have white or beige render providing localised variation. Roof colour is predominantly a dark brown tile. Red tiles are present in some areas; however, they are prominent and contrast with surrounding building materials.



View north along Braunstone Close, showing similar red brick properties.

Several properties have corner detailing in brick. This generally uses a slightly darker colour of brick although in rendered properties the brick colouring is of a lighter colour.

Boundary treatments vary from brick walls to ornamental hedgerows and in places no boundaries or timber fencing. Timber fenced boundaries are a common feature. Where present, taller fences often prevent intervisibility between the buildings and the roads. This reduces the relatively continuous built frontage created along the roads.

Public Realm and green space

The grass verge along Kingsway is the most prominent piece of open space. It provides a green setting to housing through a swathe of mature tree planting which filters views to either side of the road. Thorpe Astley to the northeast has a considerable amount of informal green spaces between housing, softening the character of the suburban area.

Elsewhere the gaps between detached properties are narrow; this combined with a high proportion of gardens converted to drives creates a more urban feel with limited green areas visible from roads.



View north across open green space in Thorpe Astley, from Darien Way.

Mossdale Meadows provides a small area of informal open space, playing fields, play facilities and nature conservation areas. Osiers Nature Area is situated in the south of the settlement, linked to Mossdale Meadows by a green corridor. Shakespeare Park is situated in the north of the settlement and contains a sports clubhouse along with playing fields, play and recreation facilities. Thorpe Astley Park contains a playing field, play and recreation facilities, along with a Community Centre. Franklin Park is located within the centre of Braunstone Town. A lack of built development facing the greenspace and careful woodland/hedgerow planting, creates a feeling of isolation and seclusion, despite its location. In addition, there are large areas of allotments adjacent to the north and southeast of the open space.

Gateway features

The southern gateway into Braunstone Town from Narborough Road South is characterised by significant retail and employment development at Fosse Park and major road infrastructure. The gateway from the M69/M1 to the west is also characterised by large roads and large scale development at Meridian Business Park.

Other gateways are less defined, and the edges of Braunstone Town are difficult to distinguish from other surrounding suburbs. Features include welcome signs at the busy Braunstone Lane Junction with the A5460. There is no signage to identify entering the settlement from Meridian Way (the access route for New Lubbethorpe) in the northwest, or Braunstone Lane in the north.



Gateway features from the junction of Braunstone Lane and the A5460.

Capacity for change along the settlement edge

The urban edge of Braunstone Town is constrained, with almost no opportunities for further expansion. Development extends continuously to the north and east, therefore there is limited capacity for further development.

To the south the boundary is formed by Fosse Park, a retail centre consisting of large block shaped buildings and expansive car parking.

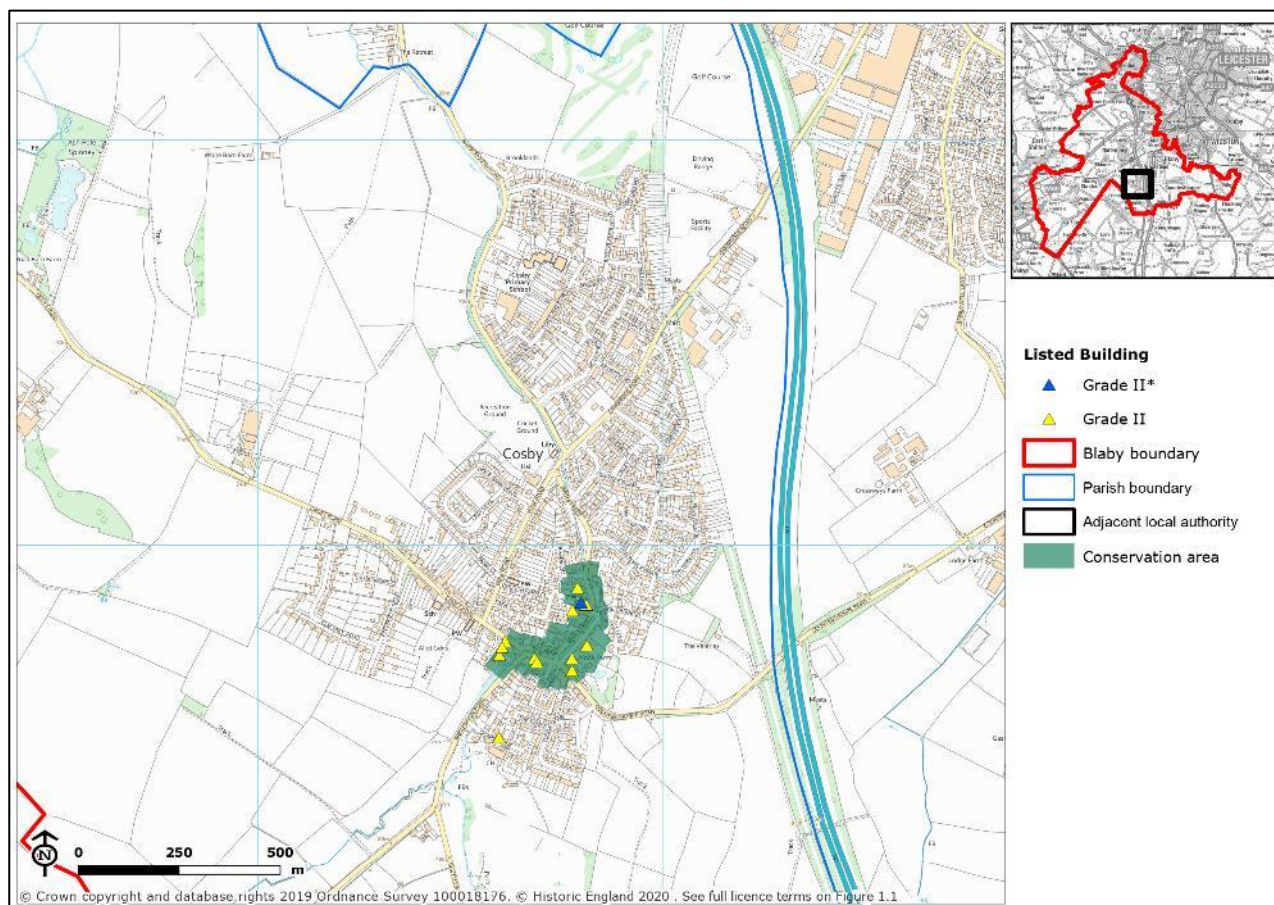
The south eastern boundary extends into the Sence and Soar floodplain landscape character area which is defined by its floodplain characteristics of a mix of open meadows and small clumps of woodland. This area remains relatively undeveloped due to the risk of flooding. The western boundary extends to the M1.

To the southwest the edge is constrained by industrial development which is separated from housing by the A563 and The Osiers Nature Area. The eastern side of the A563 has considerable new woodland, which helps enclose the settlement and buffer sound pollution from the busy A-road.

Recommendations

- Conserve and enhance the Kingsway boulevard running through the centre of the settlement for its resource as green corridor and for landscape setting.
- Enhance signage for the settlement to provide a gateway features to identify it as a different suburb to adjacent developed areas.
- Enhance the interaction between open spaces and surrounding residential areas through sensitive management of vegetation and improving entrances and approaches into open spaces.
- Conserve woodland areas which enclose the settlement and maintain a sense of separation from other surrounding development, such as that following the A563 and the tall broad hedgerows on the eastern edge of the settlement.
- Increase the connection between different areas of the settlement to cross harsh dividing features such as Narborough Road and the A563 (Lubbesthorpe Way). Currently properties to the east of Narborough Road and in Thorpe Astley are only connected by limited underpasses.
- Protect the corner building characteristics of the area and promote new distinctive corner buildings within new developments.

Cosby



Representative photographs



Location and context

Cosby is situated in the south of Blaby District to the southwest of Whetstone and south of Littlethorpe. Cosby is a large clustered village that has expanded north from its historic core which is situated around the Church of St Michael and All Angels. The core of the village extends along a small brook which is a dominant feature within the village and follows Narborough Road, Main Street and Broughton Road. The settlement expanded with significant development to the 20th century. The M1 is a dominant feature to the east of the Cosby. The village includes Cosby Land Settlement, originally set up as part of the Land Settlement Association to provide smallholdings for rural workers. This area has a distinctly different settlement pattern and building vernacular to the rest of Cosby.

Key settlement characteristics

- Strong village character created around the historic core with a series of road intersections surrounding the brook.
- Open street character and wide roads through the central part of the village, with the wide course of the brook creating a strong sense of place.
- Cosby Land Settlement is a distinctive sub-area of the village, with a built form and vernacular distinct from the rest of the settlement.
- The high concentration of listed buildings in the historic core.
- Historic agricultural barns within the settlement reinforce the strong agricultural connections of the village.
- Varied roofline created through a combination of smaller terraces interspersed with large townhouses and the distinctive spire of St Michael and All Angels Church.
- A mix of red brick and white painted or rendered terraces with simple architectural detailing, particularly in the centre.
- The village has a verdant character, largely due to the presence of mature vegetation along the brook as well as mature street trees and vegetation in gardens.

Description

Built form and settlement pattern

Cosby has developed around a brook which flows along the main route through the village, following Narborough Road, Main Street and Broughton Road. The brook forms the central spine and green space with a wide road which gives the area an open character. The central core around the watercourse is designated as a Conservation Area. The oldest buildings are within the central core of the village to the south, many of which are listed. Cottages often front directly onto the street.

The street pattern is relatively sinuous, created by the close association between the houses, roads and the brook. Development along most roads is of high density and uniform, although the central core includes a mix of cottage terraces, shops and small courtyards set behind arched entrances which provide variation. Some narrow side roads are set back from the main centre including The Nook. Along Church Farm Close is a recent development for a rural exception site providing affordable homes, most are detached or semi-detached.

In the north east modern developments take on a typical residential layout with sinuous roads and cul de sacs. This area is made up of detached and semi-detached properties set within small front gardens.

Properties within Cosby Land Settlement to the south-west have a low density, with large detached properties set in large gardens and separated by wide grassy verges.

The presence of the brook provides a unifying influence and creates a subtle transition from the older historic core to modern development. Away from the brook the character changes dramatically with newer development becoming much more urban in nature with narrower roads and relatively little vegetation. The roofline is varied through a mix of building styles and heights. The spire of St Michael and All Angels Church is distinctive on localised skylines and a unifying feature of the settlement, visible from residential areas in the north east which are otherwise removed from the historic core.



View east along Church Farm Close showing new development with mixed building materials in front of the Grade II* listed church

Architectural style

There is a variety of architectural styles present within the village with examples of 18th, 19th and 20th century development.

Older buildings in the centre are characterised by red brick with properties such as Cosby House and the Bulls Head Pub having detail provided by granite walling at the base of the building and sandstone on the corners, doors and windows. The Grade II* listed St Michael and All Angels Church is granite. Many buildings in the centre have either been painted or rendered white. Roofing material is often dark grey or brown, although there are several thatched properties including The Tithe Barn.

Buildings further from the centre in the north and north east are constructed mainly of red brick with very simple detailing around their window frames. Throughout the village, many of the windows are painted white although a few are black.

There are several agricultural barns within the village including the Grade II listed Barn east of Cosby House which is dated at 1766. These barns help reinforce the village's connection with the agricultural landscape.



The Bulls Head Inn located adjacent to the brook

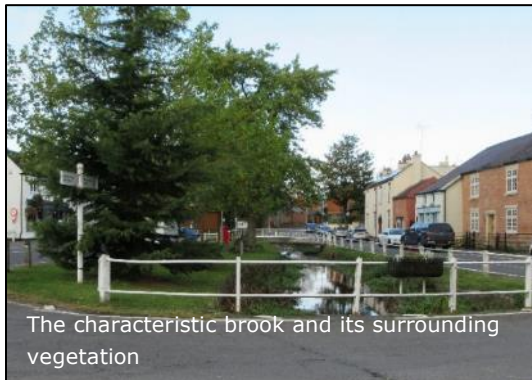
In the south west of the village lies Cosby Land Settlement. Properties here are larger and detached with a character distinct from those in the rest of Cosby. Here buildings are orange-red brick, with steep pitched roofs of red clay or grey tiles. Properties often feature gable ends, often with large windows set within the sloping roofs.

There are several information boards and signs in the village's centre. A metal handrail (painted white) protects pedestrians from the steep drop to the brook and some properties have similar metal fencing. Other property boundaries include brick walls of varying heights, open plan driveways, and tall hedges.

Public Realm and green space

Cosby's character is formed by the distinctive

canalised brook set within a wide verge which flows through most of the village. Mature trees and riparian vegetation along the length of the brook provide a green setting to buildings within the village.



The characteristic brook and its surrounding vegetation

Areas in the east such as Chiltern Avenue and in Cosby Land Settlements to the southwest feature wide grassy verges and/or street trees.

Victory Park is the largest area of green space, located on the western outskirts of the central part of the village. Small amounts of other public open space are present within housing estates including at Lady Leys, Ashover Close and Cosby Parish Council Cemetery, whilst in the east of the town there are frequent large grassy verges in residential areas.

Gateway features

The south-eastern entrance is well defined on Countesthorpe Road, with the road dipping as it enters the village and passing underneath the motorway and railway bridges. Numerous older buildings are located close to this entrance.

The entrance into the village on Narborough Road is relatively suburban due to the presence of modern development and intervisibility with settlement in Littlethorpe. However, the course of the vegetated brook provides a uniting landscape feature which links this part of the village to its centre.

Linear development along Cambridge Road to the north reduces the sense of separation from nearby Whetstone, with only the motorway bridge acting as a strong division between the settlements. An ornate village sign which reinforces this entrance into the village and emphasises identity, although these are absent in southern entrances.



View east into the village from Croft Road

Capacity for change along the settlement edge

The eastern side of the village is set on slightly lower topography and is defined by the wooded dis-used railway embankment. Expansion along the eastern edge would be likely to increase the village's visual prominence within the wider landscape, as well as increasing the risk of its coalescence with Whetstone which would detract from these settlements' distinct identities.

Expansion to the west of the brook would need to respect this strong linear feature and ensure that the village still appears as a small cluster of development.

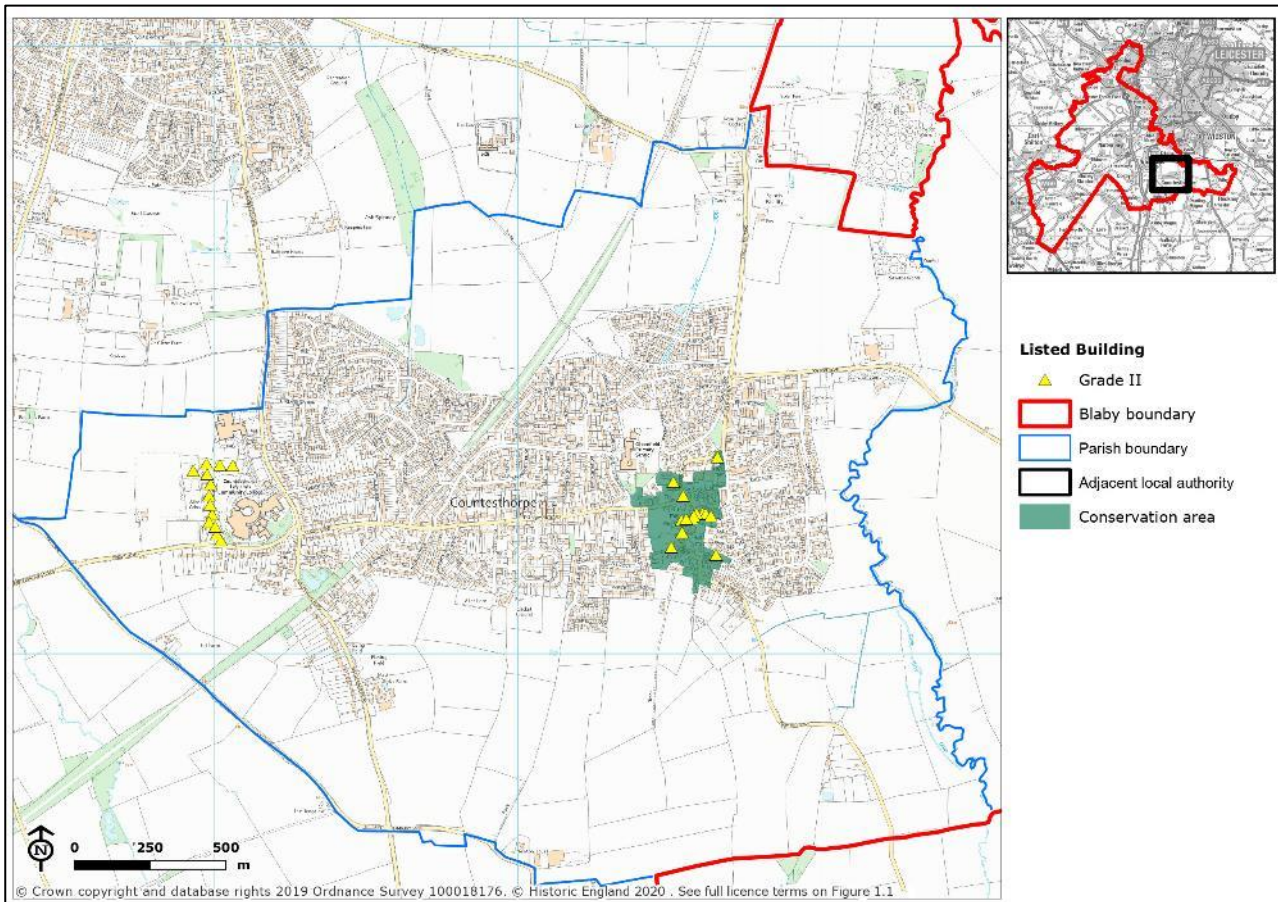
The northern edge is particularly sensitive as it forms an important defining space between Littlethorpe and Cosby. There is a relatively sharp transition from the settlement edge of Cosby to agricultural fields, however there are already several dispersed individual properties along Cosby Road which reduce this distinction.

To the south, the ground slopes up from the settlement edge. Expansion on higher ground could increase the influence of the village within the surrounding landscape.

Recommendations

- Conserve the brook and associated vegetation as it is an important transitional link between modern development and the older historic core. It also provides attractive green space with important habitats.
- Ensure new development does not encroach on the undeveloped gap between Cosby and the surrounding settlements of Whetstone and Littlethorpe to retain their separate identities and distinctiveness.
- Protect and enhance the gateways into the village through the installation of bespoke signage at entrances where this is not present.
- Protect and enhance the historic associations of the settlement by ensuring new development reflects this vernacular and that existing buildings (many of which are listed) are sensitively managed.
- Preserve the varied architectural form within the village including the agricultural barns, farm buildings and cottage terraces. Seek to reflect this diversity and reference historic buildings in any new development within the village.
- Protect the distinct character of different parts of the village including the dispersed settlement pattern of Cosby Land settlement and the close association with the brook in the village core.
- Enhance the vegetated character of the settlement through the planting of new street trees and the active management of existing stock.
- Explore the potential to use the route of the dismantled railway along the eastern edge to improve recreational links to the wider countryside and other settlements, providing a long-distance green infrastructure route through the district.
- Retain the agricultural setting to the village, particularly the distinctive fields which follow the course of the brook to the west.

Countesthorpe



Representative photographs



Location and context

Countesthorpe is a relatively clustered settlement, located six miles to the south of Leicester, within the Blaby, Countesthorpe and Whetstone Fringe Landscape Character Area. The settlement has expanded along the four roads which enter from each corner of the village: Willoughby Road, Winchester Road, Leicester Road and Peatling Road. The built form around the junction of Peatling Road and Leicester Road is within a Conservation Area.

This is a relatively large village, with expansion first taking place as a result of the knitting industry. At one point there were over twenty frame knitting shops, however few of the buildings remain. The village has expanded rapidly from the historic core, particularly in the 20th and 21st century and is now a large residential commuter village.

Key settlement characteristics

- Historic core centred on a small road intersection in the east of the settlement, with a block of older buildings within the centre.
- Frequent street trees provide a green setting to development and helps to link the older and more modern development.
- Relatively uniform skyline punctuated by mature tree vegetation. The church is a localised feature.
- Tight urban form within the centre enhanced by walled lanes leading off main roads. There is a mixed built form and building vernacular away from the historic settlement core.
- More open suburban settlement pattern with large grassy verges within modern residential developments.
- Landmark buildings within older core provide focal points and vistas.
- Red brick and white painted buildings with black windows and doors are a feature of the village centre.
- High concentrations of listed buildings in the east along The Drive in the west and the historic core in the east.

Description

Built form and settlement pattern

Countesthorpe is a large settlement, with a main east-west axis. The historic core of the town is in the east, surrounding the Grade II listed St Andrew's Church and is designated as a Conservation Area. The Conservation Area contains the adjacent village green and several small narrow roads bordered by a few older properties. This area contains mostly small terraces and cottages many of which are Grade II listed. Older buildings tend to front directly on to the street creating a narrow-enclosed character, which is enhanced by high boundary walls. The enclosed character is compromised in places by modern car parks and single storey development.



View south along Willoughby Road in the south of the settlement, showing larger properties set back from the road.

The village expanded significantly in the mid-20th century along Station Road in a westerly direction. The centre of the village contains a mix of older and more modern infill buildings, which have been developed in the last century. Several new housing estates have been developed since 2008 on the northern settlement edge. On the western side of the village at the Drive at the location of the old Infirmary, lies a cluster of Grade II listed buildings.

Residential properties in the town are mostly semi-detached. A small proportion in the west are detached and set back from the road within large grounds with mature vegetation, including outbuildings of the former farmsteads on Station Road. Residential areas in the western and northern part of the village is also often more open than those in the historic core.

The roofline within the village is relatively uniform although the church is a localised feature. When viewing the village from the west, buildings and evergreen vegetation within the cemetery is a prominent feature. The route of the disused railway is well-wooded and crosses through the settlement.

Architectural style

The village core contains mostly small terraces and cottages (both residential properties and small shops) and several feature half-timbered buildings providing local variations in the street character.

Materials used are predominantly red brick in a variety of patterns depending on the age of the building. The colour and texture of the brick contributes to the settlement's distinctiveness. Some of the older buildings are characterised by render which is generally white and have window frames painted black. Some timber-framed and mudstone buildings are evident within the village centre. Welsh slate is the predominant roof material although some older buildings use Leicestershire

Swithland slate. The replacement of these materials with more modern materials is detracting from the character of the village. Wide and busy roads dominate the village centre and are a detracting feature.

The church is the only example of a stone building which is predominantly limestone and granite.

Property boundaries are quite varied through the village although tend to be small brick walls within the village centre with granite stone used around the church. Many new build properties lack boundary features within gardens.

Some new developments have attempted to reflect the built style within the historic core. These are small red brick terraces with white windows which integrate well with surrounding settlement. These developments also frequently feature localised areas of brick roads.



View north along The Drive from Cosby Road, showing the southernmost of a row of Grade II listed buildings.

Public Realm and green space

Residential development throughout the village is characterised by wide grass verges containing hedgerows and groups of mature trees, particularly in the more modern parts of the settlement. These create a green setting for development and integrate the well vegetated dismantled railway which bisects the village.

Open spaces are scattered across the settlement including; the Paddock and St Andrews Churchyard near the historic core. Parks associated with recent housing development include the playpark at Wheatlands Drive, the Play Park at Albert Road and the large park at Jubilee Way. Other parks and green spaces include Dale Acre Play Park and The Square, as well as allotments and sports pitches.



View south from Scalborough Close towards the play area and green space at Sunbury Rise

There are a series of sporadic open grassy areas within the town including off Reed Pool Close, off The Woodlands and a drive of green space lined with avenue trees between Leicester Road and Buckingham Road. South Leicestershire Crematorium is a green space located on Foston Road to the east of the settlement and is surrounded by two memorial parks.

Gateway features

The cemetery is located on high ground and forms a landmark feature when entering the village from the east.

The entrance to the village from the south, along Willoughby Road, is well vegetated with large properties set back from the road within mature gardens. This green character is reinforced by mature trees and wide grass verges following the road.

When approached from Peatling Road to the south and Leicester Road to the north the settlement edge is harsh and characterised by modern housing with few features to act as a gateway to transition from agricultural land into the settlement. The gateways into the village from Leicester Road in the north help to retain the settlements sense of identity.



View south along Leicester Road from the north east of the settlement showing the hard settlement edge

Capacity for change along the settlement edge

Countesthorpe has already extended to a considerably from its historic core and this expansion has resulted in the assimilation of Winchester Road and Willoughby Road into the settlement. There have been several new housing developments in the north of the town including Jubilee Way, Mill Field Avenue and Hoffler Close.

The northern and western boundaries are particularly sensitive to change due to the limited countryside between the village and Whetstone and Blaby. This rural gap is crucial for the retention of separate character and identity of the town.

The southern boundary is relatively well defined and well-vegetated although some properties extend along Willoughby Road and Peatling Road.

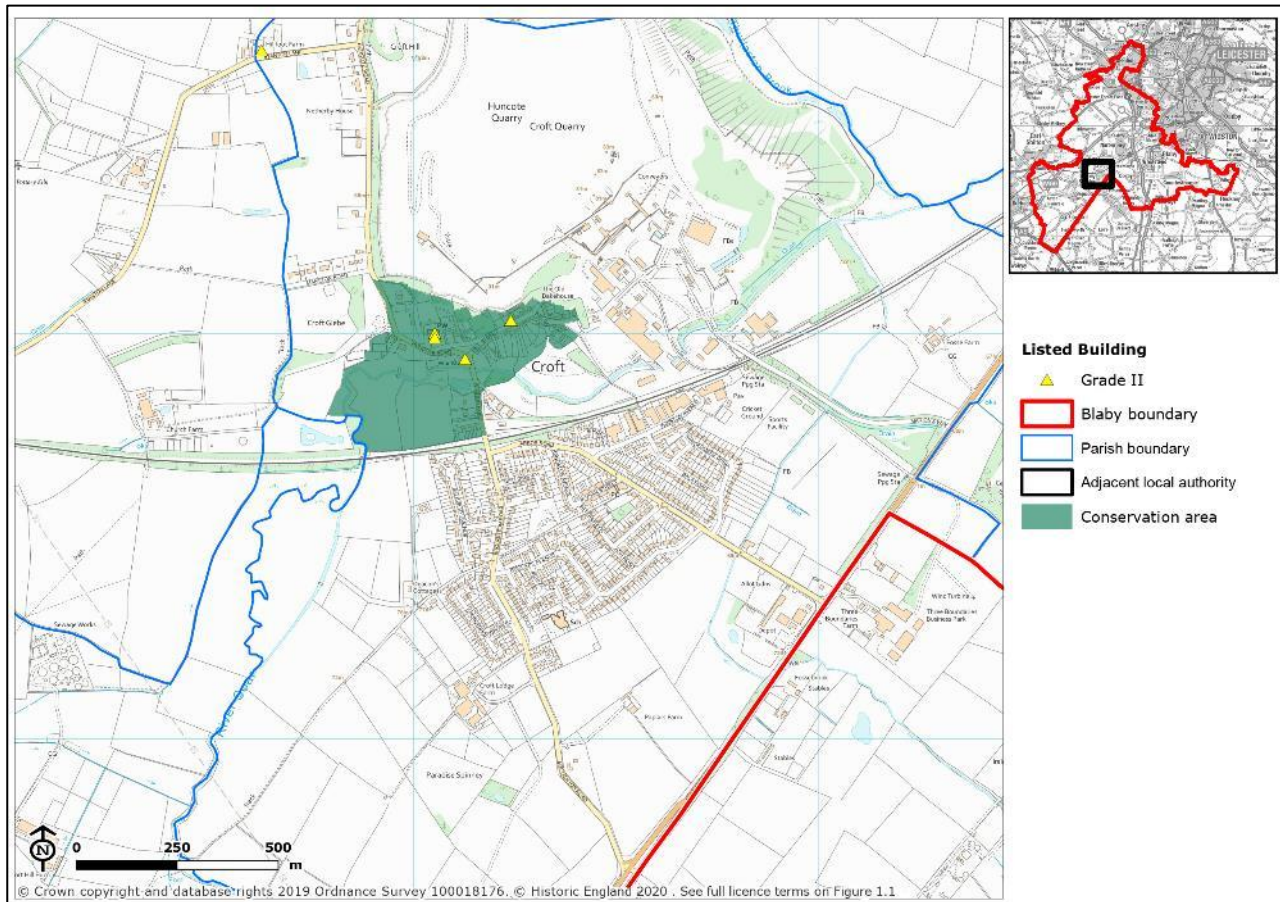
The eastern edge is currently relatively urban although its influence within the wider landscape is screened by mature vegetation along the brook to the east of the town and along the cemetery edge. Future development along this edge could only be accommodated if they were suitably hidden within the landscape and did not extend into the floodplain.

