

Harborough District Landscape Character Assessment

September 2007





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Executive Summary

Executive Summary

Introduction

This study was commissioned by Harborough District Council in order to provide a comprehensive Landscape Character Assessment of the district that would assist in policy development in relation to protection, conservation and enhancement of landscape character. Additionally, the study examines the relationship between urban edge settlements and adjoining landscapes through a focus area study.

The document is divided into two main parts: Part 1, Landscape Character Assessment and Part 2, Focus Areas Assessment.

The Landscape Character Assessment seeks to present an impartial exploration and analysis of the district and to achieve the following:

- An overview of the structure of the landscape across the District
- An analysis of the five landscape character areas identifying the key characteristics and issues
- An indication of the capacity of each landscape character area to accommodate development in landscape terms

The Focus Areas Assessment provides:

- A more focused analysis of the landscape around selected urban fringe/settlement edge areas across the District
- An assessment of the capacity of the urban fringe/settlement edge areas to accommodate potential change/development without undue adverse impact upon the landscape setting of the settlement

The seven Focus Areas analysed in the study are:

- Scraftoft, Bushby and Thurnby
- Great Glen
- Kibworth

- Market Harborough
- Lutterworth
- Fleckney and
- Broughton Astley

Harborough District General Characteristics

Harborough District covers an area of 238 square miles within rural South Leicestershire. The city of Leicester is located on the northwestern edge. Market Harborough to the south and Lutterworth to the south west are the main settlements in the District. The seven Focus Area settlements each have a population in excess of 3,000, with the remaining population residing in over eighty smaller villages and hamlets.

The topography varies from steep sloping valleys and broad ridges in the north of the District, to gentler and shallower valley and basin slopes associated with the River Welland, which passes through Market Harborough, in the south of the District. The elongated basin of the River Soar stretches outside the District to the west.

Landscape Character Assessment

Harborough District is analysed in landscape terms according to a range of key characteristics: topography, vegetation cover, ecology, heritage, land use and settlement patterns in order to define consistent combinations which are common to landscape character areas.

This study uses the landscape character areas put forward in the 'Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Landscape and Woodland Strategy' (2001) published by Leicestershire County Council. Harborough falls within five of the landscape character areas and these form the basis for the landscape character analysis in this study.

Through desk and site survey the landscape character areas have been refined, described and evaluated in relation to landscape qualities and capacity. Landscape capacity is defined as 'the degree to which a particular landscape character type or area is able to accommodate change without unacceptable adverse effects on its character'.

Although the five landscape character areas identified have discernable characteristics defining one from another, some of the characteristics are common across all the areas. It is the topography, woodland cover and settlement pattern which are the most defining features identified through the Landscape Character Assessment.

A brief description of the character areas is given below:

High Leicestershire Landscape Character Area

High Leicestershire is the largest of the character areas and covers the north of the District. It has defined features of steep valleys and broad ridges containing many woodlands and a network of small villages connected by winding country lanes and gated roads. The western edge of the area borders on the urban fringes of Leicester. Other characteristics include undulating fields with a mixture of pasture on higher sloping land and arable farming on lower flatter land. The character area is predominantly rural with a network of lanes, tracks and footpaths interspersed by small thickets, copses and woodlands. Whilst traditional villages and hamlets are scattered throughout the area, reinforcing this rural character, the urban influence of Leicester encroaches onto the west of the area.

Laughton Hills Landscape Character Area

This area is defined by a distinct ridgeline of rolling hills with steep sides containing a scattering of small

villages and hamlets, and areas of woodland. Hill areas are used mainly for grazing although these flatten out to arable areas towards the south of the area. Medium sized fields are defined by mature declining hedgerows with boundary trees throughout the area. Wooded areas are more common and larger towards the north of the character area.

Welland Valley Landscape Character Area

To the south of the High Leicestershire Character Area is the Welland Valley Character Area, which follows the gently meandering course of the River Welland, and its wide flat river valley, passing through Market Harborough, the largest settlement in the District. The Welland Valley's key characteristics are defined by the wide valley form that has pasture on floodplain areas and arable farming on the valley sides. It is notable that there is little tree cover. Market Harborough is the only urban influence within the character area.

Upper Soar Landscape Character Area

This area lies on the westernmost boundary of the District although only the eastern edge of the Upper Soar lies within Harborough District. It includes the periphery of the wide elongated basin with steep ridges to the River Soar that contain the significant settlements of Broughton Astley and Ullesthorpe. It is characterised as a large wide river basin with high ridges which forms a small part of larger character area extending outside the District to the west. The landscape is open to visible influences from outside the character area. There is a general lack of woodland across the landscape, with predominantly pasture agricultural land use, but urban influences are apparent in particular around Broughton Astley

Lutterworth Lowlands Landscape Character Area

Lutterworth Lowlands lies to the west of the Laughton Hills and is characterised by an open and relatively flat to gently rolling landscape, of predominantly grazing farmland, and a scattering of small villages and the larger settlements of Kibworth, Fleckney to the north and Lutterworth to the south. Generally there are few large woodland areas although there is some woodland associated with parkland estates towards the north of the area. Open views are available across the flatter expanses of the area.

Focus Areas Assessment

The Focus Area settlements are analysed to ascertain the nature of the relationship between them and their surrounding landscape, with a view to assessing their potential to accept and accommodate change/development in landscape terms. The combination of desk and site survey, at a field-by-field level, evaluates the landscape qualities and landscape capacity of potential sites to change without affecting the landscape setting for each settlement. A 'traffic light' methodology is employed to evaluate the immediate land adjoining the perimeter of the settlements using the following definitions:

Red - Land considered unsuitable for development in landscape terms. Landscape character should be protected through the prevention of development.

Amber - Land considered to have the potential for consideration of development in landscape terms. Appropriate mitigation measures would need to be developed through fuller landscape assessment at the site design/ masterplanning stage.

Green - Land considered appropriate for development in landscape terms. Development proposals would need to be accompanied by a fuller landscape assessment at site design/ masterplanning stage.

Each of the Focus Areas is represented by a Traffic Light Plan which illustrates the designation given to each part of the settlement edge. The plans are supported by findings set out in a tabular format which outlines site characteristics according to criteria including: site context, topography, vegetation, designations, integration with settlement edge, visibility and enclosure, in addition to the traffic light rating.

It is important to note that landscape character is only one of the factors taken into account in determining appropriate sites for future development. The settlements considered are described below:

Scraptoft, Busby and Thurnby Focus Area

These are three separate but partly coalesced settlements on the eastern fringes of Leicester, which fall within the High Leicestershire Landscape Character Area, stretching to the east. The wider landscape surrounding the settlements can accommodate change but to a limited degree, constrained by impacts on the sensitive rural characteristics of the landscape character area.

The results of the traffic light study show that potential development sites are limited to full or part sites directly contiguous with the existing settlement edge. The rolling landform pattern of ridges and valleys of the surrounding countryside determines which sites will not impact in landscape and visual terms. Enclosed and flatter sites adjacent to the existing settlements and roads on the edge of Scraptoft and Bushby are most suitable for potential development.

Great Glen Focus Area

Great Glen is located south of Leicester adjacent to the A6, as it connects Leicester to Market Harborough. It falls within the High Leicestershire Landscape Character Area and is vulnerable to development pressure similar to other settlements close to the edge of Leicester.

Traffic light analysis highlights potential sites for development situated away from the core of existing central settlement, particularly on radial routes to the north west and north east. Visually prominent slopes on all sides of Great Glen preclude development as this would have a negative effect on adjoining sensitive landscapes. The most important factor in protecting Great Glen's landscape setting is preventing development encroachment on higher, steeper slopes.

Kibworth Focus Area

This area is located on the A6, between Leicester and Market Harborough, and includes the combined settlement of Kibworth Harcourt to the north, and Kibworth Beauchamp to the south. The northern settlement edge of Kibworth adjoins the High Leicester Landscape Character Area although the village itself falls within the Lutterworth Lowlands landscape character area. Whilst the High Leicestershire area is characterised by sloping valleys and ridges Lutterworth Lowlands is more gently sloping and more enclosed, and in general terms more able to accommodate development in landscape terms. There are few small potential development sites on the northern side of the settlement which fall within the built envelope. On the southern side, sites contiguous to Kibworth are more suitable for development, falling within the higher landscape capacity category of Lutterworth Lowlands with fewer long distance views.

Market Harborough Focus Area

This focus area in the south of the District falls within the Welland Valley Landscape Character Area, and is well contained by landform to all sides, which constrains potential development in landscape terms. The distinctive ridgeline to the north precludes development, but other sites contiguous to existing development are available to the west and south. These sites are mainly small in size and would need mitigation measures to reduce impacts on local views.

Lutterworth Focus Area

Lutterworth, to the western side of the District, sits within the Lutterworth Lowlands Landscape Character Area, which as a character area is generally capable of accepting some potential development. However, the traffic light analysis shows that the immediate surrounds to Lutterworth do not offer much potential for development. The local landscape features constrain development considerably so that potential development is limited to small contiguous sites directly associated with the existing settlement edge.

Fleckney Focus Area

Falling within the Lutterworth Lowlands Landscape Character Area, and despite being the smallest Focus Area it offers a range of potential development sites. Fleckney is set within higher surrounding land to the west and south, which encloses the settlement from wider external views. All the potential sites for development will, however, require landscape mitigation to fit the sites into their local landscape setting.

Broughton Astley Focus Area

The only Focus Area within the Upper Soar Landscape Character Area, Broughton Astley, in the far west of

the District is contained within generally rising slopes of the wider countryside. Lower and inward facing slopes offer the potential for development where sites are hidden from external views so that the traffic light analysis highlights a number of potential sites suitable in landscape terms. accommodate change through development. The report presents a method of assessing and evaluating the landscape resource to fit development within the existing landscape character, and to minimise adverse impacts on valuable landscape features and characteristics in the District.

The results of the analysis will act as a tool to guide the next stage of decision making and policy planning by the local authority to accommodate development pressures across the district.

Introduction

Introduction

Project Background

Harborough District Council and the Countryside Agency commissioned Atkins in February 2006, to undertake a comprehensive Landscape Character Assessment covering the whole of Harborough District, an area of 238 square miles in rural South Leicestershire.

The overall objective of the first section of the study is to provide an impartial exploration and assessment of the general landscape and settlement patterns across Harborough District. The study aims to provide a clear baseline document which gives an:

- Assessment of the overall general structure of the landscape
- Analysis and characterisation of landscape character areas
- Identification of an indication of landscape capacity to accept and accommodate development in each of the landscape character areas.

The document will be used to guide policy in relation to protection, conservation and enhancement of the landscape character of Harborough District.

The second section of the study involves a complementary consideration of selected urban fringe/ settlement edge areas across Harborough District. It focuses on the detailed study of the seven largest settlements within the District, which have a current population of over 3,000. As an extension to the landscape character study, the Focus Area study aims to concentrate on the relationships between the settlements and their immediately surrounding landscape setting exploring the relationship between the settlements and the characteristics of the adjacent landscape character areas.

The Focus Areas study aims to assess the capacity of areas around the edges of the settlements to accommodate potential change and to accept

development. The 'traffic light' methodology adopted, is based on a three tier system of designating sectors of the settlement edge, as either:

Red - Land considered unsuitable for development in landscape terms. Landscape character should be protected through the prevention of development.