Any infill development should be sensitively designed to reinforce the tight urban form and maintain a close association with the street.

Recommendations

- Improve the connectivity between the eastern and western parts of the village through consistent landscape and public realm treatment along all main roads through the village to better unify the settlement.
- Development should be avoided where it may further reduce the gap and therefore sense of separation between Countesthorpe and surrounding settlements. New development should not intrude into the surrounding countryside by being visually distinctive from the surrounding landscape.
- Protect the existing historic core and safeguard the tight urban form of the village and ensure development is only permitted where it fits with the historic building vernacular.
- Any development should seek to unify existing features of the settlement and reinforce character through respecting the vernacular building materials, scale and settlement pattern.
- Enhance the village entrances through improved urban form and landscaping to provide a distinctive entrance into the village from all directions.
- Protect the existing wooded character and tree lined avenues particularly along Station Road, through careful management. Promote the planting of street trees in new developments throughout the village.
- Explore the potential to use the route of the disused railway to improve recreational links from Countesthorpe to the wider countryside and to provide a long-distance green infrastructure route through the district.

Croft



Representative photographs



Location and context

The village is located within the central part of the district to the south of Croft Hill and adjacent to Croft Quarry. This is the largest quarry in the district and has a strong relationship with the village both in its physical presence and the use of building materials. The processing area and other structures associated with the quarry are also distinct. The settlement retains a distinctive core of historic buildings in the north which is designated as a Conservation Area. However, the majority of the settlement has expanded to the south east over the 20th century. These two areas are separated by the River Soar and the Birmingham-Peterborough railway line.

Key settlement characteristics

- Distinctive separation between the intact older core and modern development which are separated by the railway and River Soar and have little relationship to each other.
- A strong association with the granite quarry, evidenced by the prominence of granite used in local building materials within the older core.
- High granite walls along roads provide a strong sense of enclosure in the north of the village
- Sense of enclosure created by surrounding rising topography and dense urban development.
- Numerous open spaces in the north of the village, associated with the River Soar, Croft Hill and Glebe Woods, which link into the wider countryside.

Description

Built form and settlement pattern

The historic core of the settlement is characterised by the sharp rise in topography towards the quarry and Croft Hill and the relatively narrow street pattern created by high granite stone walls (often up to 2m in height) which border the roads. The buildings are visible above the stone walls due to the sharp rise in topography. The historic core of the village is designated as a Conservation Area.

The historic core of the village is in the north of the village on the intersection of Station Road, Huncote Road and Hill Street (which links to the edge of the quarry). This centre is predominantly residential with the Heathcote Arms pub located on high ground at the intersection.

The street pattern to the north of the village tends to be relatively narrow with the sense of enclosure created by a mixture of mature vegetation within private gardens and properties on high ground which front almost directly onto the road.

Most of the village is located to the south, where the village expanded significantly in the 20th century. The recent development of the village is separated from the historic core of Croft by the railway line and River Soar. Most of the village to the south is suburban in character with wide roads and houses set behind front gardens designed to accommodate car parking. This area does not reflect the character present within the historic core of the village.

The roofline is relatively uniform within the majority of the village, however the ground rises sharply towards the church and buildings are set within a wooded backdrop. The church tower is visible above this vegetation and is a localised feature on the horizon.



Pochin Street is characterised by a variety of building styles

Architectural style

The older historic buildings such as the church, old rectory and a private house are characterised by granite stone construction. These buildings tend to be detached and relatively large with detail provided around windows including sandstone lintels and cornerstones. They are set behind high granite walls with mature trees and vegetation surrounding them.

Other buildings to the north of the river are characterised by their combined use of granite with brick detailing on the edges and around windows. Cottages and terraces closer to the quarry are mainly of brick construction and tend to front either straight onto the street or are set back slightly with a small front garden bordered by a low stone wall. Some of the windows within these terraces have been designed to reflect the window style of both the church and old rectory and contribute strongly to their



The old school building is constructed of the local granite stone

architectural style. Other properties have a simpler design and there has been a loss of original window features through the installation of PVC windows and doors.

Although a mix of materials are used within the village the overriding colours are soft pink/reds and browns with smaller features and detailing using either buff coloured sandstone or dark blue brick. The old school building on Hill Street is a good example. A small amount of white render or paint is used on buildings, but this is not a prominent feature within the village.

To the south of the river and railway the built form does not relate to the older core and is more suburban in character, with the primary building material being red brick. Houses are set back from the road to enable off-street parking, creating a relatively wide and open character along the roads further emphasised by the general lack of mature vegetation within gardens or the public realm.

Public Realm and green space

Within the historic part of the village a grassy bank and war memorial form the focal point. The River Soar forms a wooded, low-lying green corridor which, along with the railway line, separates the historic core from newer 20th century development.

Croft Hill is outside of the settlement but is accessible from the village and the open grassland at its summit enables panoramic views across the district and beyond. Croft Hill is nationally designated as a SSSI.

Glebe Wood is an open access Woodland Trust site adjacent to the cemetery on the edge of the village. This site is grazed by sheep with mature trees including hornbeam and horse chestnut which create a parkland character. This links strongly to the woodland on the slopes of Croft Hill and within the larger properties such as the old rectory and provides a linkage into the wider countryside.

Croft Pasture Nature Reserve is located to the north west of the village although access to the area is relatively limited from the main roads through the village. This site is nationally designated as a SSSI.

There is less provision of green space within the southern part of the village. A playground and informal open space are located to the north of the bridleway which crosses through the centre of the village.



Sheep grazing at Glebe Wood

Gateway features

There is an enclosed gateway into the village from Huncote to the north, created by high granite boundary walls along the road and mature vegetation. This sense of enclosure is reinforced by entering the village from higher ground.

From Coventry Road to the east, the village lacks a defined entrance; the two routes do not reflect the character of the older core of the village. The Leicestershire County Council highways depot and offices are located off Arbor Road and are characterised by large blocky buildings and hardstanding. However, within the centre of Croft, the bridge over both the railway and river in combination with the public house on higher ground and war memorial provide a strong gateway into the historic core of the village.



The war memorial forms a gateway feature to the historic village core

Capacity for change along the settlement edge

The northern edges of the village are largely restricted by the quarry which prevents expansion beyond the existing edge.

Scattered development exists along Croft Hill Road, however the land beyond this falls sharply and the surrounding landscape is relatively open. Existing development is dispersed within wooded vegetation which links into the wooded slopes of Croft Hill and is not prominent within the landscape. The road has glimpsed views out towards the surrounding countryside and is disconnected from the existing village.

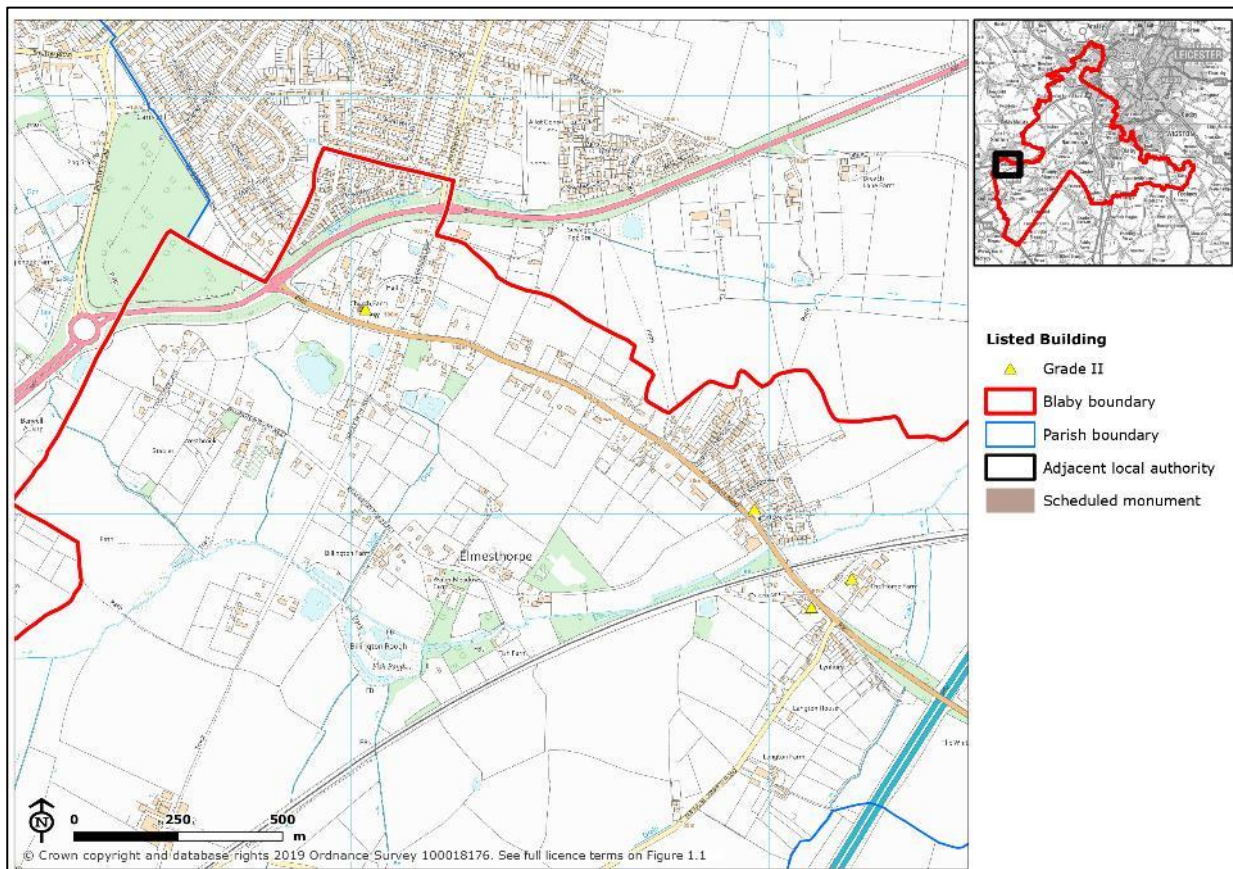
The southern edge of the village is well defined. However, a general lack of vegetation results in the urban edge appearing prominent within the landscape and from Coventry Road in particular. The scale, visibility and uniform nature of the edge reduces the perception of Croft being a small village. Future land management or development should integrate landscaping and mature field boundary vegetation into the urban edge to provide variety to the skyline and to improve the perception of the gateways into the village from the south and east.

Recent development at Windsor Gardens on the southern edge of the village (adjacent to the school) has resulted in a relatively hard urban edge that could be improved by the planting of vegetation to soften the edge and provide visual screening.

Recommendations

- Integrate the newer area of Croft with the older historic core through appropriate public realm treatment and the use of similar building materials such as granite within boundary walls and signage on prominent roads through the village.
- Protect the unique characteristics of the older core of Croft (particularly the Conservation Area) and ensure that new development reflects the existing building materials and characteristics.
- Enhance the connectivity of the residential areas to the south of the River Soar to Croft Pasture Nature Reserve and Glebe Woods and improve their integration within the village by improving the linking green infrastructure access routes such as cycle tracks and footpaths.
- Seek to improve the provision of public open space in the southern part of the village.
- Encourage planting of vegetation along hard urban edges in the south of the village to better integrate these areas into the landscape and provide visual screening.

Elmesthorpe



Representative photographs



Location and context

Elmesthorpe is a small settlement situated to the western edge of the district, south of Earl Shilton (Hinckley and Bosworth District). It is predominantly a residential village, with a strongly linear form. The settlement has been expanded and developed largely by the Land Settlement Association during the 1930s to provide smallholdings to enable workers to start a rural life and be self-sufficient working off their land. There has been some modern expansion of the village, particularly to the north east.

Key settlement characteristics

- Strong linear settlement pattern with most buildings located along Station Road.
- Mature tree and hedge lined road frontages provide a green and well-wooded appearance.
- Large distinctive and individually styled dwellings are widely spaced and set back from the main road.
- Historic church (including the ruined nave) is located on high ground on the western edge of the village and creates a distinctive gateway feature.
- No retail centre within the village means that there is no clearly defined core.
- Pockets of modern housing are typical of 20th century development and at odds with the linear settlement form.
- Limited public open space and amenity space present within the village.

Description

Built form and settlement pattern

Topography within the village is gently sloping, rising from a lower area and watercourse to the south west of the village to higher ground in a north easterly direction towards Earl Shilton. Most houses in the village are arranged along the main road, Station Road. This includes some of the Landscape Settlement Association buildings. There are also numerous Landscape Settlement Association building along Billington Road East and Billington Road West.

Elmesthorpe is likely of Saxon origin, although suffered decline and subsequent abandonment due to the plague during the medieval period. The village was revitalised by the construction of the railway in the 19th century and a shoe factory in the early 20th century, which resulted in a new cluster of settlement in the south of the village. The railway station and shoe factory closed in the 1960s. In the 1930s, the Land Settlement Association built 43 smallholdings in the village. Few examples of the original Land Settlement houses remain. Many of these properties have had modern extensions which has created large detached properties set back from the road within extensive mature landscaped gardens.

A pocket of modern housing has been developed towards the northeast edge of the village which is clustered and at odds with the linear settlement form. New development has occurred off the main road in the areas of The Roundhills and Leighton Crescent.

Further large detached dwellings and smallholdings are situated to the south of Station Road along the Billington Road East and West private roads. These properties are situated on lower ground adjacent to a small watercourse which runs parallel to the road, repeating the strong linear pattern which is evident throughout Elmesthorpe.

There are few views in and out of the village. Existing mature dense vegetation together with regular, well-spaced buildings and large private gardens limit public vantage points and restrict views.

The village has an enclosed character due to the dense roadside vegetation. The village does not have a defined core, partially due to its strong linear pattern. The oldest building in the village is the Grade II parish church of St Mary, which dates from the 13th century and is situated on the western side of the villages at the junction of Elmesthorpe Lane and Station Road. A ruined nave from an older church is located on the same site and is a Scheduled Monument.

Buildings are nestled into the sloping landform and are softened by surrounding vegetation including that within large gardens. The roofline of modern housing to the north eastern edge of the settlement is uniform. Buildings are low-rise, and predominantly bungalows or two storeys.

A modern cluster of development has been constructed within the parish to the north of Clickers Way (A47) and has little relationship with the historic village.



The Wortley Cottages are distinct buildings in the southern part of the village

Architectural style

The village has a strong unified architectural character typical of Land Settlement Association estates. A degree of variation is created through subtle differences within the arrangement of building materials. The dominant materials within these buildings are red brick, white and cream painted render and dark red/brown clay roof tiles.

Buildings tend to be of a similar age being relatively modern and constructed during the 20th century. Building materials are similar throughout the village, generally a mixture of red brick and render. Roofs have a steep pitch covered with dark coloured tiles. Larger dwellings typically have two or more protruding gables to the facades.

Windows are generally large within Land Settlement buildings; curved bays and dormer windows are often present. Recent modifications have resulted in a variety of window styles in uPVC which detracts from the original character.

Home Farmhouse, a brick built and rendered Grade II listed building situated on Station Road, dates from the mid-18th century, indicating a long-standing association with agriculture in the area. The Wentworth Arms pub and adjoining stables are some of the older buildings in the village built in 1896 to the designs of Charles Voysey, an Arts and Crafts designer and architect for Lord Lovelace of Kirkby Mallory. Around the same time Charles Voysey designed Nos.1- 6 Worton Cottages also on Station Road. The cottages are built from brick with white rendered façades with leaded windows and are Grade II listed.

Property boundaries comprise a mixture of fences, hedges and brick walls. Many boundaries have relatively high walls and are well vegetated. Vegetation includes large trees which give glimpsed views of the buildings beyond. Some larger properties enclosed by walls are gated and have long sweeping driveways.

Most properties have had modifications and extensions and are of slightly different materials such as lighter shades of brick and wood panelling.



Dwellings tend to be large and set back from the road within significant grounds

Public Realm and green space

Public realm within the village is generally restricted to roadside verges and paths. Often dwellings do not have a strong visual presence from the main road as they are surrounded by large gardens and mature vegetation.

Roadside footpaths are often very narrow. The main road is busy and creates an intimidating environment for pedestrians.

There is one recreation ground within the village at the Roundhills which contains a small play area and goal posts.



Roundhills Recreation Ground contains a play area and informal open space

Gateway features

The fringes of Station Road are heavily vegetated and form an attractive green and leafy approach to the village. The vegetation consists of hedges, ornamental planting and numerous large mature trees situated within large private gardens. A group of mature pine trees forms an attractive landscape feature when entering the village from the south east. The trees are at the junction of Burbage Common Road and Station Road.

When entering the village from the west, the church and ruined nave located on elevated ground form a distinct landmark.

The construction of Clickers Way (A47) has severed road access to the village from the direction of Earl Shilton, although this is still a gateway for cyclists and pedestrians.

The Wentworth Arms pub and the bridge over the railway form a significant landmark to the southern entrance to the village.



The south eastern entrance into the village along Station Road (B581)

Capacity for change along the settlement edge

This area is particularly sensitive to development which would change the uniform character of the area; smaller houses of a different architectural style would seem out of place and would erode the distinct character.

Localised subdivision of large land plots surrounding land settlement buildings has occurred in outskirts of the village. This has resulted in alteration of the character as new buildings are constructed at greater densities and often do not reflect characteristics such as the steeply pitched roofs. New development has also introduced smaller semi-detached dwellings which contrast with the older large detached buildings.

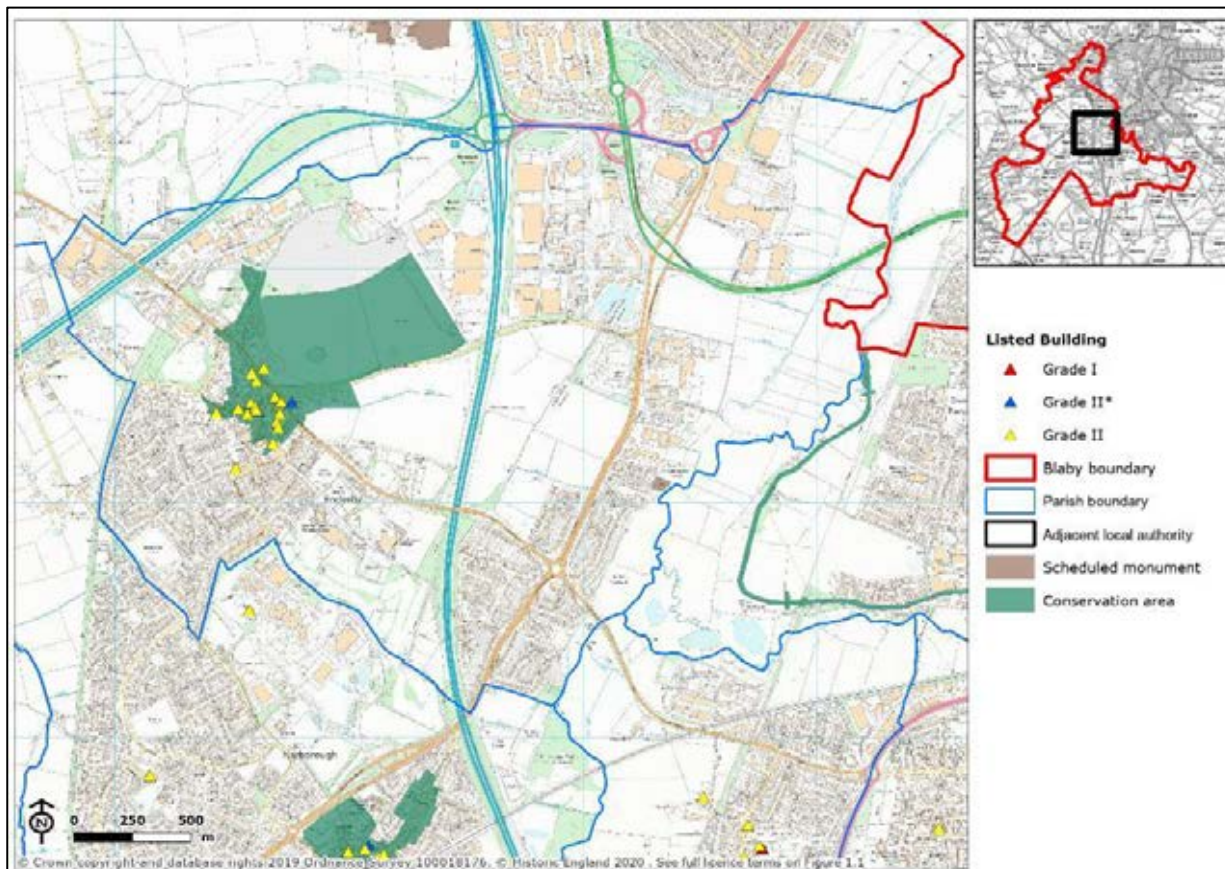
Redevelopment of existing land within the village which reflects the principles of Land Settlement housing such as large grounds, houses with strongly pitched roofs set within mature trees and hedgerows could be assimilated provided it retained the geometric road pattern which exists at present. There is limited capacity for large areas of housing within the village.

A modern estate of approximately 90 houses has been built to the north of the Earl Shilton Bypass (St. Mary's Way & Wentworth Avenue) and is technically part of Elmesthorpe parish. However, because the estate is totally separate from the rest of Elmesthorpe Village, and it is sited behind a large bund and landscaped areas, it has had little or no impact on the strong characteristics of the rest of the village which are still based upon the features of the Land Settlements superimposed on the structure of the depopulated village.

Recommendations

- Protect and conserve the linear settlement pattern of the village and the distinct characteristics of the Land Settlement Association buildings.
- Protect and enhance the mature vegetation which creates an attractive green and leafy appearance and ensures that the buildings are integrated into the rising landform when viewed from the surrounding area.
- Encourage woodland planting along new infrastructure routes to ensure the wooded enclosed nature of the village fringes is maintained and enhanced.
- Calm traffic flow through the village to improve the experience of the public realm for pedestrians and cyclists.
- Explore the provision of additional open space.

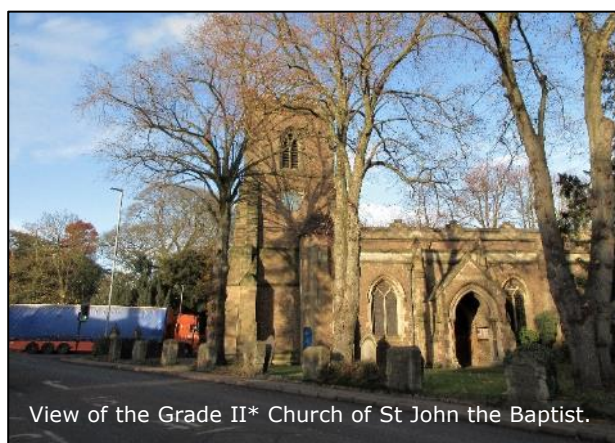
Enderby



Representative photographs



View south along Cornwall Street from King Street.



View of the Grade II* Church of St John the Baptist.

Location and context

Enderby is located between the Thurlaston Rolling Farmland and Lubbesthorpe Agricultural Parkland Landscape Character Areas. The village is located within the central part of the district to the south of the intersection of the M1 and M69, to the immediate north of Narborough and the south west of the boundary with Leicester City. It is situated on a ridge of high ground to the north west of the Soar Valley. Enderby St Johns is a separate part of the settlement located along the B4114. Grove Park is an area of business development to the north-east of the main village.

The historic core of the village, designated as a Conservation Area, is on the north-eastern side of the village where the land rises in a north-westerly direction towards a series of former quarries. Granite quarrying and local granite outcrops have a localised effect on the landform adjacent to the settlement and also the building materials used within it.

Key settlement characteristics

- Historic village centre with a winding street pattern, surrounded by modern suburban housing development.
- Enderby St Johns is a distinct area of the settlement located to the south-east of the main part of the village.
- Grove Park is a large business/retail area located to the north-east of the main village, adjacent to the motorways.
- Set on rising topography the roofline of the village is visible in the surrounding landscape.
- Slightly fragmented urban centre with a strong division between the older and more modern centres.
- Mixture of cottage terraces, terraces and thatched properties often fronting directly onto the street or behind small front gardens.
- Thatched properties are landmark buildings within the village.
- Property boundaries mostly use a combination of granite and brick.
- Small walled footpaths link between roads.
- Urban fringes are defined by the disused railway to the west and agricultural parkland to the east
- The southern part of the settlement is effectively merged with the adjacent settlement of Narborough.

Description

Built form and settlement pattern

The historic core of the settlement is characterised by the sharp rise in topography towards a former quarry within the northern part of the settlement (part of which is now an industrial area). Towards the south development merges with Narborough and is typical of late 19th century and 20th century suburban residential development with wide verges, houses set back from the road and a uniform architectural style. The village is associated with Enderby Hall and its associated parkland, located to the north east.

The village centre is defined by its tight enclosed street pattern which winds around the rising topography. This provides a continuous frontage and variety along the street with buildings such as the thatched New Inn pub providing focal points along the street. Most buildings are two storeys in height, although roof styles vary. The historic core contains some commercial and retail development; however, the contemporary village centre is located slightly further south. There have been modern infill developments and shops which have partly fragmented the character creating a wider street pattern with buildings set back from the road. Terraced housing development is located adjacent to the centre and the dense nature of this style of built form contributes to the enclosed character.

Although the village has no formal village green or square, the orientation of the buildings at the junction of High Street and The Cross create the character of a square with buildings facing onto it on all sides. This area is now mostly used for car parking which is a detracting feature. Small walled footpaths which lead off the main streets linking roads together are a characteristic feature and further enhance the enclosed character within the older part of the settlement.

Enderby has a varied roofline created by the varied topography and range of building types and heights within each street. Towards the south the skyline becomes more uniform where the built form becomes predominantly terraced.