Amber - Land considered to have the potential for consideration of development in landscape terms. Appropriate mitigation measures would need to be developed through fuller landscape assessment at the site design/ masterplanning stage.

Green - Land considered appropriate for development in landscape terms. Development proposals would need to be accompanied by a fuller landscape assessment at site design/masterplanning stage.

The study will provide guidance to recommend potential sites that can accommodate development around the fringes of key settlements within Harborough District. The document will be used to guide policy for development adjacent to existing settlements according to landscape character and setting, based on the qualities of the landscape resource itself.

General Approach

The overall approach to the two-stage study of landscape character and urban fringe/ settlement edge assessment is in line with the guidance set out in 'Landscape Character Assessment- Guidance for England and Scotland 2002' (the Countryside Agency and Scottish National Heritage). The document provides a framework for describing and assessing the landscape in a systematic way, to give definable character areas with similar landscape characteristics. Whilst general landscape character assessment is well documented and practised, the

approach for urban fringe and settlement edge areas is less tested, being part townscape part landscape assessment. The 'Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Assessment 2002' (the Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment) have been used as guidance to develop an approach to the Focus Areas assessment, which takes into account the ability of the landscape to accommodate potential development change around the edges of selected settlements, in both landscape and visual terms.

The approach has involved an impartial evaluation of the landscape within the study area. This has adopted a combination of desk and site survey to identify key landscape characteristics and landscape capacity for both landscape character areas and Focus Areas. The study incorporates an assessment of historic and environmental factors affecting landscape character, by drawing on ecological and heritage information.

The desk study has considered the current strategic policy context for landscape character/ development policy at national, regional and local level. This study itself will form part of the evidence base, for the Countryside Character Development Plan Document (DPD) and the Housing and Employment Allocations DPD which will be used to assess development options as part of the Local Development Framework.

At the local level, consideration has been given to Local Plan policies, including APAC (Area of Particularly Attractive Countryside), Green Wedge and Separation Area designations. However, as an impartial assessment of the landscape pattern, the site survey assesses the landscape in the absence of designations, relying on landscape and visual characteristics to guide site analysis, particularly for the Focus Areas, adopting a 'pure landscape' approach to assess landscape capacity, without the constraints of designations.

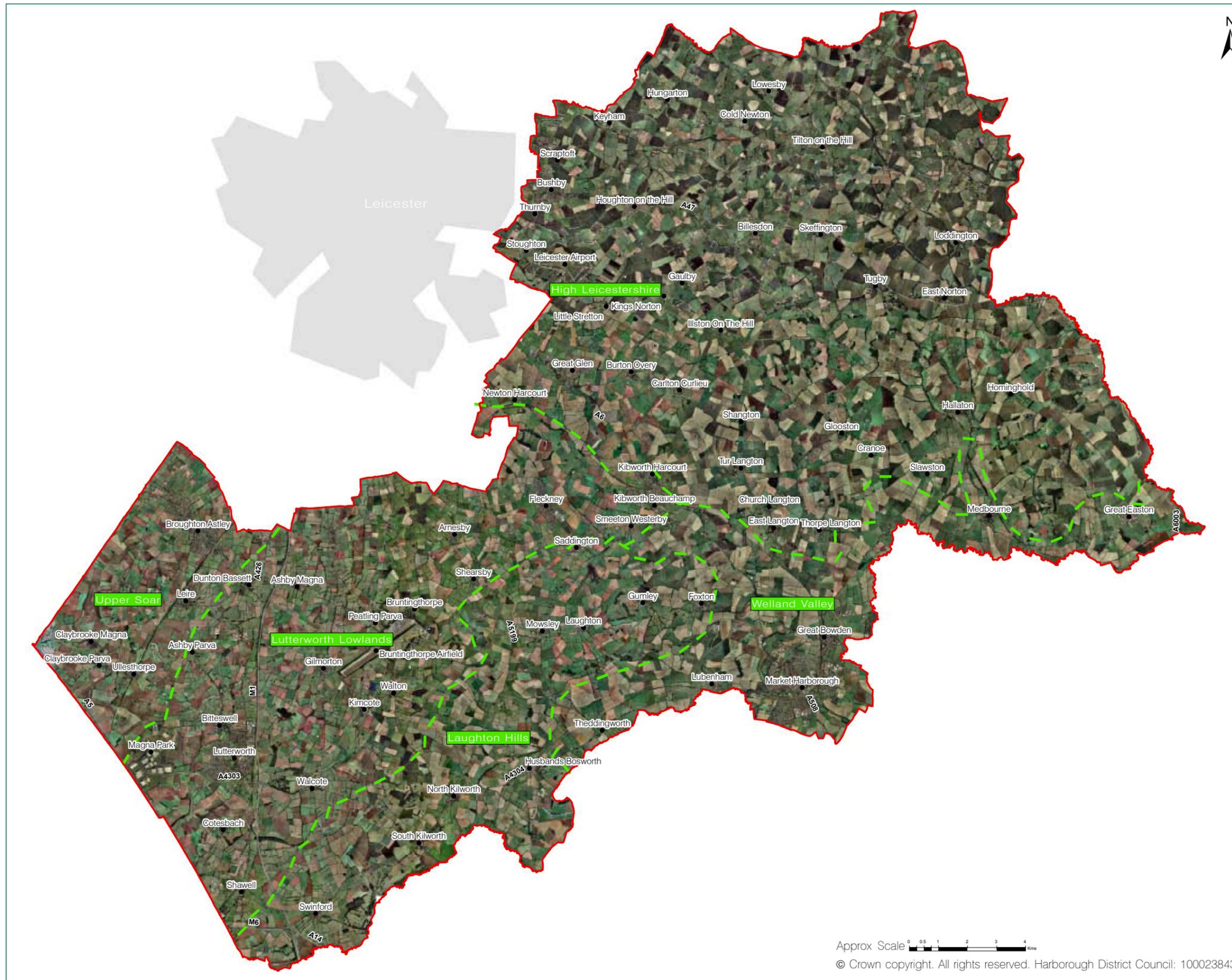
The approach has involved a process of consultation alongside the assessment process, aiming to test and check the analysis and assessment as it progresses. The study has been guided by the involvement of a client-led steering group comprising Harborough District Council, the Countryside Agency and Leicestershire County Council (LCC). At the draft stage of the landscape character analysis results of the study were discussed and tested through a consultation workshop, which aimed to give feedback regarding Focus Areas.

The Landscape Character Assessment has drawn upon a previous study, 'The Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Landscape Character Assessment', published in 2001 by Leicestershire County Council, (LCC) which provided a thorough character assessment of the county, of which Harborough forms a part. The document has provided the backbone for this study, but did not cover issues of sensitivity or capacity.

The search areas for the Focus Areas stage of the study were chosen by the client. These were defined through accompanied site visits by the steering group to determine the nature and extent of the Focus Areas work on a settlement-by-settlement basis.

The approach aims to present the findings of the work in a clear easy- to-understand way, presenting complex issues of capacity and urban fringe/ settlement edge landscape resource in an accessible format.

Figure 1.1: Aerial Photo and Character Area Plan



Legend

- Harborough District Boundary
- Settlements
- Harborough District Character Area

Harborough District

Urban Influence/ Settlement Pattern

Harborough District covers an area of 238 square miles. The area is largely rural with the towns of Market Harborough and Lutterworth providing the main shopping and business services. Market Harborough is located to the very south of the district, towards the east, whilst Lutterworth is also to the south, but further west.

The 2001 census records the population of the District as 77,000 with approximately one third of the overall population residing in Market Harborough and Lutterworth.

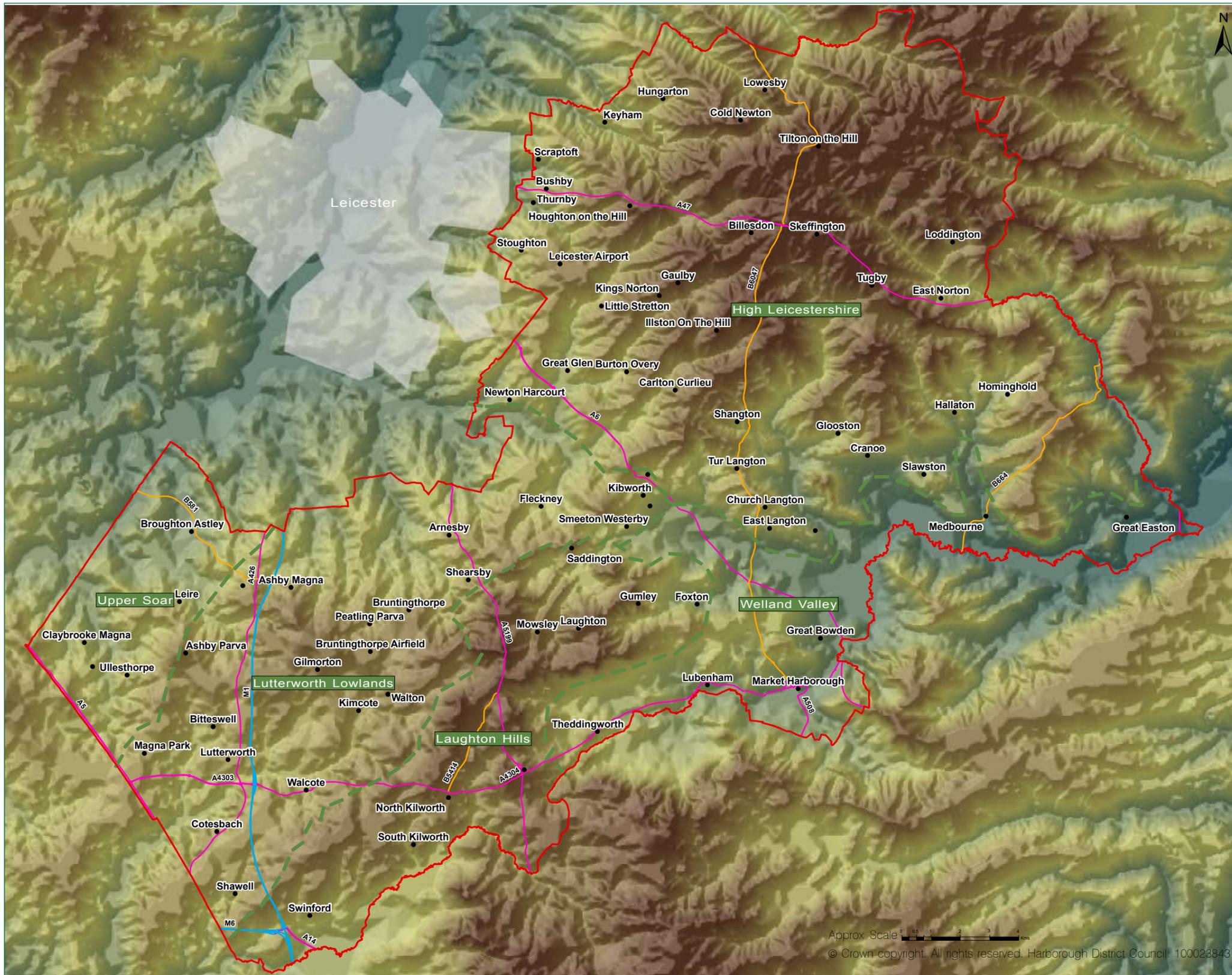
Furthermore, there are 90 different parishes in the District, comprising 31,000 households according to the 2001 census.