The village was expanded in the 19th century, with Victorian terraces characteristic to the south of the village core. Further expansion occurred in the 20th century onto allotments and fields to the south and



View south along Shortbridge Lane, showing mixed built form.

west of the historic core. These dwellings have a suburban character with cul-de-sacs and semi/detached dwellings, which contrast with the Victorian terraces and historic village core.

Enderby St John is a distinct area of the settlement located along the B4114. Most buildings originate from the 20th or 21st centuries. Grove Park is an area of retail/employment development located adjacent to the M1/M69 interchange. Fosse Park and the police headquarters building are also included within Enderby Parish to the north-east of the main village.

Architectural style

The older historic buildings such as the church and former school are characterised by granite stone construction. These buildings are in prominent positions and have ornate detailing around windows, doorways and along the roofline. Shop frontages within this older core generally integrate well with their buildings and have ornate detailing around windows and doors. The old bank still retains its ornamental detailing around large ground floor windows and a simple painted archway over the door.

Most buildings within the village are small brick terraced cottages. There are some larger townhouses at the intersection of High Street, Cross Street and Chapel Street. Several thatched properties occur within the village, the most prominent located on the corner of Broad Street and Cross Street within the village centre. These buildings tend to have steeply pitched rooflines and contrasting black and white colouring. Smaller cottages are more varied in character, and front directly onto the street.

Windows in older buildings tend to have architectural highlights provided either by a brick detailing, arched windows or wider lintels. The most common building materials are red brick and slate or dark grey tiles. Granite is restricted to the eastern periphery of the village adjacent to the church. A small amount of white render or paint is used on buildings, but this is not a prominent feature within the village. Property boundaries are often constructed using granite with brick pillars. Evergreen and ornamental hedgerows occasionally enclose the fronts of houses.

Modern development which has been successfully integrated into the village includes a three-storey townhouse development which fronts onto Mill Lane and provides an active street frontage. Within the older core a larger detached property has reflected a farm courtyard with garages centred within the courtyard as outbuildings. Although set back from the road, this development has granite and brick walls with metal gates along the main street and integrates well with the surrounding buildings.



View east up Cross Street, showing mixed building materials and styles



View west across the park on the eastern edge of the settlement.

Public Realm and green space

Open space is located outside the historic core on the eastern and southern edges of Enderby. This includes a golf course, bowling green, recreation area and cricket ground.

A large area of open space is located within the eastern edge of the village has some recreational facilities such as a cricket pitch. The ground is well overlooked by properties and provides a central focus within this part of the village.

There are small pockets of green space amongst residential development, including at Jacques Close. A playing field with sports pitches and play equipment is in the south-west of the village adjacent to Forest Road.

Gateway features

Most entrance roads into the settlement are marked by mature trees, creating a sense of enclosure. The only entrance road where this feature is less defined is Mill Lane in the northeast. Gateways into the village are also often characterised by suburban development. There is gateway signage at all entrances of the village.

The junction of Blaby Road and Leicester Lane is a distinct entrance from the east. The church to the east of this junction and the old granite school building is located to the west. These buildings combined with the tight urban pattern along the street create a strong entrance feature into the village.



View east into the village from Seine Lane, showing countryside and the distinct crossing of the dis-used railway line.

The entrances from the west of the village are characterised by open fields with a distinctive line of mature woodland along the dis-used railway which transitions to the built-up form of the village.

The southern boundary of the village is merged with Narborough is not distinct. Although settlements are effectively merged, the mature vegetation and orientation of buildings away from Forest Road provides some sense of separation. The northern entrance to the Enderby St Johns area of the village is characterised by views of the police headquarters building, while the southern entrance is marked by the road passing under the M1.

Capacity for change along the settlement edge

The village centre has limited capacity for infill development. Change within the village centre has the opportunity to restore an enclosed street pattern and reconnect the Conservation Area with the contemporary village centre.

The eastern edge of the village is defined by parkland around Enderby Hall which lies to the north of Leicester Lane. This parkland provides an attractive rural approach to the village and there is little capacity for change along this edge.

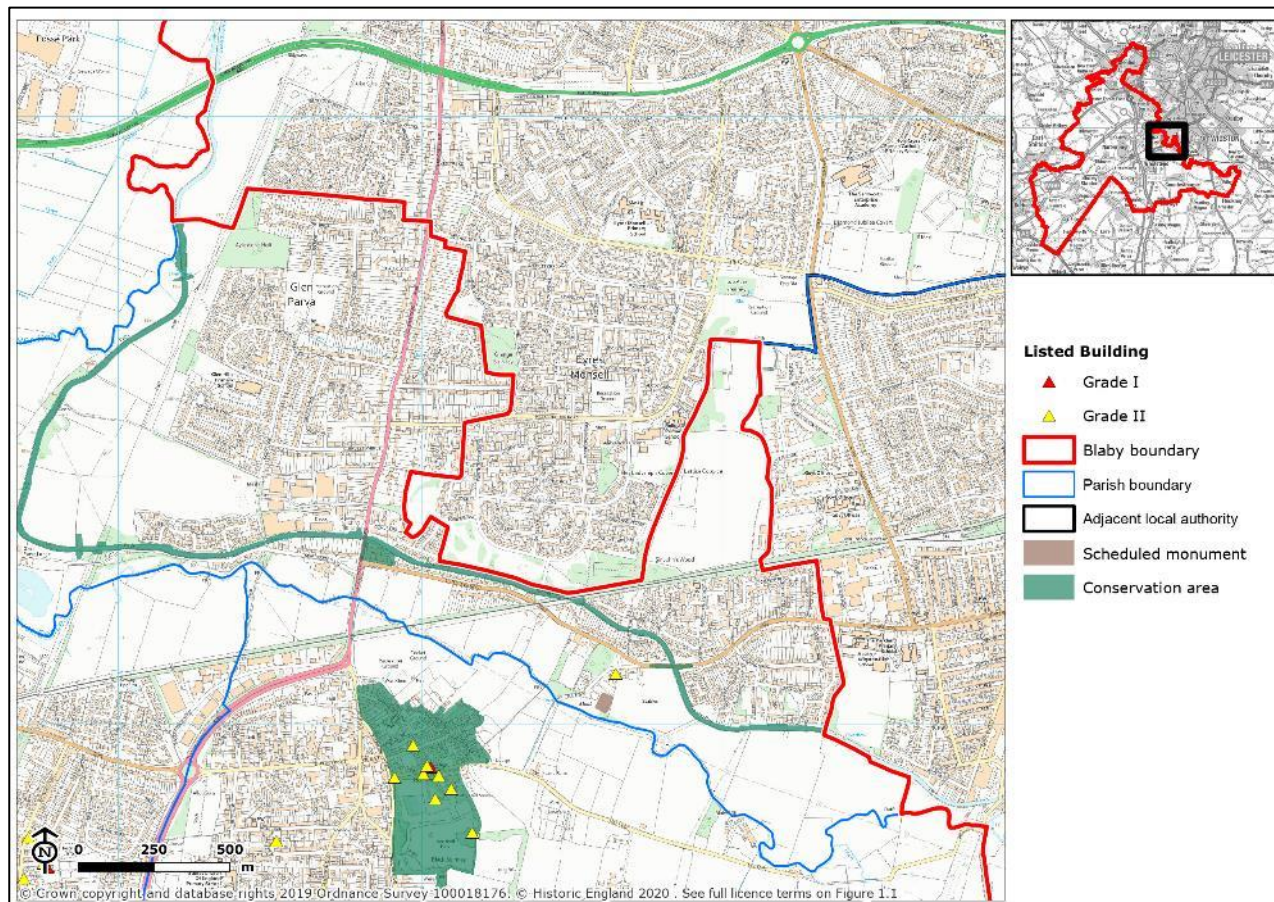
The southern boundary of the village is difficult to determine. There is little distinction between where Enderby stops and Narborough begins as there is no break in development.

The western boundary is defined by a disused railway which forms a mature wooded boundary which contains the settlement and provides a strong separation between the village and the wider countryside. Expansion beyond this edge would likely be prominent in the wider landscape. A strong mature wooded buffer between the landscape and the urban edge would need to be retained to ensure the village does not become more prominent within the surrounding landscape.

Recommendations

- Protect the distinct entrance to the village created by the church and other buildings at the junction of Desford Road and Leicester Lane by conserving these landmark buildings and their setting.
- Conserve the rural character of the approach to the village from Leicester Lane by ensuring that views of the roofline of Enderby are prevented and the setting of the Hall conserved.
- Conserve and in places restore small walled footpaths and connecting routes through the village centre and encourage their inclusion within new development.
- Restore the tight urban form within the southern part of the village centre through careful placement of new infill development and sensitive and integrated public realm treatment.
- Conserve the mature woodland along the dis-used railway, which contains the settlement and provides visual screening in views from the west.
- Ensure that new development reflects the existing character of the village in terms of building style and materials used.
- Any development within the village centre should reflect the distinctive winding street pattern and mix of building styles which complement the scale and form of existing terraces. Buildings should front directly on to the street or be set behind small front gardens. Feature buildings which reflect the characteristics of black and white thatched properties should be included within any proposals.

Glen Parva



Representative photographs



Location and context

Glen Parva is a small fragmented settlement situated on the north-eastern edge of Blaby District, to the north of Blaby. The village forms part of a wider suburb to the south of Leicester, although historically it was a small hamlet focused around the ford of the River Sence at Glen Ford. The southern edge of the settlement is marked by the route of the Gran Union Canal, although some properties are situated on its southern banks. The northern boundary of the settlement directly abuts Leicester City (Aylestone and Eyres Monsell) and the eastern boundary is adjacent to South Wigston. There is no clear sense of separation between these settlements. The western settlement edge is constrained by the wooded route of the disused railway line.

Key settlement characteristics

- The settlement is predominantly 20th century suburban housing estates with no obvious historic centre or commercial town centre.
- A largely geometric grid-based settlement pattern, with some localised variations.
- Building materials are most frequently red brick, white render or a mix of the two, sometimes featuring painted woodwork and usually having darker coloured grey or brown tiles.
- There are no defined gateways/entrances due to merged boundaries with adjoining residential areas.
- Lacking distinctive feature buildings and landmarks such as churches.
- Presence of street trees along some residential roads, sometimes in the form of avenues and mature vegetation with private front gardens.
- The Dorothy Avenue playing fields, Glen Parva Nature Reserve, Glen Hills Nature Reserve, the canal and the Sustrans route (National Cycle Route 6) along the dismantled railway (known as Great Central Way) are valued recreational resources.
- Channelled views along linear features such as watercourses and straight roads.

Description

Built form and settlement pattern

The settlement follows a largely geometric grid pattern layout, with the open straight road layout channelling sight lines along them. This characteristic built form is fragmented with several localised variations of more sinuous cul-de-sac layouts on the fringes including Featherby Drive, Bradshaw Avenue and Grosvenor Close.

The built form is mixed although generally properties are semi-detached and have front gardens and/or driveways. Variations include roads where there are grass verges and avenues of mature trees with properties set back from the road, such as at Glenville Avenue. Other roads such as Richmond Drive have narrow walled gardens.

Taller properties including the modern town houses at Navigation Drive create more enclosure.

The settlement has few distinguishing features with no church and dispersed shopping and community facilities rather than a defined centre.

Slight undulations in the landform gives the appearance of differing building heights, although there is little variation from two-storey buildings.



View west along the tree-lined street of West View Avenue

Architectural style

This area contains an assortment of 20th century residential buildings including terraces, bungalows, semi-detached and detached accommodation. Variations in building styles are limited and usually occurs due to the differing ages of buildings.

Manor House is the oldest building in the settlement and is built with black and white exposed timber frame. The property is Grade II listed and is a restaurant.

Most buildings in Glen Parva use red brick, white render or a mixture of the two. Painted woodwork often features on properties and is usually white or black. Roofing materials tends to darker in colour, normally dark grey or brown. There are localised areas where red roof tiles are used, including at Hews Close, Iris Avenue and scattered individual properties.

Boundary features are mixed. Along main roads these include walls and hedgerows, but elsewhere there is also fencing and open gardens.



View east along Dorothy Avenue showing mixed building vernacular

Public Realm and green space

Street trees including some avenues and vegetation in front gardens provide greenery and an attractive backdrop to residential streets.

A large open space and play area at Dorothy Avenue Playing Field is situated in the centre of the western part of the settlement and includes large open mown fields and play equipment. Directly north east of the playing field is Glen Parva Nature Reserve, whilst Glenhills Nature Reserve lies on the western settlement edge.

The Grand Union Canal and associated towpath provide an attractive and accessible recreational resource. With the significant mature vegetation lining its course it creates a physical break between adjacent built up areas. The canal is a designated Conservation Area.

The disused railway line (Great Central Way) to the west is a Sustrans route (National Cycle Route 6), providing a long-distance walking and cycling route both out to the countryside to the south and Leicester to the north.



View east to play equipment in Dorothy Avenue Playing Field



View south showing the settlement entrance from Leicester along the A426

Gateway features

Place name signs form the only notification when entering Glen Parva from the north with continuous settlement linking it to Aylestone. Divisions between Glen Parva and surrounding settlements are less obvious to the east with no defining features. A significant green space at Dunn's Lock provides some separation between the settlement and Eyres Monsell to the north.

The Sense and Soar floodplain provides a rural floodplain setting to the south of the settlement. This area is identified as a Green Wedge to retain the sense of separation between the Glen Parva and Blaby,

although this is detracted from by busy traffic.

Capacity for change along the settlement edge

There is relatively limited capacity to the fringes of Glen Parva for urban expansion due to its constrained boundaries.

The former railway with its linear wooded corridor creates a strong physical barrier and effective screen to the western edge of Glen Parva. Expansion beyond this edge should be avoided and if permitted would need to respect the prominence of this feature and replicate its character along built from edges.

Any development adjacent to the canalside could lead to the loss of trees and waterside vegetation. Any potential development near the canal should seek to conserve and enhance the canal corridors as attractive and safe recreation routes. The Grand Union Canal is designated as a Conservation Area, and therefore development should have regard to its vegetated character and heritage value.

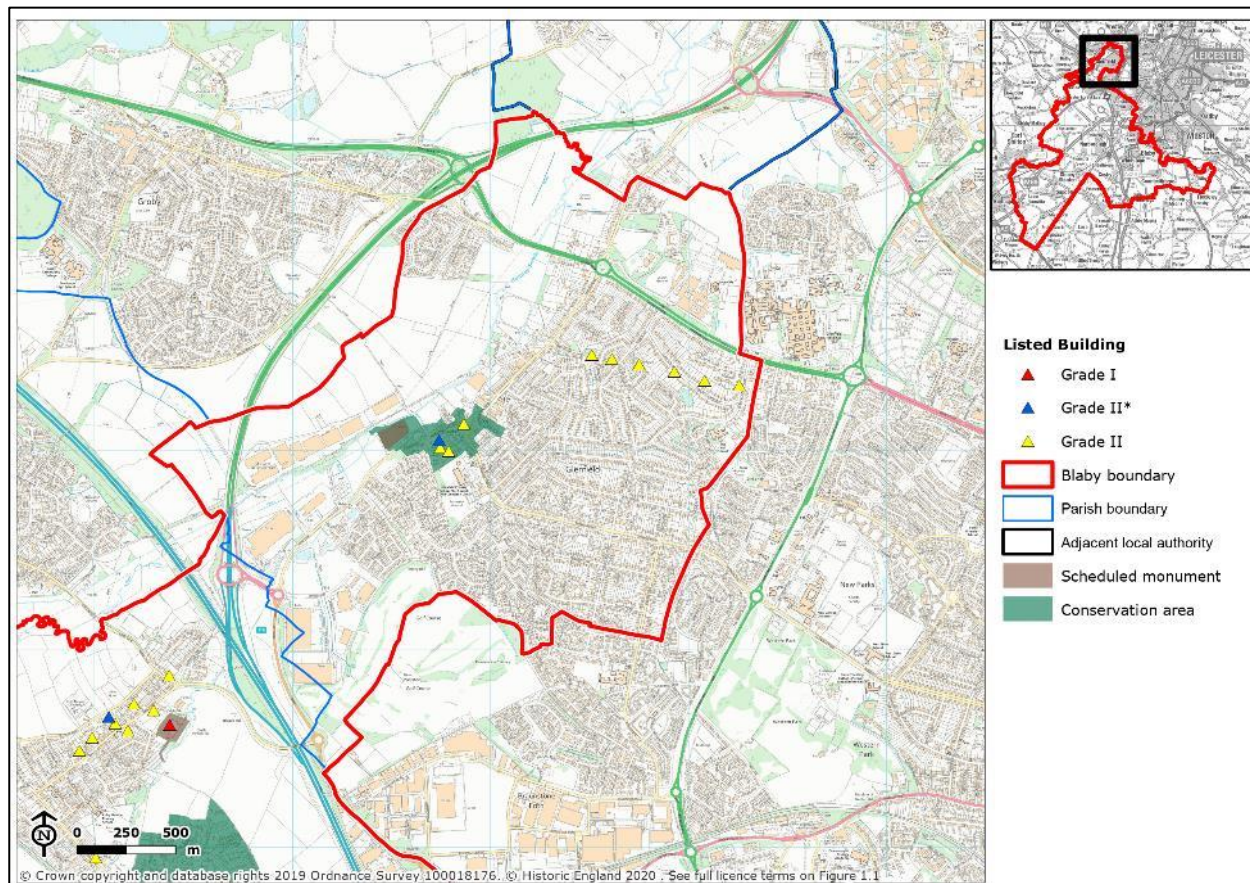
Landform dips down from Glen Parva to the River Sence to the south. An operational railway line cuts across the Sence floodplain in this area and through the eastern section of Glen Parva. The southern fringes of Glen Parva are relatively well screened by field boundary trees, hedgerows and natural vegetation associated with the floodplain area. The extent of the floodplain is likely to prevent expansion to the south.

To the south of the Grade II listed Manor restaurant is the Moat and Hut Circle at Glen Parva Scheduled Monument, which is sensitive to any development that may affect its landscape setting.

Recommendations

- Conserve and enhance the canal corridor and the setting of its Conservation Area.
- Conserve and enhance views along the watercourse corridors. Key view points and vistas should be enhanced where possible.
- Protect and enhance the floodplain characteristics of the land between the fringes of Glen Parva and Blaby to retain the important sense of separation between the two settlements.
- Create gateway features and promote local distinctiveness, particularly in the north and eastern edges where there is no clear separation from surrounding settlements.
- Future development may present opportunities to create distinctive features or landmarks currently absent from the settlement.
- Retain and enhance the disused railway as a landscape feature and informal recreational resource. The mature vegetation provides screening and separation from the surrounding urban development.
- Protect and enhance features of nature conservation interest including the two nature reserves, the mature vegetation associated with the disused railway and canal and mature street trees.
- Ensure features of historic interest and their setting is sensitively managed, conserved and enhanced where possible. Sensitive historic features here include; the Grade II listed Manor Restaurant, the Moat and hut circle at Glen Parva Scheduled Monument and the Grand Union Canal Conservation Area.

Glenfield



Representative photographs



Location and context

Glenfield is situated on the northern tip of Blaby District and is a mixture of 20th century housing estate developments with a small historic village centre. It is attached to the built extent of Leicester City along the eastern and southern boundaries.

The original settlement was established before AD800, close to the old Leicester Forest. The village was primarily associated with agriculture and the framework knitting industry. Significant expansion occurred after the Second World War and Glenfield's separation from Leicester is less distinct.

Significant expansion of Glenfield has taken place to the north east, east and south east of the village centre. The edges of the urban area are defined by the A50 to the north, A563 to the east, industry and a golf course to the south and the Rothley Brook to the north west. The western extent of the settlement is characterised by large-scale employment development (Optimus Point).

Key settlement characteristics

- There is a distinctive village character within the historic core although the village lacks distinctive features outside the centre.
- Focal points at village centre include a village green and several landmark buildings. Leicestershire County Hall is a large building located to the north of the A50.
- This is largely a residential area, with industrial development on the western fringe.
- Mixture of architectural styles which are varied in the village centre with more uniform styles elsewhere.
- Settlement edge is generally constrained by the Rothley Brook corridor to the north, although there is a small area of development at the Brantings.
- The village contains a small number of local shops at the village centre.
- Open spaces include play areas at Ellis Park and more naturalistic areas such as Brookside Meadow and the Rothley Brook corridor.

Description

Built form and settlement pattern

A historic village core is present towards the north western edge of the Glenfield area with The Square containing several older buildings surrounding the junction between three roads entering the village: Kirby Road (B5380), Station Road and Stamford Street. The centre has retained some of the character of a village. It has two churches and a ruined church and a small village green which is a central focus to several cottages and farm buildings.

The central part of the settlement beyond the historic core is laid out on a formal grid pattern. There are squares with greenspace leading off and shops/facilities located at main road junctions which form focal points although there is a lack of local distinctiveness.

The built form across much of the area is relatively enclosed with limited greenspace. However, it becomes more open along main roads, within the northern section and around the central village green. Modern development is set back considerably from the main road which has been detrimental to the enclosed character of the village along Station Road. Leicestershire County Hall is located to the north of the A50 and is large building with grounds and car parking.

Shopping facilities are primarily located close to the historic core, reinforcing it as the village centre. Smaller local shops are dispersed throughout the wider residential areas.

Extensive areas of industrial warehouse development are located along the north western fringes (including Optimus Point) and are prominent from adjacent roads. The A46(T) is also present to the north, however it is set on lower ground which reduces its visual influence.

The roofline across the area is gently rising and predominantly characterised by uniform pitched roofs. This becomes more dispersed by vegetation to the north, is punctuated by church spires in the older core and has industrial features towards the north west.



Architectural style

The type of housing distributed throughout the Glenfield area is predominantly semi-detached housing. There is a notable change in housing type along Glenfield Frith Drive where housing is characterised by large detached early 20th century dwellings set back from the roadside within substantial mature gardens. There is a large area of recent housing development at Elm Tree Avenue and Birch Close in the western parts of Glenfield.

Buildings within the village centre are more varied than surrounding residential roads and include a mix of small cottages, small semi-detached houses, large detached houses including Glenfield Mills, Old Rectory and Glenfield House, and barn and farm conversions. These can vary between two and four storeys in height which creates a varied roof line, enclosure and street pattern.

Building materials vary across the area but are characterised by red brick and render within the centre. Some stone, local granite and sandstone detailing is used on older properties such as churches and within the village centre. Roofs tend to be dark grey in colour at the core of the village although browner tones are utilised further beyond.

Boundary treatments are varied. There is no common form of enclosure at the village core. Many buildings face onto the road and have either very short or no front gardens. A degree of unity tends to occur along roads with some properties having predominantly hedgerow boundaries and others bound by brick walls or fencing.

Glenfield Moat is a Scheduled Monument located on the north western fringes of the settlement. Its surrounded by dense vegetation and is only visible from the dismantled railway which is now used as a public right of way.



Early 20th century houses retain architectural details above windows and doors

Public Realm and green space

Most public realm spaces within the settlement consist of through roads, residential streets, roadside footpaths and grass verges. The centre of the village tends to have a narrow informal street pattern with lanes and alleyways while later development has a stronger geometric layout with wider roads and a more open appearance.

The former railway line to the north of Station Road provides a wooded recreational route from Glenfield to Ratby. Brookside Meadow is a new area of open space located adjacent to the recent warehousing development on the western side of the village.

Ellis Park and associated allotment gardens are located to the south of the historic core and provide a large area of formal open space including playing fields, play area, bowling green and MUGA courts with a further area of allotments, located on Mill Lane, to the west of the historic core. It is an expansive grassed area with its edges softened by mature tree planting and is overlooked by surrounding houses.



Play equipment at Ellis Park is overlooked by adjacent housing

Gateway features

The central village green forms a distinct feature and gateway to the historic village core. It contains a feature tree, ornamental planting and a bespoke village sign. It is an attractive focal point of the village centre, with most of the surrounding buildings looking directly onto the green. The green is at the centre of the main road junction within the village. The scale of the road is small reflecting the narrow and enclosed nature of the surrounding streets and lanes. Noise and traffic movement creates disruption.

The entrance to the village from the west along Kirby Road is characterised by large-scale warehousing and employment development and recent housing. The entrance to Glenfield from the east along the A50 is marked by the imposing Leicestershire County Hall building. Gateways into Glenfield from the adjacent urban areas of Leicester City to the south and east are indistinct.



The central green with village sign forms the gateway to the historic core of the village

Capacity for change along the settlement edge

Recent residential and industrial development to the south west of Glenfield has reduced the distance between this settlement and Kirby Muxloe. There is little capacity to accommodate further development within this gap.

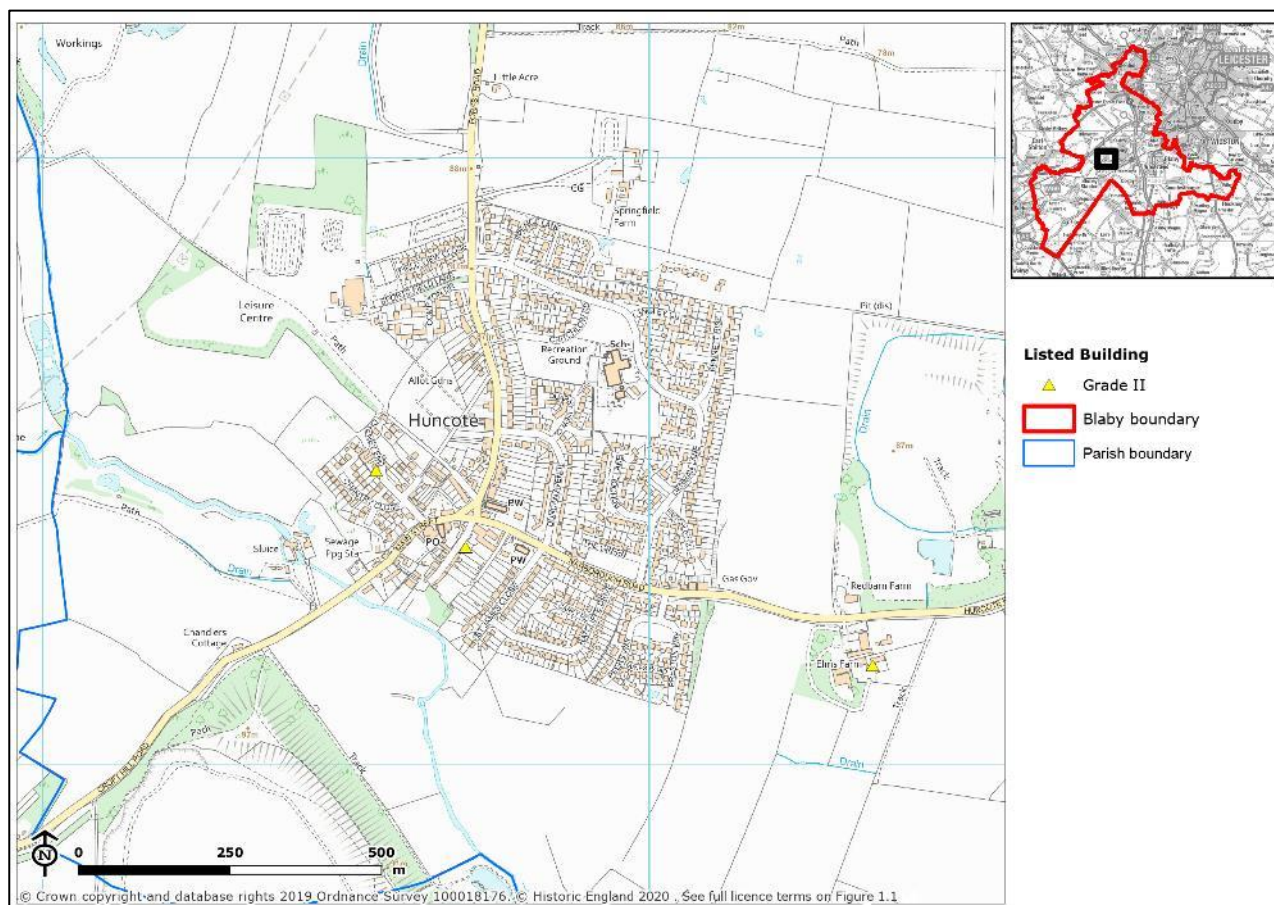
The fringes to the north are generally well vegetated adjacent to the Rothley Brook corridor. In addition, these areas are situated on lower lying slopes of the watercourse corridor and are not prominent within the wider landscape. These areas may have capacity to accommodate changes due to the well vegetated appearance and visual containment. However, these areas are prone to flooding and sensitive to some changes to wetland habitats and natural drainage systems.