The District also includes the three larger settlements of Broughton Astley, to the north west of the District, Fleckney, located in the centre of the District, Great Glen located to the north of the A6 and south east of Leicester, all with populations of over 3,000. In addition there are over eighty smaller villages with a population of less than 3000, many of which have a population of less than 1000.

Leicester city exerts an urban influence over the north western stretch of the District, particularly over the urban fringe settlements of Scraptoft, Bushby and

Approx Scale 0 0.5 1 2 3 4 Km
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Figure 1.2: Topography Plan



Legend

- Settlements
- A Roads
- B Roads
- Motorway
- Harborough District Character Area Boundary
- High ground
- Low ground

Thurnby on the eastern side of Leicester.

Topography

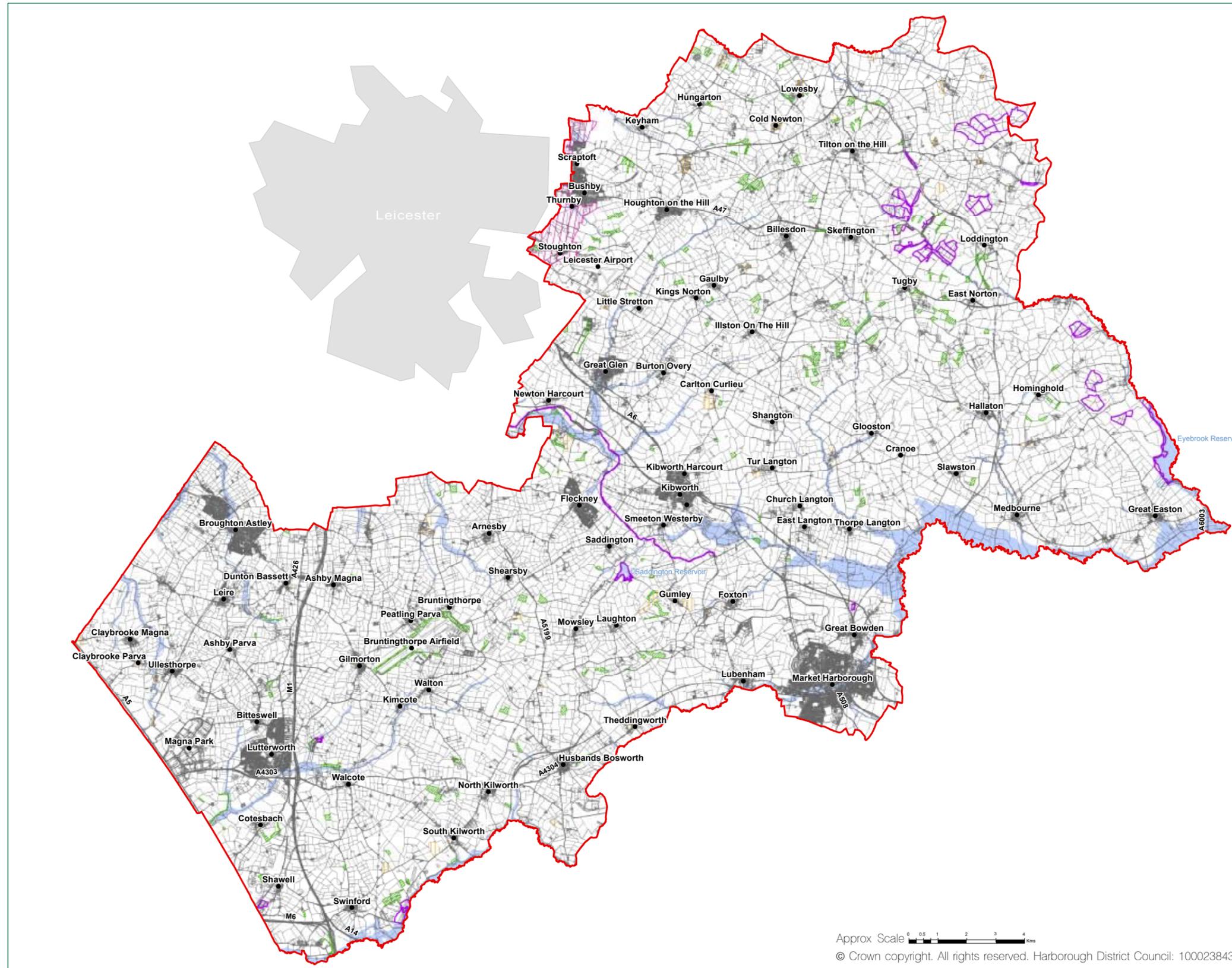
The topography of the District varies from steep sloping valleys and broad ridges in the north of the District, with levels ranging from 210m Above Ordnance Datum (AOD) beside Tilton on the Hill to 100m AOD near Leicester.

In contrast to the south east along the course of the River Welland and around Market Harborough there are much gentler slopes in the shallow river valley basin.

In the south west the topography contains a distinctive ridgeline which reaches over 160m AOD to the east of Bruntingthorpe Airfield.

In the Laughton Hills to the south the topography falls to 110m AOD at Swinford. To the very west of the District on the edge of an elongated basin that stretches outside the District boundary to the west, the land rises to 145m AOD.