The A50 generally defines the northern boundary of Glenfield. This area has limited capacity to accommodate change or expansion due to constraints of existing tree cover (which is important to the character of the area) and flood risk along Rothley Brook.

Recommendations

- Protect and conserve the village character of the historic centre of Glenfield. The village green and surrounding buildings are key components of the village core which should be protected.
- Retain the vegetated boundaries on the northern fringes adjacent to Rothley Brook which provide visual screening, important wildlife habitats and a recreational resource.
- Restore gateway features and promote local distinctiveness. Explore opportunities to create or enhance key focal points and entrances to the settlement.
- Restore and enhance urban fringes through increased woodland coverage and strategically placed planting to improve views, particularly on rising ground towards settlement edges.
- Retain the remaining green spaces between Glenfield and Kirby Muxloe which has been eroded by recent development. These contribute to the setting and the sense of separation between the settlements.

Huncote



Representative photographs



Location and context

Huncote is located approximately 700 metres to the west of Narborough, in the western half of Blaby District.

The village of Huncote is a clustered settlement with a small historic core located on low topography close to Thurlaston Brook. More recent development rises up the hillside to the north and east. The sloping topography gives open views towards Croft Hill, Croft Quarry and the surrounding countryside, helping the village to retain a strong character and relationship to the surrounding landscape.

Key settlement characteristics

- Historic core of the village located in the south-west, on lower ground close to a tributary stream.
- Convergence of four roads in the centre of the village around a central island of small red brick cottages.
- Nucleated form of the village core, despite extensive modern residential development in the north and east of the settlement.
- Terraced dwellings running down the Forest Road hill, towards the historic core.
- Linear riparian vegetation is a distinct feature along the southern boundary.
- Stone bridge over the stream forms a strong and characteristic gateway feature on the southern approach.
- The rising hill of Croft Quarry to the south is a prominent focal feature in views.
- Frequent areas of informal open space which contribute to the undeveloped setting of the village.

Description

Built form and settlement pattern

There is a defined centre in the south-west of the village on low ground at the junction of Brook Street, Main Street, Forest Road and Narborough Road. Thurlaston Brook runs along the south-western edge of the settlement. The centre is a mix of residential, commercial and community buildings including the church, shop, garage and older residential buildings of mixed vernacular styles. Older buildings tend to front directly onto the narrow streets, creating a sense of enclosure.

The layout is dominated by a cluster of small cottages on a road island surrounded by a triangle of streets. Terraced brick cottages line the other side of the road and are sometimes painted or rendered, making an attractive centre to the village. The character is continued away from the historic core as the street winds up the hill of Forest Road to the north.

The roofline of the village is characterised pitched roofs and the sloping topography. The church is a localised feature within the skyline and built development is interspersed by mature vegetation.

Modern development is focused to the north and east of the village. Newer developments off this main street are suburban in character and relate little to the individual village characteristics, often comprising modern semi-detached houses in small housing estates and cul-de-sacs. Roads are wider and subsequently there is a more open character. Recent developments include 75 dwellings to the south of Huncote Road and to the east and west of Forest Road on the northern edges of village. Within the village, post-war pre-fabricated houses have been demolished and redeveloped on Quarry View Close.



A recent development on the south-eastern edge of the village

Architectural style

The historic core is mainly terraced brick cottages and houses, sometimes painted or rendered. These buildings are a combination of detached, semi-detached properties and terraced, set relatively close to the kerb. The cluster of old brick cottages on a triangular road island at the centre of the village creates a distinctive feature. As the village rises up the hill, red brick and painted houses are predominant along Forest Road. These tend to be set slightly back from the road and raised slightly from the street with boundaries formed by retaining walls, steeply sloping driveways and steps leading up to properties.

Windows are generally smartly painted with a design feature such as shutters or lintels. These are often set close below the roofline. Windowsills and exterior lintels in some older brick buildings tend to have architectural highlights provided by a coloured brick or sandstone. The installation of uPVC windows and doors has resulted in the loss of some original architectural features.

New development is less characteristic with semi-detached properties arranged along cul-de-sacs and uncharacteristic building materials such as dark concrete panelling and red roofs. Houses are set back to enable off-street car parking, creating a relatively open and wide character which is emphasised by the general lack of mature vegetation

Larger properties are often converted farms. New development along Brook Street has reflected this rural character and is successfully integrated into the village. The thatched cottage on Brook Street is of a unique style within the village and forms a part a noticeable street scene of the village. Cottages tend to be joined in short terraces and often have a slight step to their roofline where located on slightly sloping ground.

The village has a small granite and brick church with no tower but a bell gable which has a localised influence on the skyline. There is a Methodist Chapel with some distinct window and brick design features which provides interest along Forest Road.

The palette is predominantly red brick cottages and terraces, some with brightly painted door and window frames. A small amount of white render paint is used on buildings, but this is not a prominent feature in the village. Residential development in Huncote is a maximum of two storeys tall.



The granite Church of St James The Greater

Public Realm and green space

The village has numerous areas of informal green space throughout. A recreation ground, a play area and sports field are located adjacent to the school. A small parkland area alongside the stream provides attractive open green space. A central green is located on the north side of Narborough Road and contains several mature trees. Several green areas in the centre of the newer cul-de-sacs and a cemetery also contribute to the public realm.

A sports pavilion with pitches and a BMX track is located on the north western edge of the settlement. Allotments are located to the west of the village and accessed off Eunice Avenue.



A small war memorial is located on Narborough Road, opposite the church

Gateway features

From the south the small stone bridge over the stream forms a defined gateway feature after which the road curves round to reveal the cluster of houses in the historic part of the village.

From the north the road slopes down the hill on Forest Road and into the historic part of village. The entrance to the village is characterised by wide grassy verges with deciduous trees, although has become less distinct through new development on the village fringes.

From the entrance into the village from the east along Huncote Road there are 75 newly constructed dwellings to the south of Narborough Road. These are well-screened by mature boundary vegetation which has been retained.



New development at the northern entrance to the village

Capacity for change along the settlement edge

The village is quite visible in the wider landscape due to its location on a hill. The uniform and relatively low height of buildings means that the village has little capacity for tall buildings. Structures over two storeys in height would have a large influence on the skyline of the village.

The well vegetated northern edge screens views of the settlement from northern approaches and reduces Huncote's influence in the wider landscape. There has been recent development along this edge, although this has retained the existing mature vegetation.

The eastern urban edge along Denman Lane and Bennet Rise is hard and quite prominent from the approach along Huncote Road. There is scope to soften the urban edge with new planting. New development in the south-eastern edge has retained existing mature boundary vegetation and is well screened. There is little capacity for development along the eastern edge, in order to maintain the sense of separation between Huncote and Narborough.

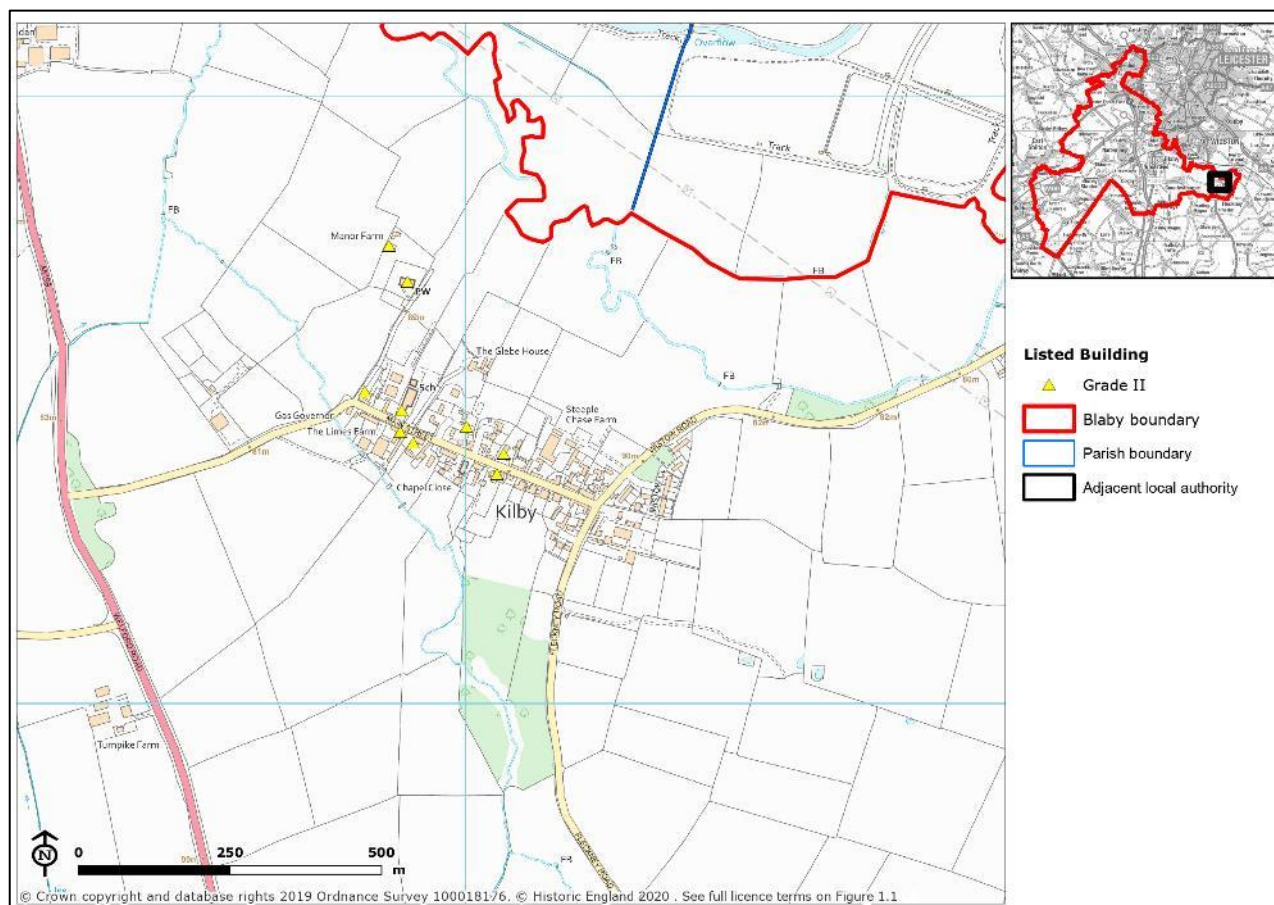
A stream and its associated vegetation define the southern boundary, beyond which the land is gently rolling. The area between the stream and the village forms a small area of linear greenspace. Despite being set low in the landscape this is a sensitive boundary which, if changed would alter the setting of the village. Any development along this edge would need to retain this strong vegetated buffer along the edge of the village.

The western boundary lies close to the historic core of the settlement and is relatively well integrated into the landscape. Expansion along this edge would need to be small-scale and reflect the characteristics of terraced properties on sloping ground, retain a strong relationship with the historic centre of the village and ensure that the village does not become more prominent in the wider landscape.

Recommendations

- Any future settlement expansion should protect the sense of separation with Narborough and the stream corridor to the south. Any development proposals should respect the surrounding landscape character.
- Protect and enhance the vegetated linear stream which is a key characteristic of the village and which defines the southern boundary and provides setting to the historic core of the village.
- Retain the sense of separation between Huncote and the larger settlement of Narborough to the east. Avoid development which would compromise the distinct identity of the settlements.
- Introduce planting to restore a soft edge to the eastern boundary of Huncote to align it with the character of the village edge from other approaches and increase the sense of separation between Huncote and Narborough.
- Ensure that new development in the area follows a similar pattern and uses materials in keeping with the traditional building style and colour.
- Improve the character and quality of new development by ensuring enclosure remains similar to the existing small-scale enclosure defined by houses built close to the road line and narrow streets. This has been lost in some newly developed areas of the village which have a sub-urban character.
- Ensure that any new development is two storeys to be in keeping with the existing dwellings in the village.

Kilby



Representative photographs



Location and context

Kilby is located within the eastern part of the district to the south of the River Sence. This relatively small rural settlement has strong agricultural and historical associations. The village is one of the few settlements within the district to have retained much of its agricultural character, with most new development constructed to be in keeping with the existing settlement vernacular. The village was originally part of the Wistow Estate. Historically many of the villagers worked either in agriculture, as house staff in Wistow Hall or in the knitting industry.

Key settlement characteristics

- Small rural village with a strong association with agriculture.
- Situated in an area of low ground, enclosing the settlement and allowing it to be well screened from the surrounding landscape.
- Distinctive bespoke gateways with welcome signs are located on entrances to the village.
- Linear settlement character with strong street pattern and buildings fronting the road creating enclosure.
- Some recent development of cul-de-sacs and infill development, detracting from the linear settlement character.
- Small red brick terraced cottages with small front gardens forming a strong association with the street.
- A distinctive red brick building vernacular often featuring distilling above windows.
- A high concentration of listed buildings including the distinctive Church of St Mary Magdalene and the School.
- Distinctive agricultural style buildings with farm courtyards set back from the main road and slightly sprawling agricultural buildings along village fringes. Its agricultural associations create a rural and tranquil character.
- A strong association with the surrounding countryside with the settlement nestled into the landform. Views across agricultural land in all directions, particularly to the floodplain of the River Sence in the north re-enforce the connection of the settlement to agriculture.

Description

Built form and settlement pattern

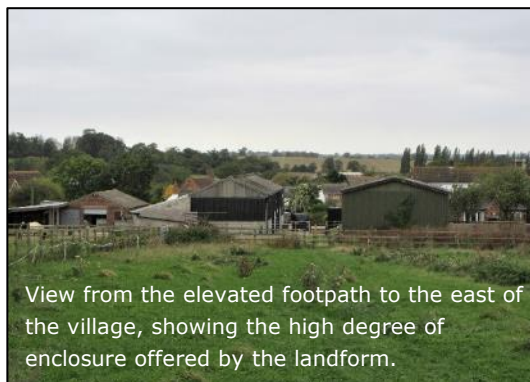
The village has a distinct linear form along Main Street and Fleckney Road, which has scarcely changed in the last century.

The village is nestled within the surrounding countryside. The eastern edge is integrated into the landscape and generally screened particularly from elevated land to the east. The western settlement edges are slightly more defined. Farmyards are located on the settlement edges and views towards the village comprise farm outbuildings, yard and storage areas, reinforcing the agricultural connections of the village.

The village is relatively enclosed by its built form which provides an almost continuous frontage. Orientation of buildings with some being 'end on' to the road and others fronting on to it, creates variation. Some buildings (including the pub and school) are set back from the road which reduces enclosure.

Agriculture associations have been retained in the village through the continued presence of farms on the village fringes. Small lanes and driveways lead off the main street sometimes through archways into small courtyards characteristic of farmyards, with buildings centred on stables. Although some of these have been converted to residential properties, their character is retained.

Where new development has taken place along the main street it has largely retained the character of the existing village. Exceptions include Wells Avenue and Wistow Close (off Wistow Road) are cul-de-sacs which is not typical of the village. These areas often contain uncharacteristic dispersed properties with driveways and have a reduced relationship to the main road, differing from the enclosed street pattern and appearing more suburban in style.



View from the elevated footpath to the east of the village, showing the high degree of enclosure offered by the landform.

Architectural style

The village has a distinctive building vernacular; the dominant building material is red brick with a mixture of slate and dark grey tile roofs. Windows are often large with decorative brickwork arch details over the top. Doorways into properties frequently feature a small overhang over the door or

have their door set slightly into the buildings. Some properties have small front gardens, although their connection to Main Street is maintained through low boundary walls. Subtle variations in these vernacular features create interest along the street.

There are a few rendered buildings which look slightly out of place within the village, particularly where the render has hidden window and door features and simplified the architectural character of buildings.



The Grade II listed School with detailed brickwork above windows.

There are localised occurrences of new development which contradict the characteristic vernacular with higher boundary walls screening lower storey windows and providing large expanses of blank facade.

For the most part, buildings within the village are small terraced cottages of two storeys in height. There are a handful of larger three storey buildings which form prominent landmark buildings due to their relative height.

The village has strong historical associations, containing a total of seven Grade II listed buildings in the western half of the village. The Church of St Mary Magdalene, and the Barn Behind Church are also Grade II listed and are located slightly outside the north-western village

boundary

Public Realm and green space

There is a large park set back from Main Street on the northern side, accessed by a public footpath. This contains a variety of modern play facilities and a small playing field.

The churchyard of the Grade II listed Church of St Mary Magdalene on the north-western edge of the village is also publicly accessible, enclosed by numerous mature specimen trees.

On the eastern edge of the village is a small grass verge which contains several large mature willow trees.



Play facilities in the park to the north of Main Street.

Gateway features

All three entrance roads to the village (Spinney Road, Wistow Road and Fleckney Road) have distinctive gateways, which mark the transition from the surrounding countryside to the village.

From Spinney Road in the west, the gates are located on a slight narrowing of the road with a small walled bridge and terraced cottages which creates enclosure and defines the village's entrance.

On Wistow Road to the north-east the gates are accompanied by mature vegetation within a large grass verge, reinforcing the identity of a rural village character.

Properties can be seen from further afield on Fleckney Road from the south-east; the entrance features include mature hedged field boundaries before reaching the entrance gates.

The settlement has a strong relationship with the surrounding agricultural countryside that surrounds it. The village is nestled within the landform, with views extending to the north across the flood plain of the River Sence.



Mature trees and narrow bridge marking the western entrance to the village.

Capacity for change along the settlement edge

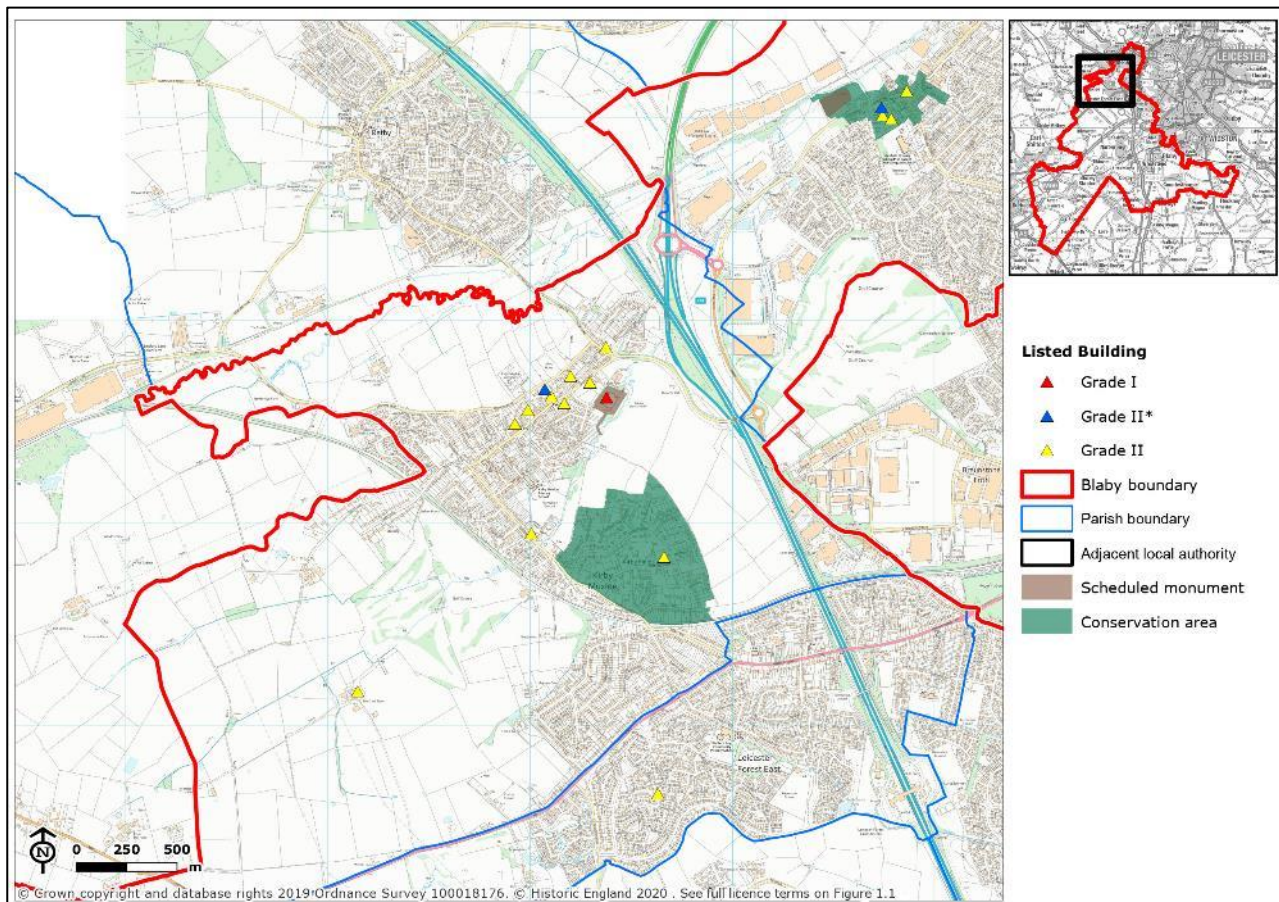
Kilby is one of the few settlements in the district which retain an intact historic rural village character throughout, with a small-scale enclosed street pattern.

The village edges are particularly sensitive to change. New development along the settlement edges should reflect the settlement pattern of the village and appear to be nestled on low ground and therefore screened from the wider landscape. This may be difficult to achieve to the east of the village where the ground becomes more elevated. Change along edges would need to reflect the existing architectural character. Careful treatment of building orientation and style would need to provide a slightly sprawling agricultural edge character which is closely integrated with the farmland beyond.

Recommendations

- Preserve the rural characteristics of this village by limiting its expansion. Conserve the association with agricultural buildings along the village fringe.
- New buildings should be carefully designed and placed to retain the linear settlement pattern through a close association to Main Street.
- Driveways should be hidden from the main road and designed to give the impression of a small farm courtyard, either accessed from a side road leading off the main street or through an archway, to retain the current active frontage.
- Where possible, development should aim to mirror existing building vernacular, using red brick or painted brick and dark grey materials on roofs such as slate. The brick pattern should not be uniform but contain minor details such as end on bricks and variation around windows. Walls fronting Main Street should aim to use Flemish bond brickwork to integrate with older properties on the street.
- Protect the gated entrances into the village and ensure the careful transition into the village is retained. This could be achieved by promoting the narrowing of built form at village entrances.
- New development should be confined to a scale and form consistent with small brick cottage terraces of two to three stories.
- Conserve and restore the enclosure provided by the interaction between houses and the roads through maintaining houses that front onto the road with minimal front gardens and low boundary walls.
- Ensure road widening or excessive street furniture does not detract from the character of the village.

Kirby Muxloe



Representative photographs



Location and context

The village is located to the north west of Leicester and there is recorded evidence of a settlement here since prehistoric times. Its name was established in the 18th century and enabled it to be distinguished from nearby Kirkby Mallory.

The settlement is formed along Main Road and Desford Road although development over the 20th century has expanded the village beyond these roads to the east, west and south. A larger cluster of modern housing development is located to the north of the A47 Hinckley Road, adjacent to Leicester Forest East. The village now connects to a small estate known as Kirby Fields which is designated as a Conservation Area for its large detached properties set in extensive grounds.

An allocation for approximately 750 homes is located on land to the north of Hinckley Road (A47).

Key settlement characteristics

- Verdant village setting created through mature vegetation in private gardens and along roads.
- Strong enclosed linear street pattern with a variety of building forms and architectural styles.
- Contrast between small scale dense development within the centre and more widely spaced detached properties set within large mature gardens in Kirby Fields.
- The historically significant structure of Kirby Muxloe Castle which is set within a moat.
- Gently falling topography to the north and south created through presence of watercourses.
- Intact relationship with the surrounding landscape on the northern and western edges.

Description

Built form and settlement pattern

The village retains a strong linear form along Main Road and Desford Road. This form has become more varied and indistinct in places where new development has expanded the village. A distinct cluster of settlement is located in the south of the village along Maytree Drive and Barry Drive. To the west of the railway and to the south at Kirby Fields the village is characterised by large detached properties set within large mature gardens which create a wooded character.

The village is set on high ground which slopes down towards Rothley Brook to the north and a small watercourse which crosses between Kirby Muxloe and Kirby Fields. Land elevation rises at Kirby Fields in the south east of the village. This provides a varied roof line with the church forming a prominent skyline feature, particularly in views from the north. Kirby Muxloe Castle, a Scheduled Monument, is located on lower ground within a mature wooded setting and is screened from most views.

The street character is relatively varied with buildings orientated both to front or side on to the street. Larger properties are set back from the road within mature gardens. Vegetation in private gardens, in combination with groups of street trees, creates a wooded and well vegetated character to the village, particularly in Kirby Fields. Newer semi-detached properties are often raised slightly from the road and set back behind a small front garden.

The core retains a strong village character although the buildings are a mix of ages as a result of substantial bomb damage during the Second World War. However, the various built developments within the village relate well to each other through the choice of similar building materials and the orientation and scale of buildings along the main streets.

Views are typically restricted to along roads. Glimpsed views out to surrounding countryside are possible to the north and south along smaller residential roads and lanes. A section of the M1 is slightly elevated and has a localised influence on the eastern fringes of the village. Large-scale industrial development is located to the east of the M1 and is partially within Kirby Muxloe parish.

Kirby Fields is a relatively large residential area to the immediate south of Kirby Muxloe and is designated as a Conservation Area. The area was created in 1877 when land was sold off individually for development and has resulted in a wide range of individual housing styles set within large grounds. Properties are generally only partially visible above extensive mature vegetation and roads are characterised by mature high hedgerows, large gateway entrances with winding driveways and glimpses of very large detached houses. In the 1960-70s there was some subdivision of plots. Where this has happened there is a marked change in character with buildings being closer together and more apparent along roads and gardens becoming smaller with less vegetation surrounding the properties.



Houses front onto the street along Woodlands Lane

Architectural style

The building style is varied within the village although the buildings relate well to each other. Buildings within the village centre are generally small clusters of terraces and individual cottages which front directly

onto the street. These are punctuated by larger townhouses and semi-detached properties which provide localised variations in street frontage and roofline. Recent development within the centre of the village has maintained the relationship to the street and varied street frontage.

Most of the shops within the village relate well to each other. Although the building styles differ from old buildings to more modern 1960s development, shop frontages retain an older style with small canopies over their windows and ornate displays within their windows and on the street.

Building materials are predominantly red brick with dark roofs using both slate and newer concrete tiles. Several the older properties have brick detailing which reflects red and dark blue/grey brick detailing within the 15th century Kirby Muxloe Castle. Larger properties within Kirby Fields show greater variety of materials and colours ranging from white render and red brick through to darker coloured bricks and combinations of both including imitation half-timbered panelling. The Red Cow public house with thatched roof is a distinct structure in the south of the village.

Boundaries are a mix of brick and stone walls within the village centre. Some boundaries include timber fencing which tends to look out of place. Newer properties have, in places, used metal fencing which is of a simple style and maintains the relationship between the buildings and the street. Within the edges of the village (particularly the western edge and Kirby Fields), the boundaries become predominantly mature well maintained evergreen hedgerows. Front gardens within the village centre tend to be small whereas along the outskirts large winding driveways and houses set back some distance from the road become characteristic.



Large red brick buildings are located on Main Street

Public Realm and green space

There is limited public open space within the village although mature vegetation within private gardens and in small groups along the roads provide a green setting to development.

There is open space around the distinctive Kirby Muxloe Castle Scheduled Monument, which links into footpaths out to the wider countryside. Kirby Muxloe Recreation Ground is situated between Kirby Muxloe and Kirby Fields and links to Blood's Hill and Kirby Muxloe Castle via a footpath.

Other smaller open spaces include Kirby Muxloe Sports and Social Club grounds and the cemetery and allotments to the north of Desford Road.



Kirby Muxloe Castle is a distinct feature with some accessible open space

Gateway features

To the east the entrance to the village is created by cottages and terraces fronting onto a roundabout. Mature vegetation along surrounding roads and clear bespoke village signage set within ornamental landscape planting provide a strong gateway feature.

The gateway to the south between Leicester Forest East and Kirby Muxloe is less defined due to dense development with similar building styles. The boundary is located partially along the railway line (to the east of Kirby Lane) and partially along the A47 (to the west of Kirby Lane).

The western entrance is defined by a change from floodplain landscape associated with Rothley Brook to housing development to the south of the road. The entrance is relatively well vegetated although new development along this edge relates little to the village centre or larger detached properties on the other urban edges.



The roundabout with village sign near the eastern entrance to Kirby Muxloe

Capacity for change along the settlement edge

The northern edge of the village is well defined by Desford Road. Most development is to the south of this road although the cemetery, allotments, a cottage and Thorneyfields Farm are located to the north. This road is relatively well vegetated including a mature hedgerow and many mature trees which create a wooded character. Future expansion beyond this road would need to respect this wooded character along its edge. Any new development should maintain the characteristics of this floodplain landscape and ensure that the village retains its separate identity from Ratby to the north.

The north-western urban edge is well defined by the railway although a small group of large detached properties have been built beyond. This edge is well vegetated through a combination of mature garden vegetation and a strong wooded belt provided along the railway. There is limited scope for future expansion on the edge as the settlement would be perceived as encroaching into the surrounding countryside across the existing barrier of the railway.

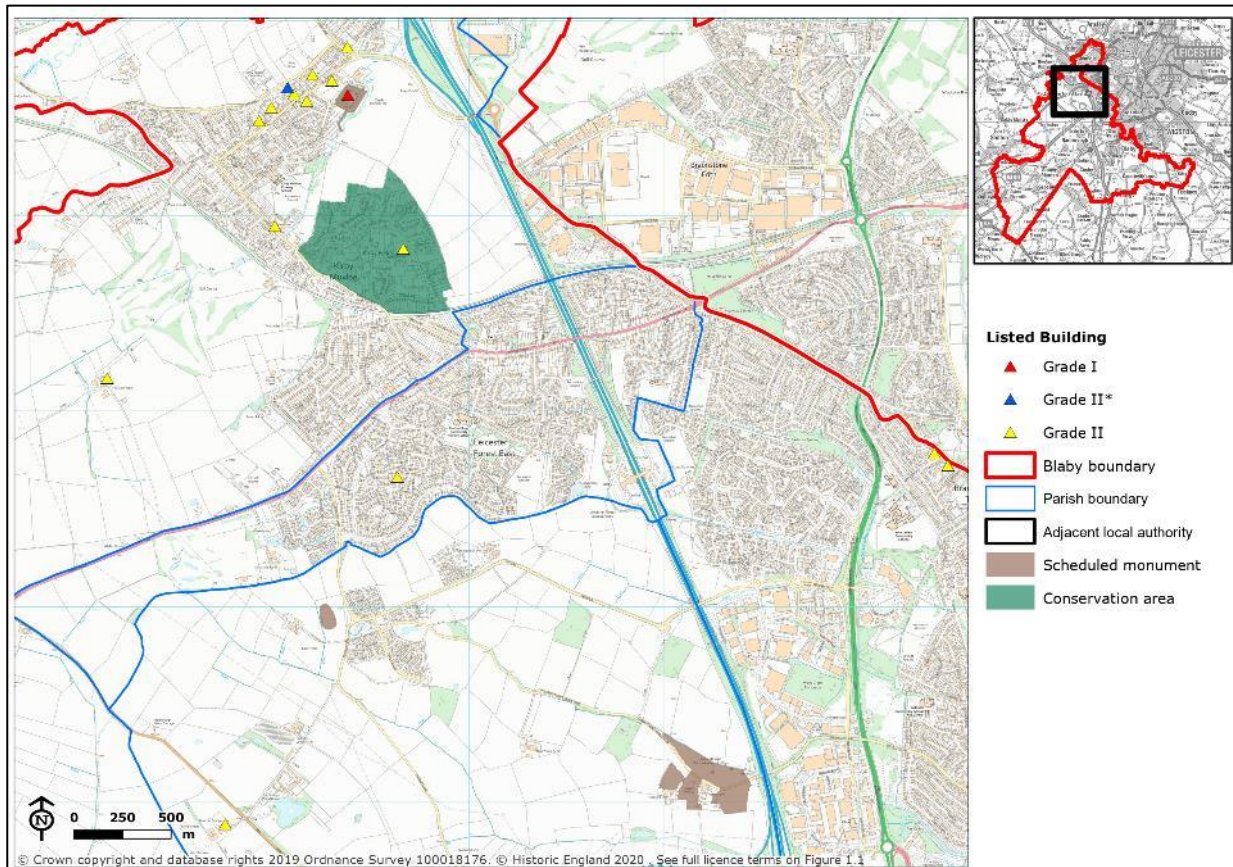
The south-western urban edge (adjacent to Maytree Drive and Barry Drive) is characterised by a mix of farmland and recreation uses including sports facilities and a golf course. There is capacity to accommodate some changes along this edge providing the guidance for development in the adjacent landscape is adhered to.

To the east of the settlement the land notably rises at Blood's Hill towards the M1. The edge of Kirby Fields is partially visible, although due to the style of the properties and the extent of mature vegetation this edge is soft. The setting of the castle is particularly sensitive. The castle is relatively well screened from existing development within the village, however future expansion on higher ground could influence the landscape and historic setting of the castle. In addition, the separate identity of Kirby Muxloe should be retained and protected from the urban fringes and industry along the western edge of Leicester.

Recommendations

- Conserve the varied street frontage through careful placement of new development to retain a varied roofline and maintain a close association with the street.
- Conserve the uniform shop frontage to retain this unique village core character.
- Protect and in places restore tree planting to ensure the village maintains its green setting.
- Enhance the village entrances from the west and south through signage and appropriate landscape treatment.
- Protect the castle as a valued resource and ensure its historic and landscape setting are preserved.
- Conserve the spacious layout of individually styled detached houses set within a mature landscape framework of Kirby Fields.

Leicester Forest East



Representative photographs



Location and context

This is a spreading settlement located towards the north of the district. It contains predominantly 20th century residential development and is perceived to be part of the Leicester urban conurbation. Leicester Forest East has evolved along the route of the A47 which crosses the settlement east-west. The A47 (Hinckley Road) and the railway forms the boundary between Leicester Forest East and Kirby Muxloe to the north.

The settlement today spreads in a roughly east to west block, partially bisected by the M1 motorway. It does not have a defined centre.

Key settlement characteristics

- Predominantly 20th century housing development constructed in a mixture of modern building styles and materials.
- No defined settlement core with smaller 'neighbourhood centres' distributed within housing development.
- Lacking in focal points and landscape features.
- New development is characterised by a sinuous road pattern with many cul de sacs.
- Presence of street trees along Hinckley Road and limited boundary features creates an open character

Description

Built form and settlement pattern

Leicester Forest East is perceived as a continuation of the city of Leicester, as there is no significant separation between the two.

The settlement is dominated by residential housing with no obvious centre. Where 'neighbourhood centres' exist they are generally of modern construction and contain a few shops with extensive car parking. Housing is largely post-war construction. A large area of modern housing development forms the southwestern part of the settlement, adjacent to Warren Farm.

Each area within the settlement varies slightly in size of property, density and building orientation, which is possibly due to sequential periods of development or the influence of different builders. This gives subareas within the settlement differentiation but there is no overriding unique character, with housing patterns being typical of suburban estates across the country. Houses are usually set back from the road in large front gardens which have space to accommodate car parking.

There is slight variation to this form along Hinckley Road which includes several larger detached properties and small apartment buildings. The junction of Hinckley Road and Kirby Lane has groupings of buildings of various styles. Some of these buildings formed the historic area of 'East Leicester Forest' which comprised several structures in this location.

The settlement generally has few distinguishing features and relates little to the surrounding environment. Roads tend to be relatively uniform with limited vistas or landmarks to assist orientation.

The roofline is uniform throughout the settlement due to the similar building style. Roofs are prominent adjacent to open countryside particularly where boundary vegetation is limited. There are no prominent buildings within the skyline. Due to the built-up nature of Leicester Forest East views are generally over short distances. From the community centre on the southern fringe there are localised open views towards the M1 and M1 services.



Semi-detached houses on the south side of Hinckley Road (A47)

Architectural style

Housing built within estate developments of similar ages is largely uniform in scale and style. Buildings tend to have minor variations in style, however regularity occurs within the housing layout through the repetition of several different house types throughout estates. Within modern developments a mixture of classical, traditional, modern and faux architectural details are used including columns, timber frame cladding and faux sandstone lintels. Some house types reflect the steep pitched roofs which characteristic throughout the district, although these are an infrequent style within housing estates.

A varied collection of buildings is arranged around and close to the junction and traffic lights at the turning off A47 into Kirby Fields/Kirby Muxloe. The most prominent The Red Cow public house with thatched roof and half black and white timbered dwelling are distinct features on the boundary between Leicester Forest East and Kirby Muxloe.

Boundaries are primarily formed through ornamental planting or open grassed areas. The use of built enclosures to property boundaries tends to be localised and is not a significant characteristic of this settlement.

A mixed range of colours are present throughout the settlement. There is no distinctive colour palette to typify this area, although buildings tend to be constructed from varying shades of brick. Roof materials are predominantly dark coloured tiles, occasionally slate. Colours are used within modern houses which are not generally typical of the district and surroundings and include bricks of pale buff/beige shades.



Red-brick semi-detached houses on Queens Drive

Public Realm and green space

There is easy access to the adjoining countryside from the urban fringes via public footpaths primarily into countryside to the south of the settlement. However, the ongoing construction of housing at New Lubbesthorpe will alter these routes.

Pockets of open space and play facilities are present within the settlement. These are arranged with buildings fronting onto them to enable clear visibility and supervision. Open spaces tend to contain a number of young specimen trees.

Public realm predominantly consists of roadside verges, residential streets and main roads such as Hinckley Road which is characterised by mature street trees and hedgerow boundaries.



Small pockets of open space are located amongst housing development

Gateway features

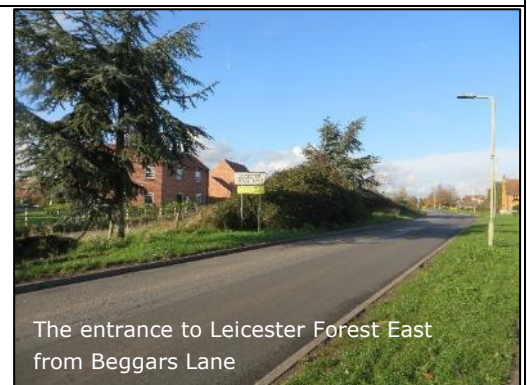
Generally gateways into the settlement are indistinct due to the immediate continuation of built form of adjoining settlements.

There is no physical separation between Kirby Muxloe and Leicester Forest East although the gateway to each is marked by the junction of Kirby Lane and Hinckley Road and landmark buildings such as the Red Cow public house and black and white timbered building.

The approach to the settlement from the southwest is denoted by modern housing on both sides of Beggars Lane (including the first phase of New Lubbesthorpe) and includes manicured verges with ornamental trees. There is little distinction between building styles to denote this entrance.

In the gateway to the settlement from the east, a major crossroads is situated at the junction of the A47 and B5380. It is bound by Meynell's Gorse woodland. It forms a landmark at this busy road junction although it appears to belong to a suburban environment rather than adding strong definition to a separate area or settlement.

Churches tend to be of modern origin and do not greatly influence the skyline or general character of the surroundings. They are often set within mature landscaped grounds which provide separation and screening, such as the Church of St Andrew on the A47.



The entrance to Leicester Forest East from Beggars Lane

Capacity for change along the settlement edge

The southern and western fringes of the settlement adjoin countryside, although the ongoing construction of New Lubbethorpe to the south will result in a significant change on this edge of the settlement.

The north western fringes fall into the Thurlaston Rolling Farmland landscape character area. Built form in the surrounding landscape is limited to scattered farms and distant glimpses of urban fringes. Any change or development in these areas should ensure that these should have regard to these characteristics.

Fringes to the north are constrained by the railway line and built development of Kirby Muxloe along the A47 Hinckley Road. Opportunities for expansion are limited.

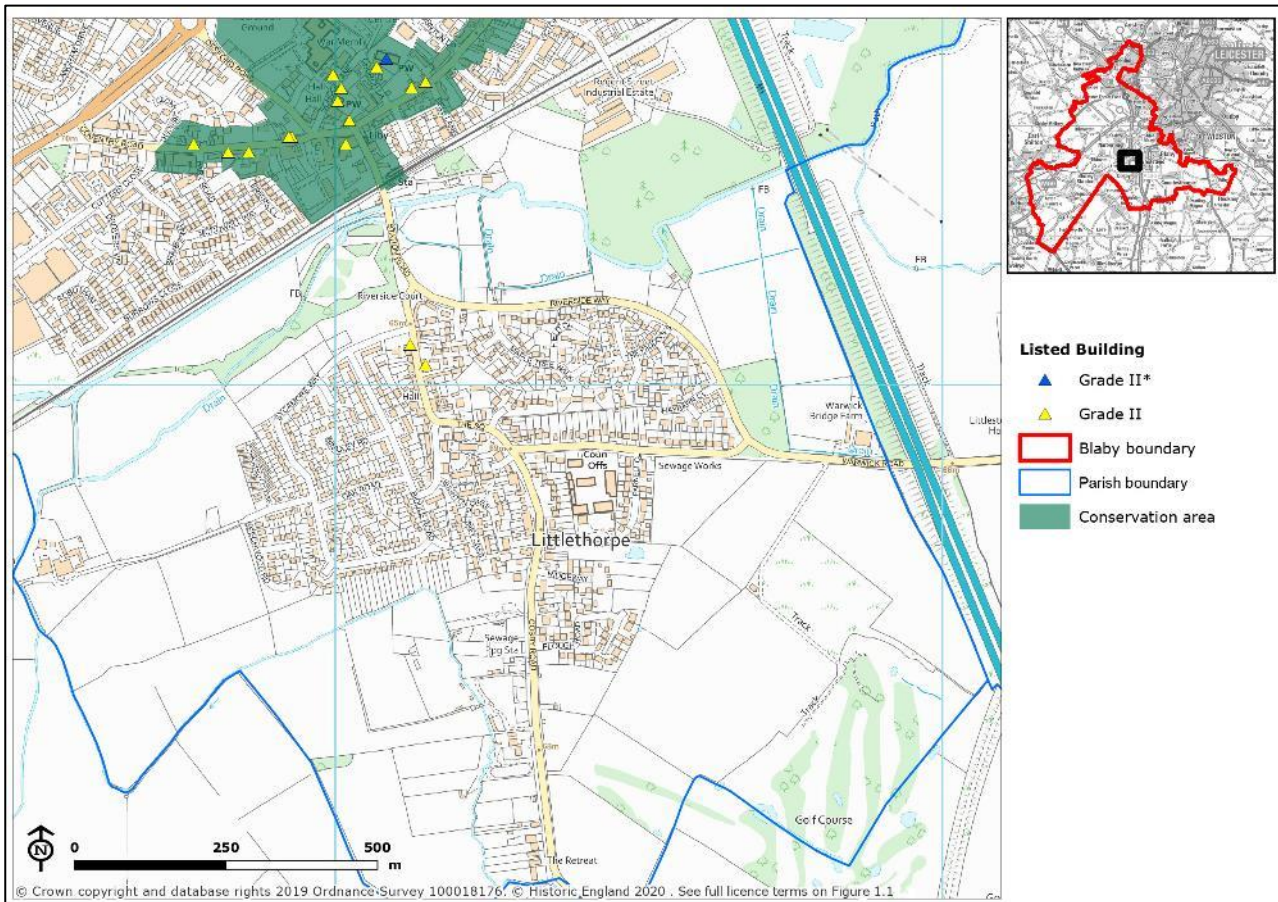
The eastern fringes are bounded predominantly by existing development.

New development in the south west of the settlement to the west of Beggars Lane has reduced the containment of the settlement along this edge.

Recommendations

- Preserve and enhance the wooded character surrounding the urban fringes of the settlement. Continue to encourage the retention and good management of existing woodlands.
- Restore and enhance a sinuous vegetated and irregular edge to the urban fringes where this would soften the appearance of built form. Existing hedgerows and woodland planting following an irregular field boundary pattern can create a softer and more natural appearance than regular and geometric shapes in the landscape.
- Protect, conserve and enhance distinctive buildings and gateway features where they exist and establish gateway features where they do not exist to help define the settlement boundaries.
- Restore and enhance focal points and landscape features where practical to create local distinctiveness within the settlement.
- Protect and enhance street trees and trees within verges. Encourage a programme of new planting, management and replacement to ensure the longevity of these features within the public realm.

Littlethorpe



Representative photographs



Location and context

Situated directly south of Narborough and immediate west of the M1, Littlethorpe is a relatively small village. The original settlement pattern is still evident as a small nucleated settlement along Cosby Road, with this area possessing historic buildings with distinct character. However, the village has gradually been expanded during the 20th century to its current size and more clustered form. The village retains a rural character with limited influence from surrounding larger settlements and busy transport infrastructure.

Key settlement characteristics

- Small clustered form retaining evidence of the older linear settlement along Station Road and The Square.
- 20th century expansion has reduced the strength of the pattern and built form character of the village and is not consistent with traditional building materials present in the historic village core.
- Station Road and The Square retain a historic built character, elsewhere there are limited distinguishing built features or landmarks, with a uniform roofline marked occasionally by mature trees.
- Small terraces and detached thatched properties characteristic along Station Road and The Square.
- Enclosed character of Station Road and The Square contrasts with the more open character of 20th century residential expansion surrounding it.
- A strong relationship with surrounding countryside with commanding views across agricultural fields particularly to the west and north.
- Thorpe Meadows Site of Nature Conservation Interest, jointly owned with Narborough Parish Council, provides an area of open space for recreation.

Description

Built form and settlement pattern

Littlethorpe retains its historic linear character along Station Road and The Square, although development in the last century has expanded to the east and west, with the development having little relationship with the older core.

Development along Station Road and The Square has a close association with the street and a relatively enclosed character. Most properties front straight on to the street and small lanes and alleys lead off the street to further housing behind. They are generally small cottage terraces except for The Plough public house and Old Farmhouse Court which are both thatched detached buildings. Larger properties such as Old Farmhouse Court are set slightly back from the road, surrounded by high brick walls. Littlethorpe House is set back from The Square and is partially screened from the road by a high brick wall.

Away from Station Road and The Square, the residential properties have a more sinuous suburban layout consisting of mostly semi-detached two-storey properties. Recent changes include the development of a new housing estate along Plough Road in the south and the demolition of Littlethorpe Depot on Warwick Road.

Most buildings are residential with commercial development limited and dispersed throughout the village. There is no church within the village. There are no prominent buildings within the skyline.



View north along station Road from The Square showing enclosed built form

Architectural style

Buildings are mostly constructed out of red brick with slate roofs. Slight variation is found on Station Road and The Square which are characterised by paint and render on buildings. In places slate roofs have been replaced by dark coloured tiles. A large proportion of painted buildings have black and white colouring with many windows painted black. Windows are generally large made up of lots of smaller panes, some of which have painted shutters.

Where doors front onto the street, they tend to be slightly recessed with a single step up to the door.



View west to the Grade II listed Plough Inn on the corner of Station Road, showing surrounding mixed building materials

The Plough Inn and The Old House on Station Road to the north are both Grade II listed. Both properties are Tudor style white painted/rendered brick and wood frame, with thatched roofs.

Modern 20th century development is constructed from a range of brick colours which often contrast with the materials on older properties. Some effort has been made to reflect traditional building materials in the northeast such as on Furrows Close where there are a series of buildings with the traditional white painted/rendered brick and wood frames. However, for the most part building design follows no clear pattern with no strong relation to the vernacular of traditional properties along Station Road and The Square.

On Station Road and The Square properties have little or no front gardens and generally front straight on to the street. The rest of the settlement has a more suburban character often with small front gardens marked by low, or no boundary features and sometimes containing driveways.

Public Realm and green space

Open space within Littlethorpe is primarily restricted to the edges of the village. A large informal open space is located on Sycamore Way on the northern boundary and contains a play park and playing field.

To the north of the village and adjoining the open space at Sycamore Way, is the Thorpe Meadows Site of Nature Conservation Interest, joint owned with Narborough Parish Council. This area was opened to the public in 2002 and provides an area for recreation.

The village is relatively verdant, with many of the properties having front gardens containing vegetation and frequent wide grassy verges. The village has a strong association with the surrounding countryside, particularly to the west and north where there is limited screening from mature vegetation. This allows views from the settlement into the surrounding countryside.

Two footpaths exit the village; one in the west towards Lodge Farm and one in the east which leads to Whetstone, passing under the motorway.



Gateway features

All entrance roads into the settlement are marked with welcome signs. In places, these have been slightly covered by the surrounding vegetation.



The village has a strong entrance gateway from Narborough to the north passing through a section of road lined with mature trees before entering the village. The Plough Inn forms a prominent feature of the view.

The eastern entrance on Warwick Road is also well defined marked by mature trees at its entrance.

To the south the entrance to the village is less defined with scattered housing along Cosby Road. Field boundaries here are lower, meaning there is some intervisibility between Cosby and Littlethorpe, reducing the sense of separation between the settlements.

Capacity for change along the settlement edge

The northern settlement edge is particularly sensitive to development, due to its proximity to Narborough and the risk of coalescence. There is little opportunity for expansion and this area is also restricted by the flood plain.

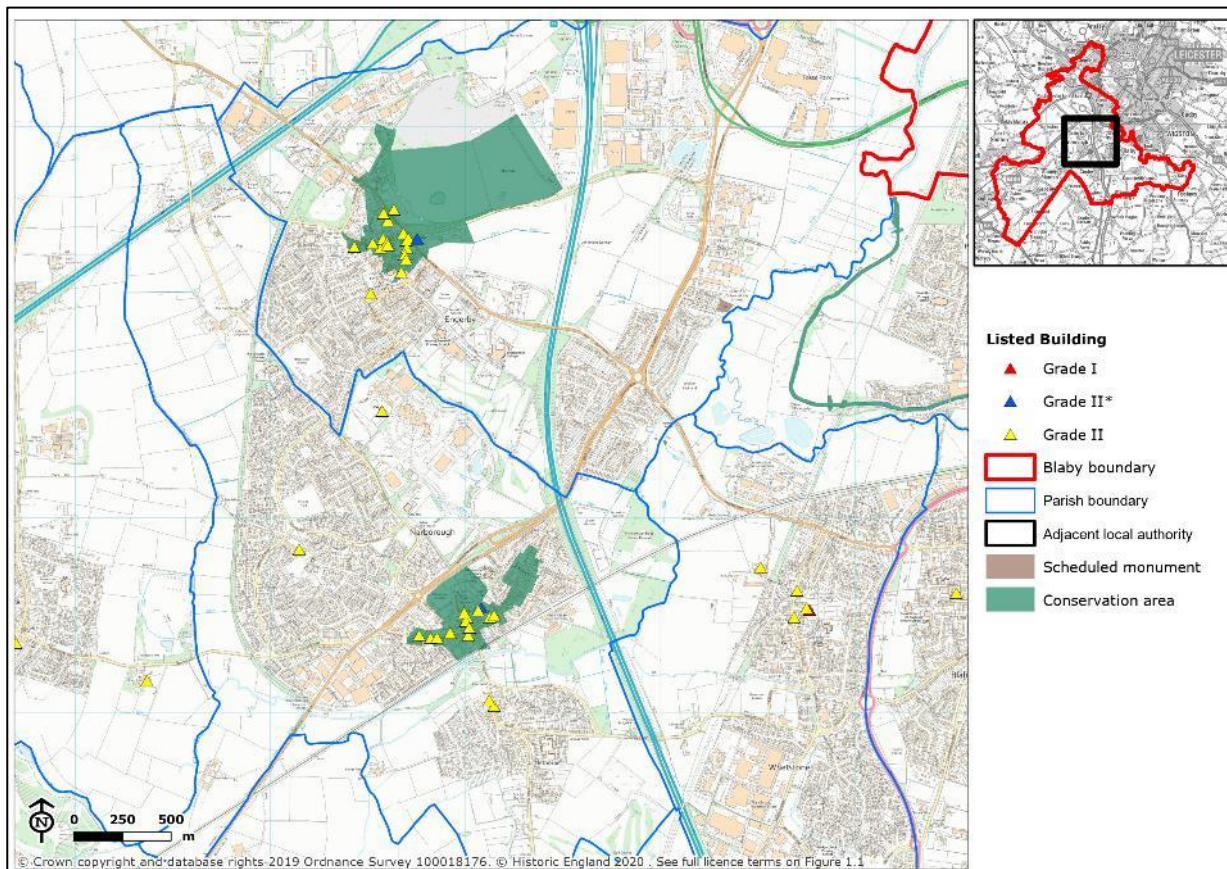
The southern edge is the least well defined, with scattered housing sprawled along Cosby Road reducing the distinction between Littlethorpe and Cosby. Further development along Cosby Road may reduce the sense of separation between the settlements. Any expansion along this edge would need to have a stronger connection with the rest of Littlethorpe, reinforcing the settlement edge and maintaining distinction from Cosby.