Figure 1.3: Ecological Features Plan



Legend

- Harborough District Boundary
- Settlements
- Woodland
- SSSI
- Local Nature Reserve
- Flood Zone
- Reservoir
- Scheduled Ancient Monuments
- Green Wedge Designation

Ecology

Generally, across the District the vegetation pattern indicates a higher proportion of wooded areas to the north of the area, becoming sparser moving south west into more developed areas. The woodlands comprise predominantly of native species with oak and ash dominating. In the north there are mature hedgerows which are dominated by midland hawthorn and oak, characteristic species of the area.

Wooded areas are sparse in the middle of the District, mainly concentrated along watercourses. The occurrence of wooded areas increases slightly towards the south west of the District.

The largest number of Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) are located to the north of the District along the eastern fringe. These areas are notable as they are representative of areas of semi ancient woodland dominated by ash-hazel-maple communities. The area also includes Eye Brook reservoir which is important for wintering wildfowl. In the middle of the District there are fewer designations. However, Saddington Reservoir and Stanford Park, to the south support wetland habitats.

Landscape Heritage

The most preserved area in terms of historic landscape is to the north east of the District; this area has retained its large houses with adjacent parkland and villages. In general terms there has been little modern development which has altered the settlement pattern in this area.

Moving south and west into the Welland valley traditional settlements are retained, including the market town of Market Harborough, which retains buildings built in the typical vernacular with local stone. However, the outskirts have lost elements of their traditional character due to new residential and retail development on its fringes.

The whole district is predominantly rural in character, with agriculture as the main land use. The medieval manorial centres with surrounding village and outlying fields have provided the pattern for current clusters of villages.

Moving further west the historic landscape becomes more fragmented due to increasing levels of development arising from industrial and transport use, including relatively recent interventions, including the M1 motorway, Magna Park and Bruntingthorpe Airfield.

The western side of the District has been influenced by a much higher degree of change than the eastern side where the landscape has retained more of its historic settlement pattern.

Part 1 - Landscape Character Assessment

Introduction and Methodology

This part of the report analyses the whole of Harborough District in landscape terms to determine key characteristics in relation to topography, vegetation cover, ecology, heritage, land use and settlement patterns. By understanding the basic patterns of landscape features across the Harborough landscape, character areas can be defined where consistent combinations of landform, geology, vegetation, settlement and other factors create a character area which is distinctly different to other character areas.

In places the boundaries between character areas are well defined and easy to locate on the ground by being associated with clear landscape features (for example, break of slope or road line); elsewhere, the boundaries appear as more of an interface between different character areas and are less distinct on the ground.

This report builds on and uses as a template the landscape character areas put forward in the Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Landscape and Woodland Strategy published by Leicestershire County Council in 2001. Through desk and site survey work character areas have been checked and refined to update and expand on the descriptions. The basic definitions, boundaries and names have been retained on the principle that the original character areas accurately reflect a true representation of the landscape characteristics of Harborough District at an appropriate scale for this study. This report has focussed on drawing out full descriptions of characteristics and issues for each landscape character area and presenting them in an accessible format, rather than subdivide each area to a smaller and less applicable level of scale.

The methodology for the assessment included a two stage assessment process, desk top followed by field survey undertaken by qualified Landscape Architects, following the principles of landscape and visual assessment. The desk survey involved research into strategic context for the landscape character areas,

and historic, ecological and landscape research into characteristics of the landscape. Following desk work, numerous field visits covered the whole of the District, concentrating particularly on boundary areas. Site survey sheets were completed for each character area in the field, with accompanying photo recordings of key areas and views in two seasons; spring and summer to gain understanding of character as vegetation growth alters views and enclosure.

In addition, this study is concerned with evaluating landscape quality and integrity of the landscape by assigning degrees of landscape capacity to each of the character areas. The following definition is given in the 'Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Assessment 2002', (The Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment').

Landscape capacity is defined as:
"The degree to which a particular landscape character type or area is able to accommodate change without unacceptable adverse effects on its character. Capacity is likely to vary according to the type and nature of change being proposed."

The landscape character areas have been assessed by considering how the current landscape could accept or accommodate development change without detriment to its key landscape characteristics.

For the purpose of this study, each character area has been assessed relative to the rest of the District and given a landscape capacity rating based on a scale of low, medium and high. It is important to note that the ratings represent an 'average' which addresses capacity for the whole of the character area; at the study scale it is possible to identify localised variation within the character area where development could be accommodated to a greater or lesser extent than the overall rating.

Sensitivity to change would be considered as and when proposals for development or change are put forward, when the specific nature of these are fully

known and during the process that fully considers landscape and visual effects. At this point sensitivity of the landscape resource can be judged against each element or characteristic of the landscape. For instance, factors such as landscape quality, landscape value and considerations such as the ability to substitute features or characteristics would be considered.

The assessment has been illustrated on landscape character sheets which aim to present the key characteristics of each of the character areas in clear, illustrated graphic format, with photographs to allow easy understanding.

Regional Character Areas

The Countryside Agency (formerly the Countryside Commission) in partnership with English Nature in 1996 developed a Character Map for England with accompanying descriptions of character areas across the country. Harborough District falls predominantly into two of these areas High Leicestershire and the Leicestershire Vales; the northern edges of the Northamptonshire Uplands and Northamptonshire Vales also fall within Harborough District. These areas broadly follow the boundaries of the character areas within this report as illustrated in Fig 1.4.

The Countryside Agency summary for the High Leicestershire character area describes it as an area of broad rolling ridges and varied, often steep-sided valleys with a mix of farming; sparse settlements of small villages with green lanes and a remote, rural, often empty character. The other significant character area in the Harborough District is the Leicestershire Vales, described as gentle clay ridges and valleys with distinctive river valleys including the Soar and Welland; with frequent small towns and large villages with imposing churches.

Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Landscape and Woodland Strategy

The Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Landscape Character Assessment was carried out in 1995 (and published in 2001) by members of Leicestershire's County Council Landscape Team. The assessment was based on the 1976 Leicestershire County Landscape Appraisal which identified twenty three landscape character areas which were reduced and redefined to 18 in 1995. Five of these character areas fall fully or partly within Harborough District.

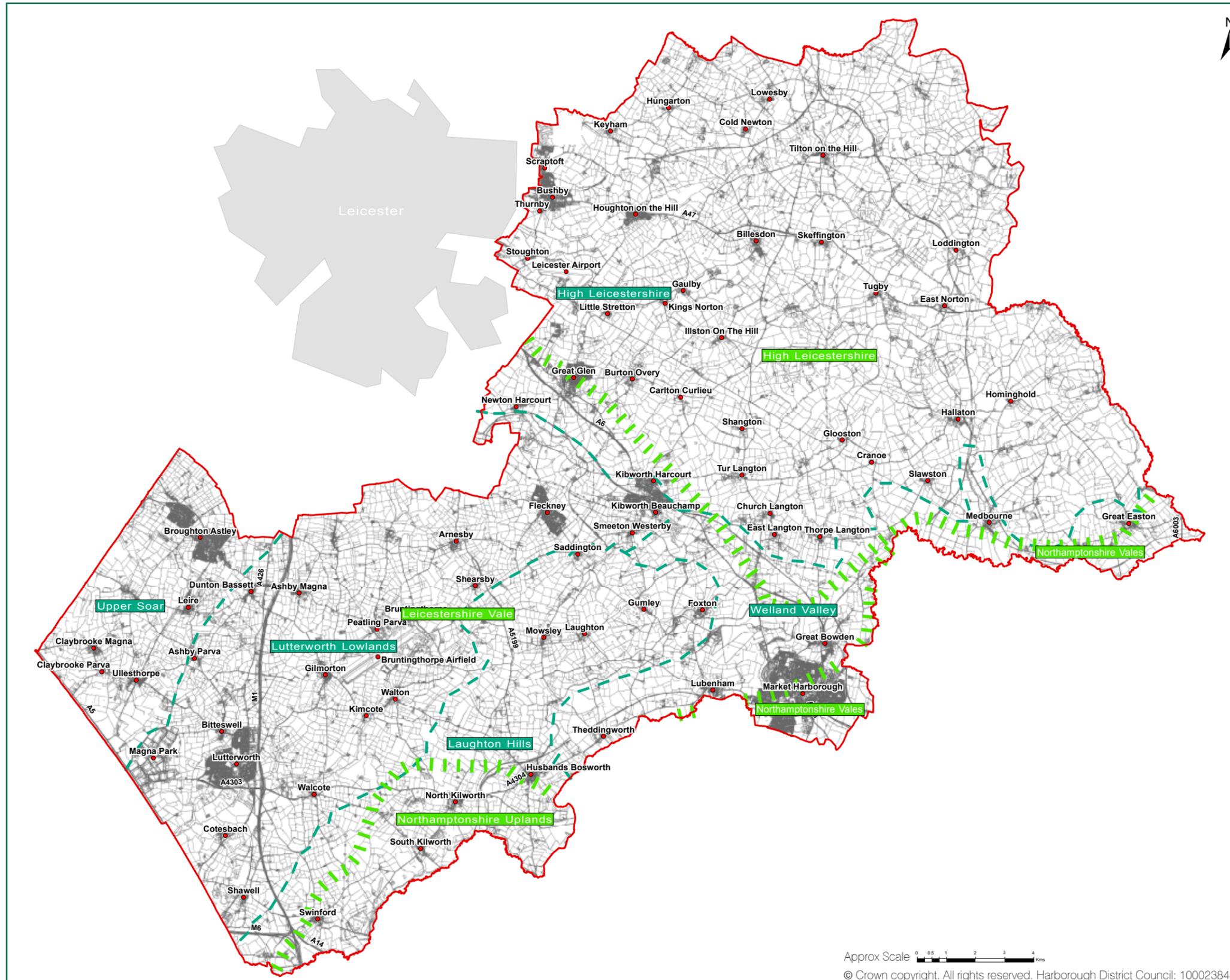
The broad study of the area examined policies, landscape characteristics, woodlands and forestry, the proposed character areas and provided general objectives and guidelines related to their findings. The character area study focused on the visual character of the countryside concentrating on landscape and woodland issues but did not address issues of built design. The document summarised its findings with plans, sketches and descriptions for each of the 18 character areas. The information formulated in this study has been used as a reference point in preparing the Landscape Character Assessment for Harborough District.

Harborough District Landscape Character Assessment

The Harborough District Landscape Character Assessment uses and progresses the findings of these broader scaled landscape character assessments and refines the detail to focus on Harborough District.

This Character Assessment identifies 5 individual character areas within Harborough District but it should be noted that many of the characteristics are common across all of the areas with the topography, woodland cover and settlement pattern featuring as the most defining features of the Character Assessment.

Figure 1.4: Landscape Character Areas Plan



Legend

- Harborough District Boundary
- Settlements
- Countryside Agency Character Area
- Harborough District Character Area

High Leicestershire is the largest of the character areas and covers north of the District. It has defined features of steep valleys and broad ridges containing many woodlands and a network of small villages connected by winding country lanes and gated roads. The western edge of the High Leicestershire Landscape Character Area borders on the urban fringes of Leicester city.

To the south of the High Leicestershire Landscape Character Area is the Welland Valley Landscape Character Area which follows the gently meandering course of the River Welland, and its wide flat river valley, passing through Market Harborough the largest settlement in the District.

Overlooking the Welland Valley to the west is the Laughton Hills Landscape Character Area defined by a distinct ridgeline of rolling hills with steep sides containing some traditional villages and areas of woodland.