Along other village edges the settled to rural transition is relatively defined and there are few urban fringe land uses.

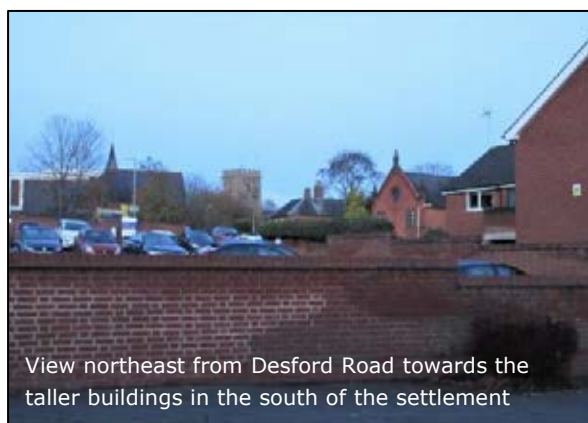
Recommendations

- Protect and where possible enhance the characteristics, features and built form present along Station Road and The Square to retain the historic and distinctive built form along the road and reinforce this character within new development in other parts of the village.
- Conserve and enhance the existing entrance to the village from Narborough through the retention of the landscape setting and new landscape treatment along the car park edge to reduce its prominence whilst retaining views of The Plough public house.
- Protect the mature vegetation along the River Soar and railway to the north and the M1 and disused railway to the east which screens views to surrounding settlements and helps retain the rural character.
- Protect and conserve the open land between Littlethorpe and the surrounding settlements of Cosby, Narborough and Whetstone to retain the separate identities of these villages.
- Maintain the village's relationship with surrounding agricultural land ensuring this is not reduced by an increase in urban fringe land uses.
- Any development should be of a similar scale to buildings already present within the village and be two storeys in height.
- Enhance the entrance gateway features in the south on Cosby Road to better define the settlement edge.
- Develop new public green spaces and opportunities for recreation.

Narborough



Representative photographs



View northeast from Desford Road towards the taller buildings in the south of the settlement



View of the southern settlement edge from Littlethorpe

Location and context

Narborough is located to the south west of Leicester on the western side of the M1. The extent of the village is largely determined by the existing railway line and a disused line forms the western boundary. The eastern boundary is generally formed by the M1.

The historic core is located in the south eastern corner of the settlement close to the railway station and includes buildings on Coventry Road and Leicester Road. Most of the settlement is the result of significant amounts of modern expansion.

Key settlement characteristics

- Strongly linear historic core with an enclosed street pattern.
- Narborough Station is a key feature of the southern entrance to the village.
- Large expanse of 20th century development in northern part of the village relates little to the historic core.
- Village fringes are strongly defined by vegetated railways and roads. Carlton Park is a business park located on the eastern edge of the settlement. The western boundary is contained by a disused railway (Whistle Way) which is characterised by linear mature vegetation.
- Perceived narrowing of road entrances through orientation of buildings and boundary walls.
- Terraces interspersed with larger townhouses provides localised variety within the village.
- Rising skyline with the church a prominent feature on the horizon.
- Predominance of red brick buildings within village centre.

Description

Built form and settlement pattern

The historic core of the settlement is linear and is located along Coventry Road and Leicester Road in the south-east of Narborough. It is designated as a Conservation Area. Shops are dispersed between residential properties which creates an elongated village centre. Although the settlement of Narborough extends north beyond the B4114, the historic centre is located to the south of the road. Modern suburban development is located to the north of the B4114.

Within the historic centre, a continuous frontage is created through terraced cottages and houses linked together with high brick walls. Most of the streets are characterised by their enclosure and narrow width.

There is a strong distinction between the older core of the village and modern development. Modern development along the periphery of the historic core has reduced the sense of enclosure through the presence of grass verges and housing set back from the road by large front gardens.

The modern part of the settlement to the north of the B4114 has a typical suburban character with sinuous roads and numerous cul-de-sacs.

The village is on slightly rising ground although this is not evident whilst within village centre. This topography and range of building heights and orientations provides a varied roofline. The Church of All Saints forms a prominent feature of the skyline when approaching the village from the south.

Building height varies within the historic centre. There are several three/four storey buildings on Leicester Road which add variety to the street frontage and form prominent landmark features. Most buildings are two storey cottages and terraces, although these also vary slightly in height due to the angle of pitch on their roofs.

An industrial estate is located along the south western outskirts of the village and is characterised by a mix of large warehouse buildings, smaller units and car parking. Carlton Park is a business park located to the south of Enderby which is characterised by large buildings and extensive car parks. This is constructed on the site of the former Carlton Hayes Hospital.



View north along Station Road from the railway bridge

Architectural style

The use of stone within building construction within the village is restricted to the oldest and most important buildings such as Narborough Hall, the school and the parish church. Within the historic core, most properties are small cottages or terraces interspersed with several townhouses which are a feature of the village. Many of the slightly larger properties have smaller outbuildings and extensions.

In the historic core, red brick, with some grey brick, is the characteristic building material. There is very limited use of timber within construction. Several prominent buildings are faced with render on the main street. Roofing materials are both Swithland and Welsh slate on older properties and darker grey tiles on newer buildings.

Most of the settlement is modern 20th and 21st century development. The style of these properties are mixed based on their age, with little relation to the historic core. Streets tend to contain properties of similar styles, including areas of small detached properties, terraces, large detached and semi-detached properties. Although some roads, for instance, Alexandra Street, have a mix of building styles.

Property boundaries are often defined by high brick walls, some with granite rubble walling at their base.



View southeast along Stainmore Avenue from Forest Road, showing detached red brick properties

These are generally of simple construction with a painted solid timber gate. Older properties have some more ornate detail with corner stones of sandstone and metal work integrated into the timber gates.

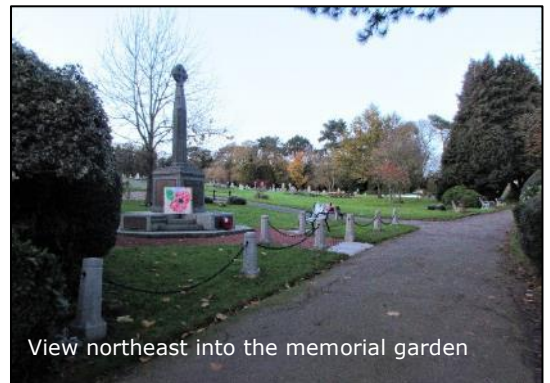
Many properties within the historic part of the village have simple brick detailing above their windows. Doors tend to have a small arch or porch. Windows in older buildings tend to be larger in size.

Most shops within the village have retained a characteristic shop frontage with small windows and doors and signs above. The Narborough Arms is a distinctive timber-framed building dating from the 17th century.

Public Realm and green space

The largest and most prominent piece of open space is Narborough Park which is adjacent to King Edward's Avenue. The park is a large area of open grassland with evidence of ridge and furrow, a large play area and mature trees around the park boundaries. Six Acre Field is situated on the eastern side of The Pastures, with an associated play park on the opposite side of the road to the southwest. There is also a new small park with play facilities at Bradgate Close.

Whistle Way is walkway located along the route of a disused mineral railway, which also forms the western boundary of Narborough.



View northeast into the memorial garden

Open space in the village includes the churchyard and memorial garden in the village centre associated with the Church of All Saints. There is also Thorpe Meadow Site of Nature Conservation Interest open space to the immediate south of the village adjacent to the River Soar. Smaller pockets of informal open space are scattered throughout the modern housing estates.

Gateway features

The most prominent gateway into the village is from the south where the railway building and associated rail infrastructure provides a distinct entrance into the village. This is enhanced further by the roofline of the village which rises towards the church. The gateway from the south along the B4114 is characterised by Langham Bridge which crosses the River Soar and the start of the Whistle Way. The gateway from the east along the same road crosses under the M1.

Other gateways into the village are less distinct. This is particularly evident between Enderby and Narborough. Suburban residential development extends between each of the two historic cores and the edges of the settlements are indistinguishable. There is however some sense of separation along Forest Road where mature vegetation and orientation of most buildings away from the road helps provide a sense of separation. Forest Road is also marked with place name signs marking the gateway into Narborough.



View south along Forest Road, showing the northern gateway features

Mature trees around the periphery of Narborough Park provide a landmark feature when entering the historic core of the village from King Edward's Avenue along Desford Road.

Mature linear vegetation along the disused railway is a distinct feature when approaching the settlement from the west along Huncote Road.

Capacity for change along the settlement edge

The edges of the settlement are largely restricted by urban features such as roads and railways which contain the built form.

Any new development in the south, close to the historic centre of the village, should respect the tight urban form and aim to replicate this through buildings fronting on to the street. If residential roads/cul-de-sacs are created to serve several properties, buildings on the corners should provide some frontage on to the main street and potentially provide a slight narrowing at the road entrance. Roads should be relatively narrow and properties should have small front gardens.

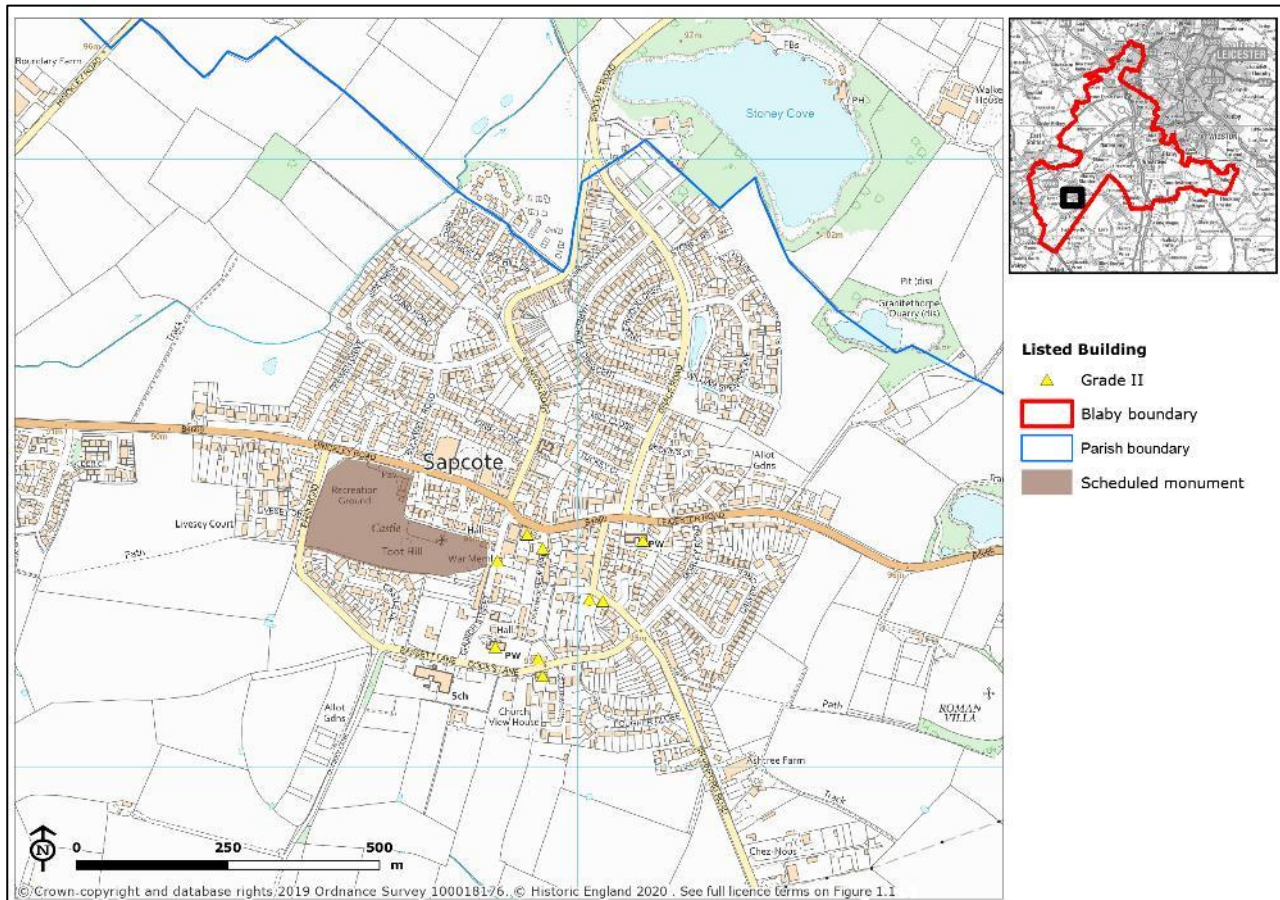
The southern boundary of Narborough has little capacity to accommodate future expansion due to its proximity to Littlethorpe. At present the effective separation is provided by the railway. Within the open land between settlements both urban edges are visible.

The western boundary is strongly defined by the disused railway, which also contributes to the sense of separation between Narborough and Huncote. Development to the west of Narborough would reduce the perception of the settlements being separate and increase the village's influence within the wider landscape.

Recommendations

- Protect and enhance areas of open space. These areas are particularly valuable as most of the settlement is urban in character and public open space is limited.
- Protect the separation between Littlethorpe (to the south) and Huncote (to the west) by restricting development and implementing appropriate landscape treatments e.g. through strengthening woodland planting along the River Soar.
- Enhance the entrances to the settlement from the east, west and north.
- Preserve the tight urban form within the historic core of the village through ensuring development respects the close association of buildings to the road.
- Protect the church's prominence within the skyline through appropriate control of new developments which may introduce tall buildings or structures.
- Conserve the use of red brick materials and varied orientation of buildings to ensure that character of built form along roads within the older part of the village centre is retained.

Sapcote



Representative photographs



Location and context

Sapcote is a medium-sized, clustered settlement in the south western part of Blaby District, located to the south of Stoney Stanton and the popular inland diving site of Stoney Cove.

The historic core is located on the southern fringe of the settlement and the village has some strong historic links, with evidence that the area has been inhabited by Saxons, Romans and Normans. From the 12th-14th century the village was the home of the powerful Basset family who founded Sapcote Castle, a Norman earthwork motte and bailey fortress which is now discernible as earthworks in the grass.

Key settlement characteristics

- Medium-sized clustered settlement, which has recently extended to the west along Hinckley Road. The village is primarily residential with some small-scale industrial and business sites.
- The historic core is located on the southern edge of the settlement, while the modern village centre is located on Leicester Road (B4669).
- The settlement has a past association with quarrying activity with several disused quarries. Historic buildings tend to be constructed of the local granite.
- Varied architectural styles ranging from thatched cottages to modern geometric designs.
- The site of the motte and bailey castle is a Scheduled Monument and important public open space within the village.
- The church and the nearby Almhouses (both Grade II listed) are constructed from local granite.
- Houses are most constructed of red brick which is sometimes rendered or painted. Roof materials are dark in colour.
- Stoney Cove creates a strong gateway feature to the north.
- Post-war and modern housing development extends to the north and west of the settlement and has a limited relationship with the historic core.

Description

Built form and settlement pattern

The historic core of the village, including the church, the rectory, site of the castle and older housing along an enclosed street, is located on the southern fringe. There are thatched cottages located on winding back roads in this part of the village.

The contemporary centre lies on the B4669 which passes through the village. It is a small centre with several small shops including a local store and a post office. Buildings tend to front straight on to the road, creating a strong street scene but the wide road means the character is less enclosed than in the historic area of the settlement.

The street pattern is generally sinuous. The historic part of the village is built around a semi-circular road which curves to the south off the main B4669 road at one end of the village and links back in at the other end. Newer residential development tends to be in a more geometric street pattern and is generally located to the north of the B4669. The Limes is a recently constructed estate located to the west of the village off the B4669, which is slightly at odds with the historic clustered form of the settlement and creates the perception of a linear settlement to the west. Development is also taking place between the Limes and the western edge of Sapcote.

The development to the north of the main road is where the village has extended through post-war and modern development and has a weak connection with the historic core of the village. These housing estates tend to have a hard urban edge which is emphasised by a lack of vegetation and is visible from northern and eastern approach roads.

The roof line is varied. The church spire is clearly visible from outside the settlement, particularly in views from the south. The unusually designed chimney feature of Homestead House is a distinct feature in the roofline, although not visible from outside the settlement. Elsewhere the roofline is a mixture of flat and pitched roofs which are generally no greater than two storeys.

There are long views from the south of the settlement over the Soar Floodplain and surrounding landscape. From the north it is possible to see Stoney Stanton rising on the opposite hillside with the linear form of the vegetated stream visible in the foreground.



Contemporary village centre, with shops and buildings fronting straight onto the

Architectural style

Sapcote has a mixed architectural style with no single defining character. The core of the village consists of small-scale domestic cottages and houses, interspersed with occasional larger houses and focal buildings. Buildings are mostly limited to two storeys, although there are some taller structures including the church and chapel. The older buildings in the historic core tend to be cottages or small terraces. There are several thatched cottages, often with white rendering, which are maintained in good condition. Granite was a frequently used building material due to the local quarrying, with the church, older rows of houses and walls constructed of granite.

Newer development is varied and includes terraced housing along the busier roads and semi-detached properties in the residential areas in the north of Sapcote. Modern development to the east of Grace Road and to the north of Stanton Road is characterised by cul de sacs. There are also several flat roofed modern buildings in the centre of the settlement.

Building materials tend to be red brick, with occasional white rendering, and clay tile roofs. Some buildings have dark slate roofs, which looks particularly striking on newer buildings with white rendered walls.

There is a mixture of property boundaries throughout the village. Rubble stone walling is a significant feature, especially around properties near the church. Red brick walls are common in the centre. In the newer developments ornamental hedgerows and garden vegetation form strong boundary features.



Distinct granite terraces close to the historic core of the village

Public Realm and green space

The most significant area of greenspace is the Recreation Ground on the site of the motte and bailey castle in the centre of the settlement. This is a wide expanse of grassland with the archaeologically significant remains of the castle earthworks visible in the centre. This area contains various recreational facilities including numerous benches, sports pitches and a children's play area. A small play area is located within the new build estate along Lime Avenue. A small area of allotments is in the east of the village, to the north of Leicester Road. Open space is also associated with the recent development at Grace Road to the east of Sapcote.

The war memorial located opposite the castle site is a small and well-maintained public square with floral planting including rose beds. It is raised from street level and bounded by hedges creating a peaceful enclosed space which fronts on to the street.

The churchyard and cemetery (off Donkey Lane) form a small area of open space on the fringes of the settlement. The churchyard and large private houses around the church contain numerous mature trees which contribute to the vegetated setting of the village. Ornamental garden planting, some wide verges and private garden trees increase the general impression of green space, although there are few other formal areas in the public realm in the settlement.



View across the site of the motte and bailey castle in the centre of the village, which is now an important green space.

Gateway features

The approach from Stoney Stanton in the north is dominated by Stoney Cove National Diving Centre. This flooded disused quarry forms a striking feature between the two settlements, although views are only glimpsed from the road. A small stream between Stoney Stanton and Sapcote is followed by linear vegetation which also forms a gateway feature.

The approach from the south along Sharnford Road is characterised by a rural lane with mature hedgerows and trees and occasional glimpses of the church spire.

The eastern approach is characterised by views of residential development. The western gateway is also residential, although is softer as it is slightly more vegetated with a gentler transition from rural to urban.



The southern entrance from Sharnford Road retains the character of a rural lane

Capacity for change along the settlement edge

Sapcote has already extended considerably to the north, narrowing the gap between the village and Stoney Stanton. Any further development in this direction would lead to the loss of distinct settlement boundaries, meaning there is little capacity for additional development on the northern fringes.

The north eastern fringe of the settlement is characterised by new development to the east of Grace Road. This creates a relatively hard urban edge, although this should become better integrated with the landscape as new planting on the boundaries matures.

This southern edge of the village contains the historic core and any development in this area would need to reflect the historic nature and style of existing development. At present there is very little development beyond Park Road/Basset Lane and developing to the south would be uncharacteristic. It is a well vegetated edge with long views over the surrounding landscape from public areas such as the church and school. It is a sensitive edge with little capacity for development.

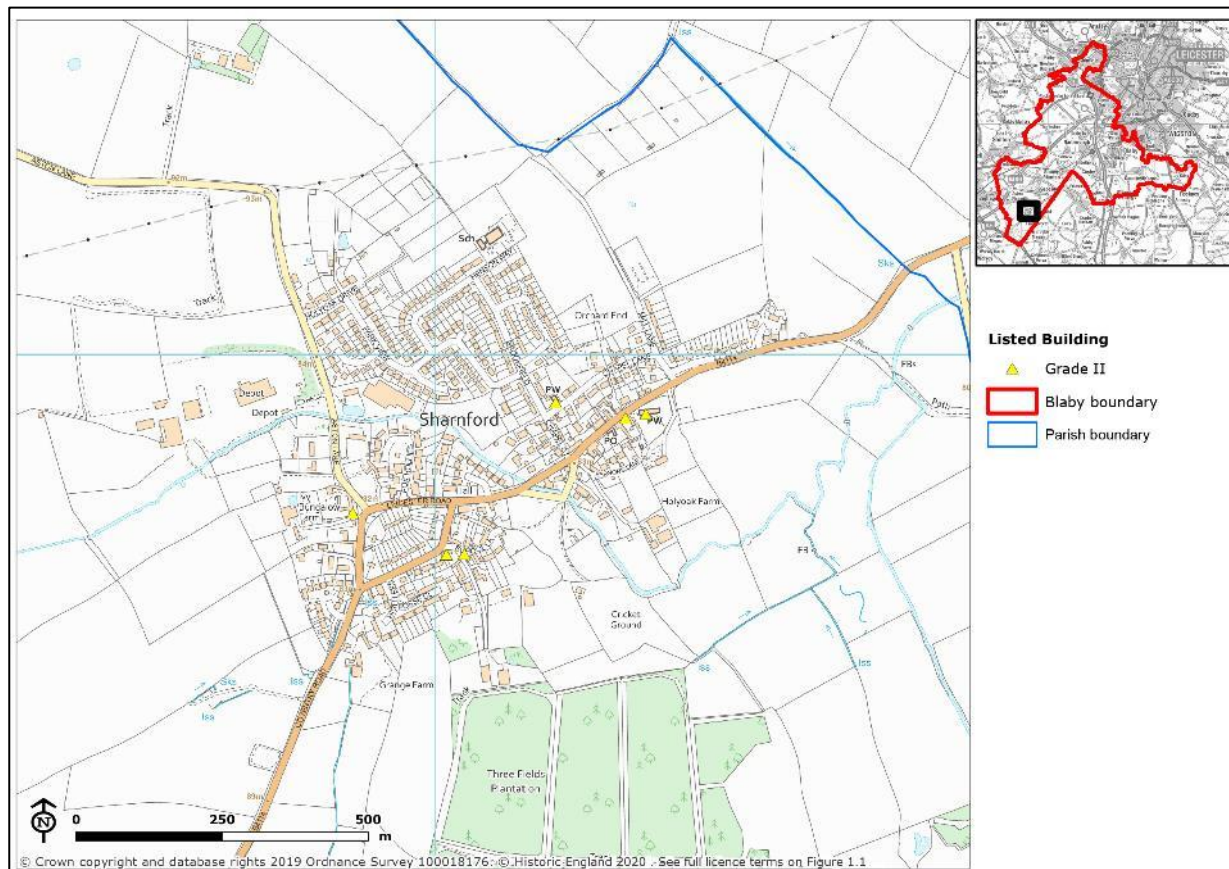
The western fringe is mostly post-war development with now well-established vegetation meaning the edge is well integrated into the landscape. New development at The Limes on the western edge of the village is well-screened as mature boundary vegetation surrounding the site has been retained, however further development along the B4669 would be at odds with the existing circular form of the village.

This north western urban edge is important in defining separation between Sapcote and Stoney Stanton consequently there is very little capacity for any development in this area.

Recommendations

- Protect open land between the two villages of Sapcote and Stoney Stanton to safeguard the distinct boundaries of each settlement.
- Creation of new community woodland between the two settlements would help to secure long-term definition to the village edges, also restricting views directly in and out of each to reinforce the separation of village edges.
- Ensure that new development is carefully designed to reflect the intrinsic character and traditional distinctive building style of the village. Development should incorporate features such as narrow street pattern, buildings fronting onto the street and varied mix of building styles, predominantly using red brick.
- Establish gateway features to reinforce the sense of separation from Stoney Stanton to the north and improve the gateway features on other approaches to the settlement. This could include more trees along the roads to create green gateways.
- Install new bespoke signage at the village gateways to improve their distinctiveness.
- Protect Sapcote Castle (Scheduled Monument) and the area of greenspace surrounding it to preserve and promote the settlement's heritage through appropriate interpretation. The existing interpretive signage for Sapcote Castle should be re-located in a more prominent location which is easily visible from the footpath.
- Establish new planting to screen the visual impacts of the proposal for the Hinckley Rail Freight interchange and associated infrastructure (if approved). This should include planting along the motorway corridor.

Sharnford



Representative photographs



Location and context

The village is situated within the south western tip of the district within a narrow valley which slopes down to the Soar Brook at its centre. The name is derived from the Anglo Saxon 'Scarn', which means division. Until the construction of a foot and horse bridge the two halves of the village were divided by a ford.

The modern village is roughly circular in shape and modern expansion has mostly occurred to the north of the Soar Brook. This historic core is located in the south eastern part of the village. Most buildings are constructed of brick (which may be painted or rendered) or local granite. The style of modern parts of the village varies depending on their age. The B4114 runs through the village and is heavily trafficked. The village has a strong association with the surrounding countryside.

Key settlement characteristics

- The village is focused around the busy junction of B4114 and Aston Lane, with a large central road island containing houses. The village centre is located further to the east on Leicester Road, near the Sharnford Arms.
- The historic church is located in the highest part of the village.
- The Soar Brook bisects the village and is defined by linear woods and vegetation.
- Open spaces within the village are concentrated along the Soar Brook.
- Low rise buildings and cottages have a dispersed built form.
- Traditional building materials found within historic centre include red brick and local granite.
- Weeping willows lining Aston Lane form distinct gateway features.

Description

Built form and settlement pattern

Built form is slightly dispersed although roughly circular and centred on the Soar Brook and the main road network. The historic core of the village is located on higher ground to the northeast where important community buildings such as St Helen's Church, the Methodist chapel and public house are situated. The village has experienced modern extension to the north, consisting predominantly of post-war housing in a geometric layout. There has also been recent housing development to the south-west of the village.

To the south of the Soar Brook, the village is focussed around the junction of two roads (Coventry Road and Aston Lane/Leicester Road) and contains several older cottages and farmhouses.

Older buildings which are located to the north and south of the Soar Brook give the impression of two small historic centres, one around the two churches and the other at the junction between the B4114 and Aston Lane.

The roofline of the village is generally set within significant mature vegetation and is relatively indistinct in the landscape. The village contains predominantly small-scale, low-rise buildings which are rarely more than two storeys. Only significant buildings such as the church, chapel and large farmhouses are of greater height.

Views within the village are generally only over short distances, enclosed by landform and vegetation. Sharnford is well-screened within in the local landscape. St Helen's Church, which is on higher ground towards the edge of the village, is well-screened by mature trees and shrubs.



Architectural style

Buildings are a mixture of ages and architectural styles. They include cottages, farms, detached and semi-detached houses, bungalows and country houses.

Within the historic core of the village, properties tend to front straight onto the road. Small front gardens are present, bounded by brick and stone boundary walls often also wrapping around the side of properties. In other areas the boundaries are made up of a variety of hedgerows, fences and brick walls. Stone walling encloses St Helen's Church. Woodland forms the boundary of the cemetery and rectory and defines the edge of the village in this area.

Occasional timber-framed buildings create focal points within the street-scene. The use of local stone is prevalent in focal buildings such as St Helen's Church and in stone walling throughout the village. Building materials consist of a mixture of local granite, red brick, painted render and painted brick.

The style of the more modern parts of the village vary depending on their age. Some have incorporated traditional elements such as granite and brick detailing or the built form which is closely associated with the street. An example of this is the recent development at Sharnford Mews.

The village is subjected to heavy traffic which is concentrated on the B4114 through-route in both directions and along Aston Lane. Vehicles dominate the street scene giving a busy and noisy impression of the village. Away from this busy road, village lanes are quiet, of small and intimate scale.



New development at Sharnford Mews replicates some traditional design elements

Public Realm and green space

Sharnford is closely associated with the Soar Brook. The brook runs approximately northwest to southeast through the village and is associated with riparian vegetation. The brook corridor is well vegetated and creates visual separation between adjoining parts of the village. The B4114 passes over a bridge at the centre of the village and the watercourse runs inconspicuously beneath road level.

The Park is located off Park View and contains play facilities, a youth club and open space. The central location adjacent to the brook corridor creates a linear green space through the village. Poor's Meadow playing field is located adjacent to the B4114. Other areas of green space in the village include the allotments at Parson's Lane and a memorial garden off the B4114.

Footpaths link to Fosse Meadows Nature Reserve, located to the south of the village. This contains woodlands, meadows and wetland habitats and is an important recreation destination.



The memorial garden with sun clock and village is located off Leicester Road

Gateway features

On entering the village from a northerly direction along Aston Lane, several mature weeping willow trees are located on either side of the road near to the Soar Brook. These are large trees with a significant presence along the narrow village lane. The branches frame the views of this entrance to the village.

Large village name signs and colourful flower filled planters are situated within the roadside pavement/verge close to the last houses at the eastern edge of the village. These face out to denote arrival into the village from a north-easterly direction along Leicester Road/Coventry Road.



Village sign and planters at the eastern entrance

Capacity for change along the settlement edge

Village fringes are generally well vegetated which provides effective screening and integration of the village into the surrounding landscape. The roof lines and geometric layout of modern housing to the western fringe of the settlement are visible on the approach from Aston Lane. In summer houses are reasonably well screened by vegetation but this edge of the village may be more exposed during winter months. There is potential for the incorporation of sensitively designed infill development.

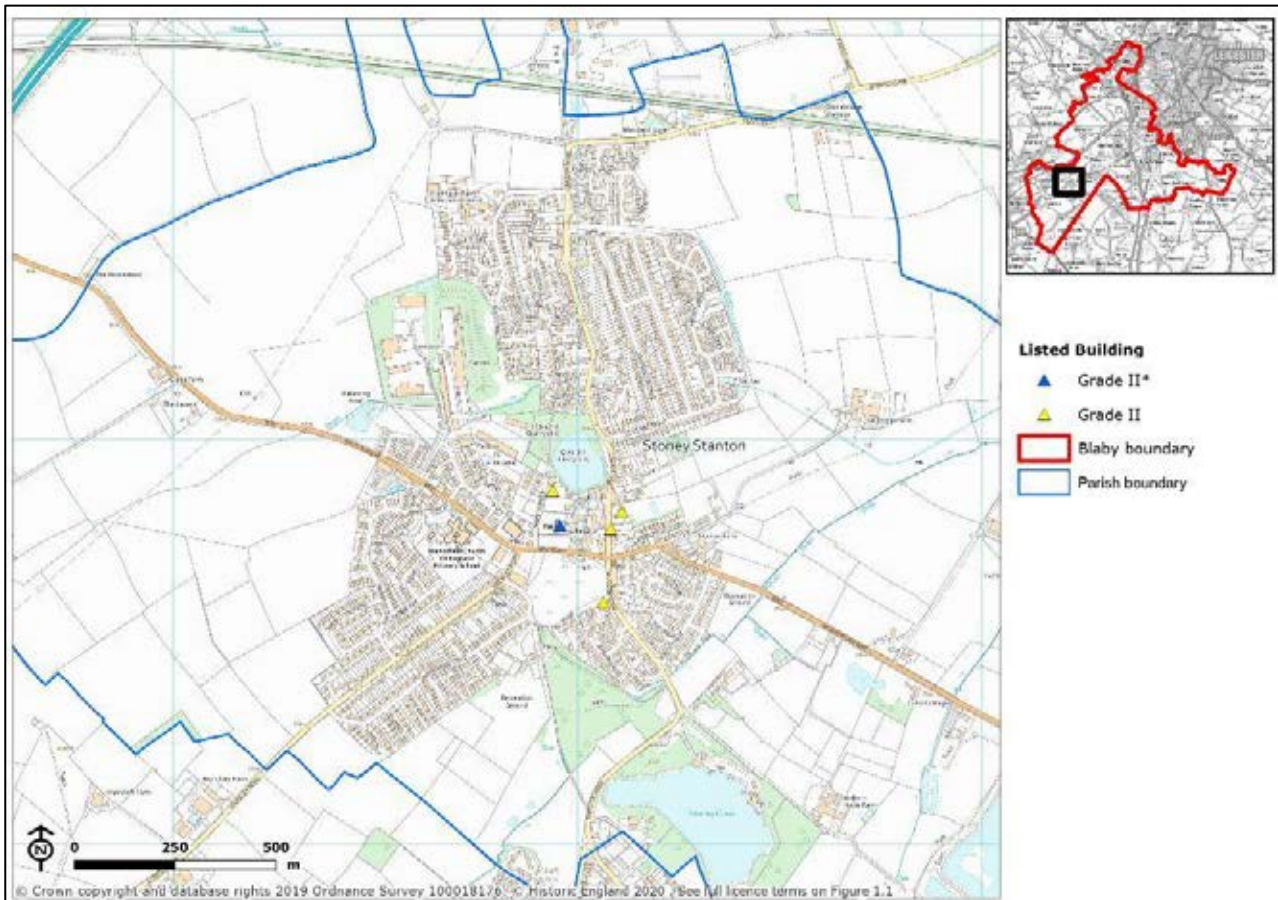
Most buildings in the village are low-rise and of small or domestic scale. Any tall or large structures would be in strong contrast to the existing built form. Village fringes have little or no capacity to accommodate large scale structures, particularly those on higher ground and where there is a lack of vegetation for screening.

There are opportunities for landscape improvements and capacity to accommodate positive changes to northern urban fringes of the village adjacent to modern housing development. Small scale development in this part of the village could be visually contained by careful siting and incorporation of additional new woodland and hedgerow planting.

Recommendations

- Conserve and enhance the Soar Brook together with associated public open spaces to ensure its retention as a key feature of the village.
- Protect and enhance the character of the Soar Brook. Enhance views along the brook from public vantage points to raise its profile as an attractive feature of the village.
- Protect the village from further traffic intrusion to preserve the perceptual character of the village. Slowing traffic through the centre would allow greater pedestrian priority, reduce noise and intimidation. Due to existing levels of traffic this village is sensitive to any development which could exert greater pressure on existing roads.
- Planting should be undertaken to improve the integration of the village fringes into the landscape. Future expansion/development on exposed prominent village fringes to the north east (behind the B4114 and Henson Way) should be restricted in order to prevent undesirable visual impacts.
- Protect and conserve the mature tree-lined entrance feature at Aston Lane through appropriate management and replacement planting of weeping willows.

Stoney Stanton



Representative photographs



The cross roads of Long Street and New Street in the village centre



The flooded Clint Quarry, which is located in the centre of the village

Location and context

Stoney Stanton is located within the south west of Blaby District to the north of Sapcote.

Stoney Stanton and Sapcote are close to each other and are physically separated by a narrow piece of land. This open land is flat and forms the floodplain to a small watercourse which flows through the area. It is characterised by a shallow valley landform, rough grassland and lush vegetation following the watercourse.

The village originally depended on farming. Expansion took place during the late nineteenth century, with rows of terraced housing built to accommodate the growing workforce for the surrounding quarries.

Key settlement characteristics

- Large village which is primarily residential and domestic buildings, with some small scale industrial and business sites.
- The historic centre contains older community buildings such as the former school, pubs and Church of St Michael.
- The Grade II* listed Church of St Michael is located at the centre of the village and constructed from local granite.
- Varied architectural styles and materials. Many buildings front directly onto the street.
- Post-war and modern housing development is laid out in geometric blocks towards the settlement fringes and lacks a relationship with the historic settlement core.
- A small number of shops are located within a modern site in the village centre.
- Busy through routes, particularly notable where roads converge at the village centre.
- Stoney Cove creates a strong gateway feature to the south.

Description

Built form and settlement pattern

Stoney Stanton has a defined centre and associated historic buildings, such as the Grade II* Church of St Michael, former school (now used as the village hall), rectory, manor house and public house. The village has a modern, purpose-built row of retail units adjacent to the parish church.

The centre of the village contains a small roundabout and wide road layout. The surrounding street pattern at the core of the village is compact and streets are narrow. The road layout at the centre is wide, busy and contains a high number of road markings and signs, resulting in a prominent feature which detracts from the rural character of this part of the village. Housing in the core of the village consists of small-scale cottages and houses, interspersed with occasional larger houses and focal buildings. Only buildings such as the church and chapel are higher than two storeys. Larger houses are enclosed within garden walls and mature vegetation and are often not visually prominent.

The village fringes have primarily expanded to the north and south-west, where estates of modern housing (1970s to current) have been built. These are laid out on a geometric road pattern and give clearly defined straight edges to south west, north and north east edges of the village. Recent development along Pickering Close and Brindley Close has introduced three storey dwellings to the village skyline. As buildings of this height are not characteristic of the village, this creates a prominent contrast with the surroundings.

The former quarries at Clint Hill and Carey Hill form distinctive green spaces in the village centre. Both have relatively well vegetated boundaries, particularly Clint Hill which is a large water-filled quarry. Vegetation around its boundary screens the water from the surrounding roads and the site is not publicly accessible. Framed views of Croft Hill and quarry are often seen between buildings from within the Broughton Road area of the village. There is intervisibility with the northern fringes of Sapcote from the public open space area to the south of Stoney Stanton.



Varied architectural styles along Church Street

Architectural style

The buildings within the village are of mixed style and age. Housing includes terraces, cottages, semi and detached dwellings. The older landmark buildings are located within the village core. Building frontages are often enclosed by natural stone walling and a typical style is random granite rubble construction. Many streets and lanes are of a small-scale and are enclosed due to buildings facing immediately onto the roadside. This characteristic of the village core is not reflected within modern housing areas which are more

suburban in nature characterised by wider roads, footpaths, verges and buildings set back from the road with front gardens.

Post-war and more recent housing estates largely comprise semi-detached dwellings. Red brick is the most common building material within the village. Natural granite forms a key component of the building materials within the historic core area of the village. Roofs are generally dark in colour and are a mixture of materials including slate, concrete and clay tiles. New development has introduced red tiles to roofs and lighter yellow tones of brick, which are not characteristic of the village and create a notable contrast.

There is a sharp contrast in building style and between the character of the parish church area, constructed from natural stone in a traditional style and the modern row of shops adjacent to the north-east, which is a low-rise development with flat roof, painted cladding, railings and light-coloured bricks.

Although the village is primarily residential, it contains pockets of industrial and commercial buildings. The largest area is Foxbank Industrial Estate on the north eastern fringe of the settlement, although this is well screened by mature vegetation along boundaries.



The old school building, constructed of granite

Public Realm and green space

Stoney Stanton Memorial Playing Fields are located on the southern fringes of the village and comprise a large area of open space with an arboretum, conservation area, play facilities and an adult outdoor gym.

There is a seating/commemorative area situated at the centre of the village overlooking the central roundabout and road junction. The benches feature designs commemorating the World Wars. The former quarries of Clint Hill and Carey Hill form important landscape areas within the village, although Clint Hill is not publicly accessible, and access is restricted to the edges of Carey Hill.



Playing fields to the south of the village

Gateway features

On entering the village from the south-west along Hinckley Road, initially the road is characterised by modern semi-detached houses. Closer to the village core, a row of stone-built terrace houses is a notable feature. The houses are constructed from the local stone which tends to be a more prominent building material within the historic core of the village.

The former quarry at Stoney Cove creates a key landmark feature on approaching the village from the south via Sapcote Road. Views of the lagoon and vertical rock face can be seen from the roadside.

The parish church of St Michael dates from the late 14th century and forms a key landmark of the historic village centre as it has a tall spire and is set at a higher level than the adjacent road. It is visually prominent from the surrounding area. Its prominence is increased by the openness of a wide grass verge to the roadside which gives clear views of the spire and side elevation of the church. The extent of open space in the centre of the village also contributes to the visual prominence of the church.

The gateway into the village from the north along Huncote Road is characterised by views of the village across fields, before the road bends to enter the village. The western gateway along Station Road (B581) is characterised by views of Foxbank Industrial Estate and a mix of old and new housing development. The eastern gateway along Broughton Road is characterised by a relatively hard urban edge.



Commemorative benches in the village centre, with the church visible in the background

Capacity for change along the urban edge

Recent development has tended to have its own characteristics and building style rather than incorporating features of the existing village core such as the tight urban form. This has resulted in a sense of detachment from the village centre and a lack of distinctiveness in these areas. Any future development should seek to maintain the character of a rural village and unify areas by the incorporation of some of these characteristics.

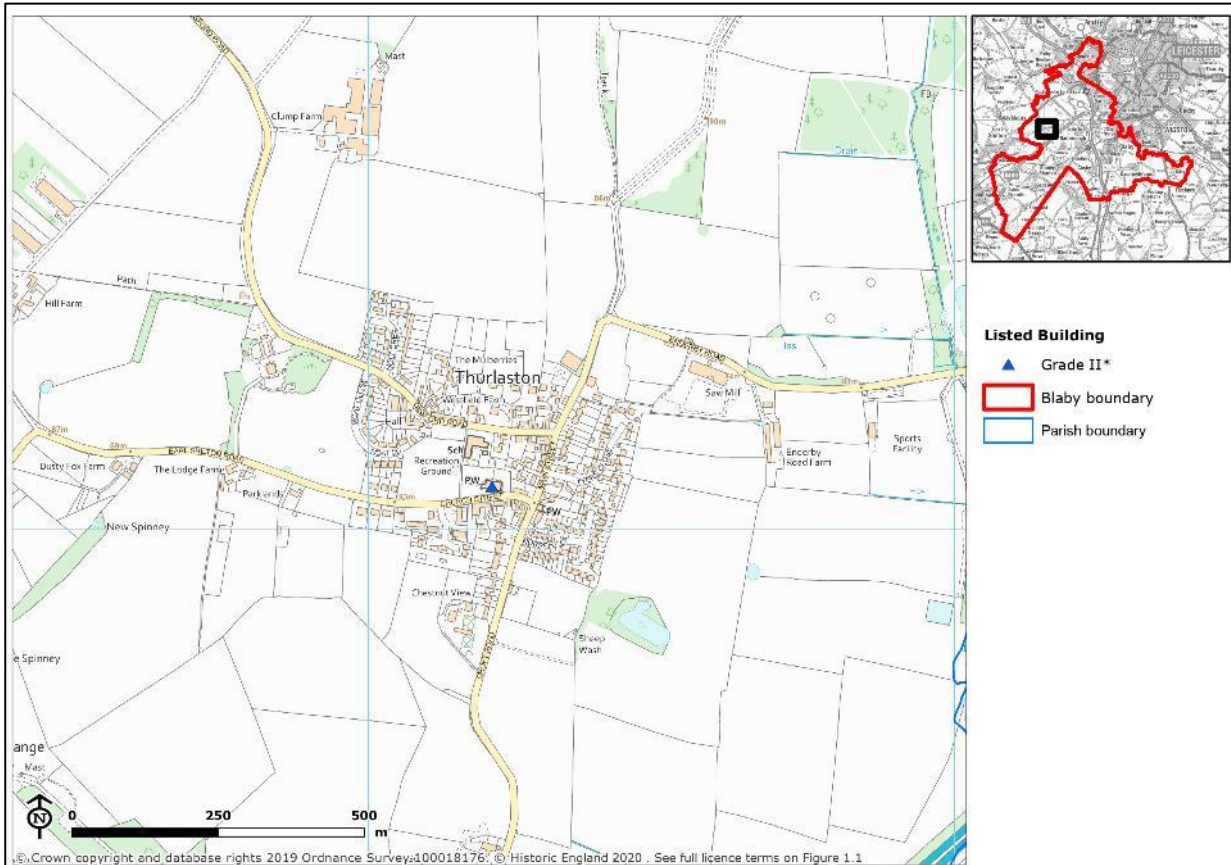
The area of separation between the southern fringes of the village and Sapcote has no capacity to accommodate expansion of the village. This area is very important to the sense of separation between the individual villages and is also an important recreational resource.

The settlement fringes of Stoney Stanton have already been extended to the north and south west giving rise to a sprawling nature to the village in these directions with little reference or connection to the historic centre of the village.

Recommendations

- Protect the open land between the Stoney Stanton and Sapcote to safeguard the distinct boundaries and identity of each settlement. Creation of new community woodland towards the urban edges in this area between would help to secure long-term definition, also restricting views directly in and out of either to further safeguard the separation between villages.
- Establish gateway features to reinforce the sense of separation from Sapcote to the south and improve the gateway features on other approaches to the settlement. This could include more trees along the roads to create green gateways.
- Establish new woodland planting along hard urban edges to integrate the village into the landscape and soften the edges (particularly new development in the north east and along the B581).
- Preserve the tight urban form within the historic core of the village through ensuring development continues the close association of buildings to the road.
- Protect the prominence of the church spire within the skyline by limiting the height of any new development.
- Respect the existing settlement form and vernacular, including the use of red brick, the varied orientation along roads and buildings fronting onto the street.
- Explore opportunities to open the disused quarries to provide additional areas of green space within the village. The disused quarries also provide opportunities to be managed for their wildlife value.
- Establish new planting to screen the visual impacts of the proposal for Hinckley Rail Freight interchange and associated infrastructure (if approved). This should include planting along the motorway corridor.
- Seek to provide improved off-street parking in relation to employment/business uses as well as clear signage to employment, business and retail facilities.

Thurlaston



Representative photographs



Location and context

Thurlaston is located towards the western edge of the district, west of Enderby and north west of Croft and Huncote. It is a small and compact rural village centred around the village church and the junction of three roads. Expansion of the village has taken place at various times around all fringes.

The village has past associations with the textile industry. Prior to the Second World War it contained a small factory which manufactured hosiery. Today the village comprises primarily a residential settlement with several amenities including two public houses, a church, and a plant nursery.

Key settlement characteristics

- Small, clustered rural village focused around the church and the junction of three roads.
- Residential settlement with limited local facilities.
- Mixture of small-scale buildings and streets in the historic core.
- Modern development is located in the north and east of the village and varies in style depending on its age.
- Primary building materials are red brick with some render and granite.
- Converted farm buildings present throughout the settlement, contributing to the rural character of the village.
- Courtyards off main streets to access properties.
- The village is located on an area of gently rising landform with the church forming a prominent feature of the skyline.

Description

Built form and settlement pattern

The core of the village has developed around a road junction created by three incoming roads; Croft Road/Enderby Road north to south, Desford Road from the north-west and Earl Shilton Road from the south-west. Several of the village's oldest buildings are located in this part of the village, The Poachers Brasserie restaurant (c1670) and the church dating from the 13th century indicate that this has been a historic meeting place and important community focus. A second public house, The Elephant and Castle, and Thurlaston Chapel are also located at the cross roads of Earl Shilton Road and Croft Road reinforcing this as the central focus of the village.



Terraced houses along Desford Road front directly onto the street

Buildings throughout the village are of a domestic scale, generally low-rise and rarely above two storeys. The church tower is visible from various locations in and around the village however it is most prominent when viewed from the south above the surrounding lower level rooflines. Generally, the roofline of Thurlaston is not visually prominent within the surrounding landscape.

Many lanes within the historic core of the village remain of small scale with narrow footpaths with buildings immediately abutting the roadside paths.

The settlement is well screened from the surrounding areas by vegetation and rolling landform. Rising ground towards The Holt provides visual containment to the edge of the village from the surrounding area. Existing well-spaced single storey buildings with soft landscaping and field boundary vegetation blend the village fringe well into the landscape. North and north eastern fringes of the village are largely enclosed by higher ground and field boundary vegetation.

Architectural style

A mixture of architectural styles is present throughout the village including cottages and converted farm and agricultural buildings. Materials include red/brown brick, granite and occasionally black and white timber facades.

All Saints Church at the village core is of Norman origin. It is constructed from granite rubble, has a modest tower and is accessed via a cobbled entrance with a lych gate off Earl Shilton Road. A granite rubble wall encloses the churchyard.

Most domestic buildings are constructed from red brick, slate and dark coloured roof tiles. A mixture of coloured painted render is present within a row of terraces along Desford Road. Other buildings include painted brick work and red brick as the main building material. The presence of local granite stone is prevalent within the buildings at historic village centre.

The Holt, a former rector's house, was built in 1845. It is a strong feature of the northern approach to village characterised by its brick walls, outbuildings and adjoining cottages.

A modern development in the centre of the village at Hollies Close reflects and integrates into the village pattern. Although new buildings are larger than some of the surrounding cottages, they face onto Main Street with a courtyard entrance to access properties behind, while boundaries are enclosed by brick walls. All are typical features of properties within the village. The use of red shades of brick and darker reds and greys of roof tiles is complementary to the existing buildings.



Timber-framed and brick houses along Church Street

Public Realm and green space

A central green is located at the village core to the rear of the churchyard. It contains an open, well-maintained field and a play area, and it provides a valuable green setting and important focal point at the predominantly built up centre of the village. The open space also provides physical separation and a pleasant outlook between buildings along Desford Road and Earl Shilton Road. The site is bounded by a public footpath along its length and provides an important pedestrian link between the two roads.

Churchyard walls are low and so from the footpath open views are possible into the churchyard over the recreation ground. This gives an open feel to this part of the village.

Moat Close overlooks an area of ridge and furrow to the west. Footpaths and bridleways provide access to the surrounding countryside. This includes access to Normanton Park to the south-west.



The central village green which is overlooked by the church

Gateway features

Entrances to the village are marked by bespoke signage.

The Holt is a large country house situated at the edge of the village to the west on Desford Road. It is enclosed by tall red brick walls which are strong landscape features in contrast with the surrounding more natural rural landscape. This property creates a sense of arrival to the village at a prominent turn in the road when approaching from this direction.

The village church tower is visible above surrounding roofs when approaching the village from the south along Croft Road and forms a key focal and orientation point in the surrounding landscape.

At the eastern entrance to the village the old sawmill site is a distinct gateway feature. The site was falling into disrepair and becoming a detracting feature. However, it is now occupied by a flooring company which should prevent the dereliction of the building.



Entrances to the village are marked by bespoke signage

Capacity for change along the settlement edge

Thurlaston is a rural village, surrounded by rolling farmland. The undeveloped surroundings of the landscape make a strong contribution to the setting of the existing village and its strong rural character which mean that the potential to accommodate changes is limited. The village fringes are only capable of effectively accommodating well designed, small changes within carefully chosen locations.

The settlement pattern is vulnerable to change and the characteristic small, tightly formed village around the hub of the church and pubs could be adversely affected by future expansion. The village core has little or no capacity to accommodate future change or development without altering its existing compact form and attractive character.

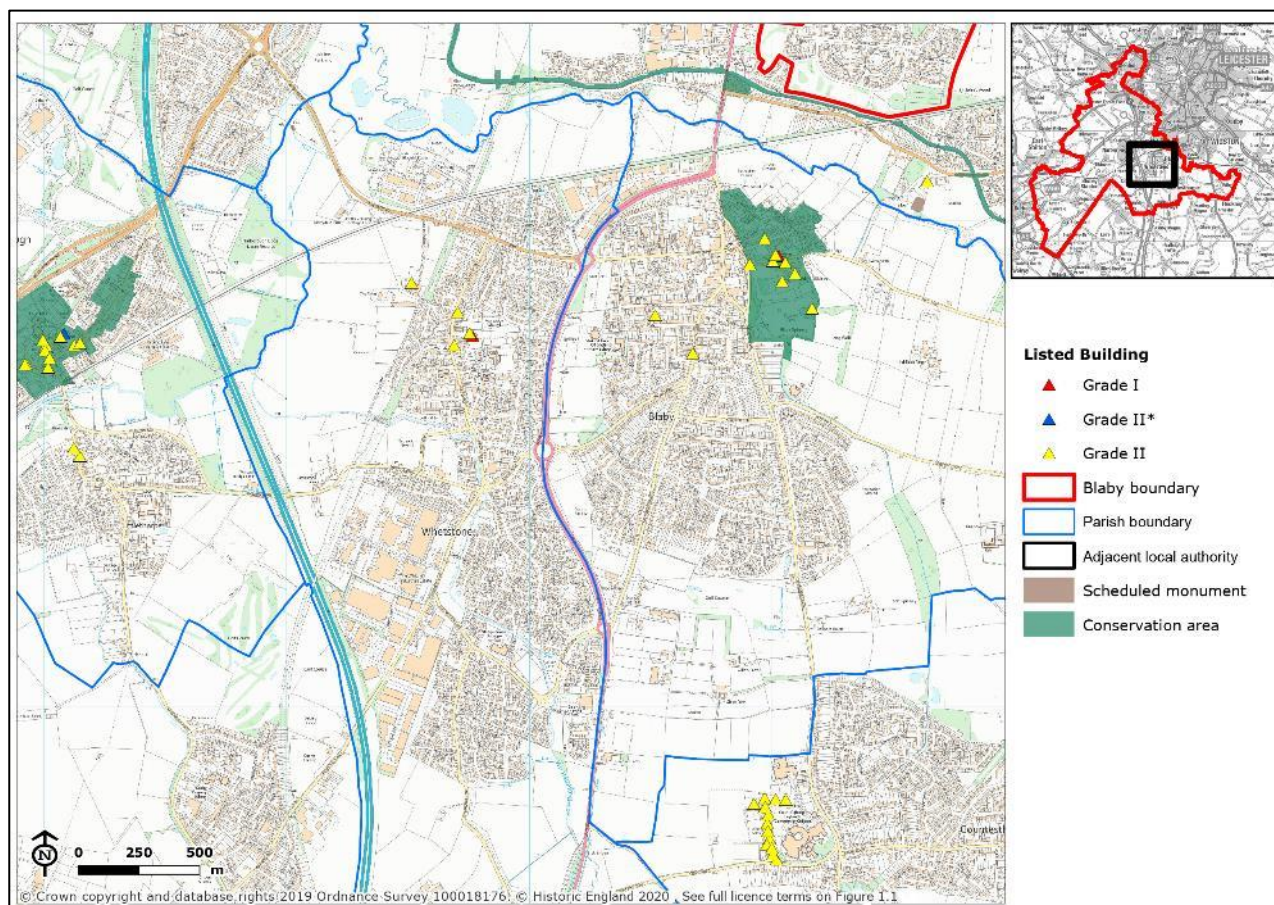
Small scale changes such as infill development may be possible to incorporate in other areas of the village provided that these are well designed, carefully sited, reflect the characteristics of the village setting and do not impinge on the key components of the wider landscape character area.

The southern fringe is open in character and visually prominent. Residential properties are visible along this settlement boundary, as is the church which is located on slightly higher ground and a key feature of the skyline. Expansion of the village boundaries in this location would need to reflect the tight village form, retain the church as a main focal point and ensure that the village does not become more visually prominent within the wider landscape.

Recommendations

- Protect and conserve the character of the historic core of the village, which is centred upon the Grade II listed All Saints Church. The narrow lanes, irregular style of buildings and the concentration of older buildings all contribute to the character of the village core.
- Protect the rural character and compact form of the village. Further expansion of the village away from its historic core would alter its small scale intimate character.
- Protect and conserve the central green public open space. The site is easily accessible from the surroundings and its openness is a strong characteristic which should be retained.
- Maintain the relationship of the village with the surrounding agricultural landscape which contributes to the rural identity of the settlement.
- Maintain the valued recreational facilities at the centre of the village.

Whetstone



Representative photographs



Location and context

Located immediately to the west of Blaby, Whetstone is a large village which has expanded southwards during the 20th and 21st centuries. The original historic linear core of the village is situated around High Street, Victoria Road and the Grade I listed Church of St Peter. The extent of the settlement is now largely confined by the surrounding infrastructure routes, with the disused Great Central Railway along the northwest, the railway to the north, the A426 to the east and M1 to the southwest.

Despite originally being an agricultural village, the village has been strongly influenced by industrial development and the 18th century knitting industry. Whetstone produced the first jet aeroengine and a strong industrial presence is still evident in the south and some areas in the north of the settlement, where there are numerous industrial buildings. The expansion of the village began primarily in the 1960s and continues to the present day. The settlement is now a large suburban commuter village.

Key settlement characteristics

- A large industrial area present on the western fringe is evidence of the village's long association with industry.
- The southern part of the village is strongly associated with Whetstone Brook which forms a green corridor through the village.
- Fragmented and dispersed centre with retail scattered along the length of High Street.
- Scattered area of small terraced properties interspaced with larger detached and semi-detached properties in the historic core.
- Predominantly a commuter settlement with larger detached and semi-detached properties in the 20th and 21st century suburban parts of the settlement.
- Whetstone is contained by the M1, A426, operational and disused railway which are often well-wooded linear features.
- Slight variation in skyline created by landmark buildings and the spire of the Grade I listed Church of St Peter.
- A lack of gateway features on access roads.

Description

Built form and settlement pattern

The original settlement pattern is partially visible along Victoria Road and High Street; however newer infill development and associated car parking reduce the continuous building frontage and give the centre a slightly fragmented appearance, altering its traditional character. There is dispersed retail along the high street mostly made up of local businesses. There are large business parks in the southwest of the village and the industrial buildings are visually prominent.

Settlement pattern in the north of Whetstone is uniform and regular, while newer developments in the south have a more sinuous character with cul-de-sacs, contrasting with the built form of the historic core. Closer to the historic core, small terraces are common and are interspersed with larger detached and semi-detached properties.

Roads are often wide, with houses set behind small front gardens. In more modern development the buildings are set further back from the road and often have driveways.

Although located centrally within the older part of the village, the church is tucked away. However, its elevated position means its spire is visible in skylines.

Buildings are normally two-storeys, although there are several 21st century three-storey town houses and flats in the centre, as well as larger buildings such as the Old Baptist Chapel, Whetstone Baptist Chapel and the spire of the Church of St Peter which provide localised variation on skylines.



The Grade I listed Church of St Peter from the west, showing its elevated location and tall spire.



View north along the high street, showing rendered and brick terraced properties, and small walled gardens.

Architectural style

There is no overriding common architectural style to the buildings within Whetstone. Buildings are a mixture of red brick and brick buildings painted or rendered in white or cream. Roofs are normally clay tile in both red and dark brown. A smaller proportion of roofs are slate or grey coloured tiles. In the centre, buildings often front onto the street, with large windows. Sometimes these properties are set in small front gardens bound by low brick walls or fences. Elsewhere, there is variety in boundary features with fences, hedges, brick walls and open grassy gardens all being present.

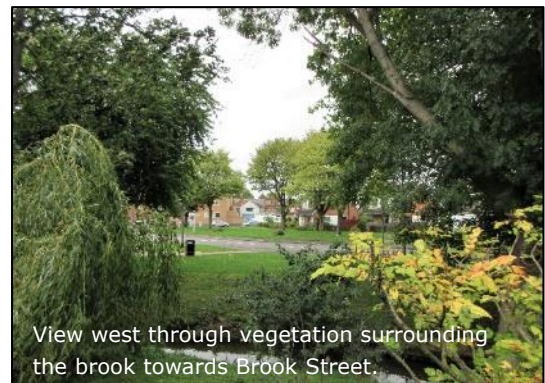
Feature buildings where present are often set back from the road with car parking or hard standing in front of them.

Public Realm and green space

Whetstone Brook provides a strong green corridor as it runs through the settlement, particularly in the south. Footpaths follow the course of the brook where it enters the village in the west, connecting the settlement to the surrounding countryside. In places, the brook has an engineered appearance with limited opportunities for people to interact with the water's edge. Mature trees and a green verge adjacent to the brook provide a strong vegetated character along Brook Street. A small square is situated at the southern end of the high street, containing benches, an ornate sign and ornate flower beds.

Newer housing developments often incorporate grassy areas and verges with mature trees which break up the suburban character and create a green setting.

The settlement contains three public parks; Oliver Park in the southeast, Trinity Park directly east of St Peter's Church and Warwick Road Park, which contains play equipment and sports pitches. There is also a community orchard and meadow located to the west of the village which was established in 2016.



View west through vegetation surrounding the brook towards Brook Street.

Gateway features

The settlement lacks distinct gateway features and inconspicuous road signage is generally the only feature. The entrances to the village from roundabouts off the A426 are residential in character and often weakly defined.

The southwestern entrance from Cambridge Road crosses under the motorway bridge from Cosby and passes through the industrial estate and ribbon development along this road also means there is a limited sense of separation from Cosby to the southwest.

New access roads in the south such as Springwell Lane provide wide entrances to the settlement and help reduce congestion.

Entrance features from the B582 in the northwest include the railway bridge, although this entrance is also indistinct.

The wooded route of the dismantled railway provides a comparatively strong entrance feature from the west, although this could be better marked by signage.



View south along Cambridge Road showing large scale warehouses.

Capacity for change along the settlement edge

The village lacks a definite character and there has been past infill development which has related poorly to older development within the village centre. Modern development to the south is larger-scale than that in the historic village core, relating little to its surroundings and making little contribution to local distinctiveness in the village.

Opportunities to expand Whetstone are limited due to the transport infrastructure constraining its boundaries. Development should remain within the limits of these often well vegetated boundary features to ensure the settlement continues to be effectively screened from the surrounding countryside.

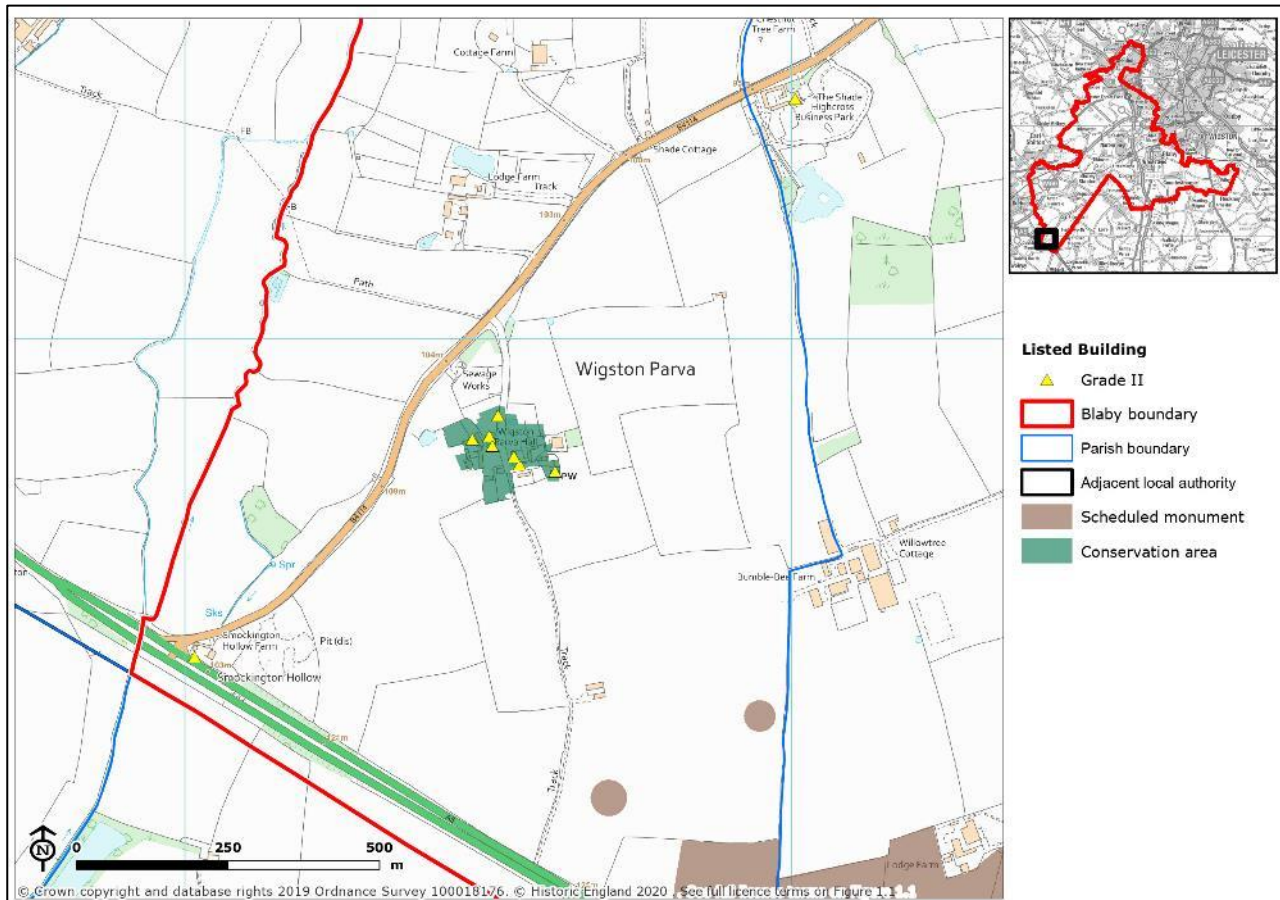
Due to the proximity of the surrounding settlements of Blaby, Cosby and Littlethorpe, any development on the periphery is at risk of causing coalescence of these settlements, removing their individual identities.

The southern and eastern settlement edge is prominent on the local countryside and would benefit from the maturing and enhancement of existing hedgerow boundaries as well as further woodland or hedgerow planting.

Recommendations

- Protect the historic core including its listed buildings and their settings.
- Ensure that development does not cause a reduction in sense of separation or result in coalescence with nearby settlements.
- Enhance the gateway features in all directions, making use of boundaries such as bridges associated with surrounding infrastructure. Signage would also help create a sense of arrival to provide distinction from surrounding settlements.
- Ensure that future development provide a sense of place to the village, using the styles present in some of the feature buildings in the centre as design references.
- Enhance the industrial southwest of Whetstone to improve its integration with the residential areas. This could be achieved native planting along the Cambridge Road, which may reduce the visual impact of commercial and industrial buildings.
- Enhance the Whetstone Brook corridor and associated open space to establish it as a key feature of the village. This should include improving access along the watercourse and measures to increase its aesthetic and wildlife value.
- Establish new hedgerows or woodlands and allowing existing hedgerows to mature along the southern and eastern boundaries, to better screen the existing settlement, and echo enclosure from other well-wooded surrounding infrastructure routes.
- Explore extending existing footpaths that make use of the dis-used railway line to create long distance public rights of way that improve connectivity of Whetstone with surrounding settlements and the wider countryside.

Wigston Parva



Representative photographs



Location and context

This is a small hamlet on the south western outskirts of the district, close to the district boundary. It lies within the Aston Flamville Wooded Farmland Landscape Character Area.

Wigston Parva has a strong rural character despite its proximity to the A5. It is set on relatively flat ground which rises up to the south and west, nestling the hamlet in the wider landscape.

Key settlement characteristics

- Very small hamlet set within a mature wooded setting. The surrounding landscape is characterised by small fields although some have been enlarged.
- Collection of buildings with varied styles and vernacular which are set around a central green.
- Barns, stables and courtyards are a frequent presence throughout the village and emphasise the agricultural character of the settlement.
- The village is nestled into the landform and screened by trees, appearing indistinct in views from the wider landscape.
- The small Church of St Mary (Grade II) is constructed of granite and forms a distinct feature on the edge of the village.

Description

Built form and settlement pattern

Most of the houses within the hamlet are set around a central green. There are selective views between properties into the wider countryside; however, due to the rising topography these views are only over a short distance and always have woodland as a component of the view.

The hamlet feels hidden and private in character due to its small size and focus set around the small green within the centre.

Many of the buildings within the village are Grade II listed.



View from the south-east, showing the settlement nestled into the landscape

Architectural style

The properties are all detached and of individual style. Some are constructed of red brick and others are finished with pale coloured render. Most of the roofs are a mix of dull red tiles and grey slate and are steeply pitched. The only building to be constructed from granite is the church which is relatively modest in appearance and reflects the small size and nature of this settlement. Some of the brick work has simple detailing which provides variation.

Some properties have small paved courtyards which are visible through gated archways.

Property boundaries vary between open well-managed front gardens to small brick walls and informal driveways. The has a strong connection to its rural surroundings with a high proportion of barns and stables present, some of which have been converted into private residences.

The church is set on slightly higher ground than the properties and provides a slight vista from the eastern corner of the green.



Large red brick house with a gated courtyard

Public Realm and green space

Wigston Parva is centred around a green, which provides informal open space. Three mature trees are located on the western edge of the green, and a historic water pump is located on the northern side of the green. The water pump is a Grade II listed structure.

Two footpaths and a bridleway link Wigston Parva to the surrounding countryside.



The central village green, with mature trees

Gateway features

The hamlet is accessed by one small lane which then splits around a central green to individual properties' drives. These access roads have the appearance of long drives to private residences rather than roads. This entrance into the hamlet is enclosed and wooded in character which mostly screens the buildings until entering the open central green. From the B4114 the hamlet is totally screened by mature vegetation and has the appearance of a small block of woodland with ornamental species within it. Wigston Parva is accessible from three public rights of way.



The enclosed, narrow entrance to the hamlet from the B4114

Capacity for change along the settlement edge

This is very small settlement focused around a central green which makes it distinctive in the district. Although there has been past infill of individual dwellings within the hamlet, this has been done in a sensitive manner which has reinforced the intimate character of the settlement.

Wigston Parva is not prominent in the wider landscape due to the presence of mature woodland along most of its boundaries and the rising landform to the south and west. The western boundary is the most open boundary; the church is visible in the local landscape due to its location on higher ground and the limited surrounding vegetation. The remainder of the built form is broken up by mature trees and woodland within private gardens. The church has no tower or spire and therefore does not punctuate the wooded roofline of the hamlet.

This whole of the settlement is highly sensitive to change, particularly any infill or redevelopment that would extend the hamlet beyond its focus on the central green and dilute its intimate and private character. In addition, the woodland along the fringes is important in assimilating the hamlet into the landscape.

Recommendations

- Retain the focus of the village on the central green.
- Conserve and enhance the woodland vegetation around the periphery of the hamlet, which integrates the settlement into the landscape.
- Promote the use of red and grey tiles in any redevelopment of buildings within the hamlet.
- Preserve the views out to the wider countryside from the hamlet.
- Protect and, where opportunities arise, restore the hamlet's landscape setting.

Appendix 1

Data and literature list

GIS information

Data used within the report, including data collated in the GIS database is shown in the Table below.

Dataset	Owner
General	
Ordnance Survey 1:25K	Ordnance Survey
Ordnance Survey 1:50K	Ordnance Survey
Vector map local	Ordnance Survey
Administrative boundaries	Ordnance Survey
Aerial photography	ESRI
Settlement boundaries	Blaby District Council
Access	
Country Parks	Natural England
Open access land	Natural England
National trails	Natural England
Railway stations/ lines	OS OML
Roads	OS OML
Cycling routes	Sustrans
Green space	Ordnance Survey
Landscape	
Landscape Character Areas	Blaby District Council
National Character Areas	Natural England
Dark skies	CPRE
Tranquillity	CPRE
Biodiversity and woodland	
Ancient woodland	Natural England
National Forest Inventory	Forestry Commission
Priority BAP Habitats	Natural England
Local Nature Reserves	Natural England
National Nature Reserves	Natural England
Site of Special Scientific Interest	Natural England
Ramsar	Natural England
Special Protection Area	Natural England
Special Area of Conservation	Natural England
Local Wildlife Site	Blaby District Council
Hydrology	
Water courses/lakes	OS OML
Flood Zone 3	Environment Agency
Flood Zone 2	Environment Agency
Heritage	
Listed Buildings	Historic England
Conservation Areas	Blaby District Council
Registered Battlefields	Historic England
Registered Parks and Gardens	Historic England
Scheduled Monuments	Historic England
Historic Landscape Character	Archaeology data service
Geology	
Fault Geology	British Geological Survey
Superficial Geology	British Geological Survey
Bedrock Geology	British Geological Survey

Key literature sources

Blaby District Council Landscape and Settlement Character Assessment. TEP on behalf of Blaby District Council, May 2008.

Blaby District Growth Plan. Blaby District Council, February 2019.

Blaby District Local Plan Core Strategy Development Plan Document, Blaby District Council, February 2013

Blaby District Local Plan Delivery Development Plan Document, Blaby District Council, February 2019.

Conservation Area Appraisals

Leicester and Leicestershire Landscape Sensitivity and Green Infrastructure Study. LUC on behalf of the Strategic Growth Plan team, October 2017.

Leicester and Leicestershire Strategic Growth Plan: Leicester & Leicestershire 2050: Our Vision For Growth, December 2018

Leicester, Leicestershire & Rutland Biodiversity Action Plan. Leicestershire and Rutland Environmental Records Centre, 2016

Leicester, Leicestershire & Rutland Landscape and Woodland Strategy. Leicestershire County Council, 2001, updated 2006

Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Historic Landscape Characterisation. Leicestershire County Council, 2009

National Character Area Profile 73: Charnwood. Natural England

National Character Area Profile 94: Leicestershire Vales. Natural England

Appendix 2

Glossary of terms

Term	Description
Aesthetic	Concerning the visual appeal of a feature or landscape
Agricultural Land Classification	The classification of agricultural land in England in Wales.
Alluvium	Loose soil or sediments, which have been eroded, reshaped by water in some form, and redeposited in a non-marine setting.
Amenity	The pleasantness or attractiveness of a place.
Ancient woodland	Woods that are believed to have been continuous woodland cover since at least 1600 AD.
AOD	Above Ordnance Datum (sea level).
Arable	Land used for growing crops.
Biodiversity	The measure of the variety of organisms present in different ecosystems.
Built Form	The characteristic nature of built development.
Characteristic	A distinctive element of the landscape that contributes to landscape character for instance a particular hedgerow pattern or sense of tranquillity.
Condition	A judgement on the intactness and condition of the elements of the landscape.
Coniferous woodland	Woodland comprised of coniferous trees often having needle like leaves. They are usually evergreen.
Copse	A small group of trees
Deciduous woodland	Woodland where the majority of tree lose their leaves at the end of the growing season
Drift	The name for all material of glacial origin found anywhere on land or at sea, including sediment and large rocks.
Enclosure	The placing in private hands of land to which there was previously common rights; the merging of strip fields to form a block surrounded by hedges.
Environmental impact assessment (EIA)	Environmental Impact Assessment is the process by which the anticipated effects on the environment of a proposed development or project are measured. If the likely effects are unacceptable, design measures or other relevant mitigation measures can be taken to reduce or avoid those effects
European Landscape Convention (ELC)	The European Landscape Convention promotes the protection, management and planning of European landscapes and organises European co-operation on landscape issues. It requires "landscape to be integrated into regional and town planning policies and in cultural, environmental, agricultural, social and economic policies, as well as any other policies with possible direct or indirect impacts on landscape". The ELC was signed by the UK government in February 2006, ratified in November 2006 and came into effect in March 2007.
Floodplain	The area that would naturally be affected by flooding if a river rises above its banks, or high tides and stormy seas cause flooding in coastal areas.
Geodiversity	The variety of rocks, minerals, fossils, landforms, sediments and soils in an area, together with natural processes, such as erosion and landslips that may still be active.
Geographic Information System (GIS)	A geographic information system is a system designed to capture, store, manipulate, analyse, manage, and present mapped, spatial or geographic data. It is used, for example, to combine different 'layers' of information to help define variations in landscape character, to map the boundaries of landscape character types and landscape character areas and to map patterns of intervisibility.
Grassland	Land used for grazing. Grassland can be improved (by management practices) semi-improved (modified by management practices and have a range of species less diverse than unimproved grasslands), or unimproved (not treated with fertiliser, herbicide or intensively grazed and consequently species diversity is high).
Green infrastructure	'Green infrastructure' is a term used to describe the network of natural spaces and corridors in a given area. Green infrastructure includes open spaces such as parks and gardens, allotments, woodlands, fields, hedges, lakes, ponds, playing fields, coastal habitats, as well as footpaths, cycleways or rivers. These provide areas for recreation and education, habitats for wildlife and

	environmental services such as flood defence or absorption of air pollution
Habitat	The natural home or environment of an animal, plant, or other organism.
Horsiculture	Development of farmland for horses and equestrianism
Hydrology	The science dealing with the occurrence, circulation, distribution, and properties of the waters of the earth and its atmosphere
Intact	Not changed or diminished
Intervisibility	The ability to see from one geographic point to another along unobstructed sight lines. GIS can be used to map patterns of theoretical intervisibility based on topography and sometimes including the screening effects of woodland, trees and buildings. The outputs are indicative and should be tested on the ground.
Land cover	The physical material at the surface of the earth.
Landmark	An object or feature of a landscape or town that is easily seen and recognized from a distance, especially one that enables someone to establish their location.
Landscape	'Landscape' is about the relationship between people and place. It provides the setting for people's day-to-day lives. The term does not mean just special or designated landscapes and it does not only apply to the countryside. It results from the way that different components of our environment - both natural (the influences of geology, soils, climate, flora and fauna) and cultural (the historical and current impact of land use, settlement, enclosure and other human interventions) - interact together and are perceived. People's perceptions turn land into the concept of landscape
Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA)	An assessment of the effects of a proposed development or some other type of change on the character of the landscape and on the way that people experience that landscape. LVIA is often undertaken as part of a wider Environmental Impact Assessment.
Landscape character	The distinct, recognisable and consistent pattern of elements that occurs consistently in a particular landscape and how these are perceived. It reflects particular combinations of geology, landform, soils, vegetation, land use and human settlement.
Landscape character area (LCA)	Landscape Character Areas are geographically unique areas where a combination of factors such as topography, vegetation pattern, land use and cultural associations combine to create an area with a distinct, recognisable character. They are the single, unique areas that are the discrete geographical area of a particular landscape type.
Landscape character assessment	Landscape character assessments identify and explain the unique combination of elements and features that make landscapes distinctive by mapping and describing character types and areas. They also show how the landscape is perceived, experienced and valued by people.
Landscape character types (LCT)	Landscape Types are a generic classification for landscape character and may occur anywhere the same combinations of physical and cultural landscape attributes are found. They are defined to represent distinct types of landscape that are relatively homogenous in character. They are generic in nature in that they may occur in different areas in different parts of the country, but share broadly similar combinations of geology, topography, drainage patterns, vegetation, historic land use and settlement pattern.
Landscape classification	Classification of the landscape into a series of generic landscape character types and / or geographically specific landscape character areas.
Landscape sensitivity	Landscape sensitivity is the relative extent to which the character and quality of an area (including its visual attributes) is likely to change.
National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)	The National Planning Policy Framework sets out government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied by local authorities in their development plans. It was last updated in July 2018.
Natural capital	Natural capital is the stock of natural resources, which includes geology, soils, air, water and all living organisms. Some natural capital assets provide people with goods and services, often called ecosystem services. These underpin our economy and society and make human life possible.
Naturalness	The quality or state of being natural.
National Character Area (NCA)	National Character Area – defined within the National Character Area Study, Natural England (2013) - NCAs divide England into 159 distinct natural areas. Each is defined by a unique combination of

	landscape, biodiversity, geodiversity, history, and cultural and economic activity.
Nucleated settlements	A settlement that is clustered around a centre, in comparison to a linear or dispersed settlement.
OS	Ordnance Survey.
Parliamentary fields/ enclosure	Fields formed by a legal process of enclosure (or inclosure), typically during the 18th and 19th centuries – by passing laws causing or forcing enclosure to produce fields for use by the owner (in place of common land for communal use).
Pastoral	Land used for keeping or grazing sheep or cattle.
Perceptual	The ability to interpret or become aware of something through the senses.
Remnant	A part or quantity left after the greater part has been used, removed, or destroyed.
Rural	Relating to or characteristic of the countryside.
Scheduled Monument	Nationally important <u>archaeological sites</u> or historic buildings, given protection against unauthorised change.
Sense of Place	A person's perception of a location's indigenous characteristics, based on the mix of uses, appearance and context that makes a place memorable.
Sensitive	The response to change or influence.
Skyline	The outline of a range of hills, ridge or group of buildings seen against the sky.
SSSI	Site of Special Scientific Interest.
Time depth	The time period expressed in the landscape, or the extent to which the landscape reflects a certain time period (a landscape with greater time depth will comprise older elements than a landscape with lesser time depth).
Topography	The arrangement of the natural and artificial physical features of an area.

Appendix 3

List of consultees

Duty to Cooperate Partners

- Charnwood Borough Council
- Harborough District Council
- Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council
- Leicester City Council
- Leicestershire County Council
- Melton Borough Council
- North West Leicestershire District Council
- Oadby and Wigston Borough Council
- Rugby Borough Council
- Environment Agency
- Historic England
- Natural England

Parish/Town Councils

- Aston Flamville Parish
- Blaby Parish Council
- Braunstone Town Council
- Cosby Parish Council
- Countesthorpe Parish Council
- Croft Parish Council
- Elmesthorpe Parish Council
- Enderby Parish Council
- Glenfield Parish Council
- Glen Parva Parish Council
- Huncote Parish Council
- Kilby Parish Council
- Kirby Muxloe Parish Council
- Leicester Forest East Parish Council
- Narborough Parish Council
- Sapcote Parish Council
- Sharnford Parish Council
- Stoney Stanton Parish Council
- Thurlaston Parish Council
- Whetstone Parish Council
- Wigston Parva Parish