To the west of the Laughton Hills lies the most changed landscape, the Lutterworth Lowlands Landscape Character Area. This is an open and relatively flat landscape with a scattering of small villages and contains the larger settlements of Kibworth, Fleckney and Lutterworth as well as the developments of Magna Park, the M1 and Bruntingthorpe Airfield.

West of the Lutterworth Lowlands lies the Upper Soar Landscape Character Area. Only the eastern edge of the Upper Soar lies within Harborough District but includes the periphery of the wide elongated basin with steep ridges to the River Soar containing the settlements of Broughton Astley and Ullesthorpe.

High Leicestershire Landscape Character Area

Key Characteristics

- Steep undulating hills
- High concentration of woodland
- Parkland areas with narrow gated roads
- Rural area with a mix of arable farming on lowlands and pasture on hillsides
- Scattering of traditional villages and hamlets through the area
- Encroachment of Leicester to the west of the area

General Description

The predominantly rural character area comprises undulating fields with a mix of pasture on the higher sloping land and arable farming on the lower, flatter land. Fields are divided by well established hedgerows, with occasional mature hedgerow trees. A network of narrow country lanes, tracks and footpaths connect across the landscape interspersed by small thickets, copses and woodlands. Gated roads are a particular feature towards the northern areas around Lowesby, Baggrave and Quenby. Extensive views from the higher ground reveal a pattern of small attractive villages, hamlets and farm buildings set within an agricultural landscape with traditional churches acting as distinctive features of the settlements.

Topography

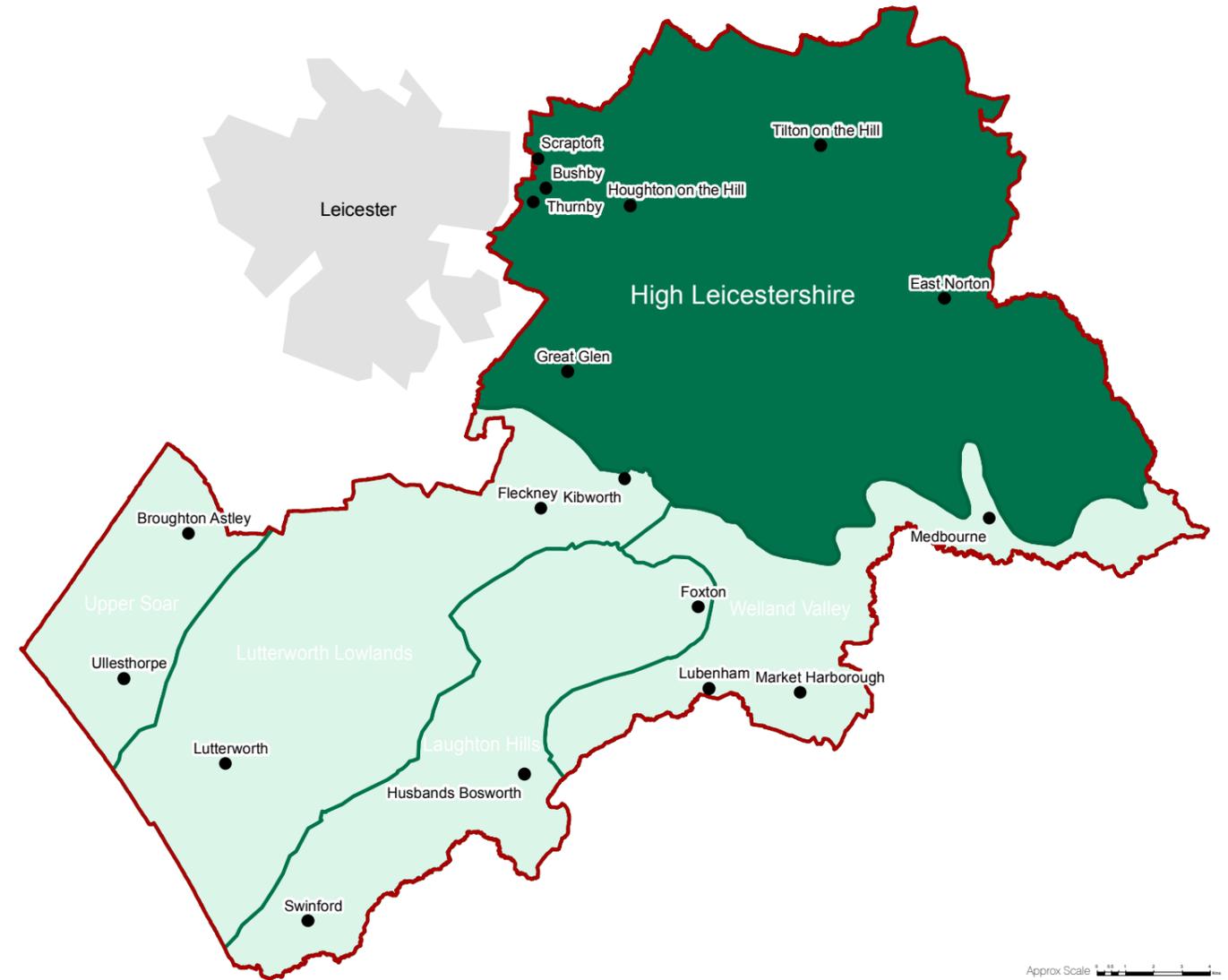
The topography of High Leicestershire is its most defining feature. The steeply sloping valleys and broad ridges were created by fluvio-glacial influences and water courses that flowed across the area. The central area of High Leicestershire reaches 210m AOD beside Tilton on the Hill, and falls to below 100m AOD along the western edge of Leicester. The topography generally radiates out and down from this high point adjacent to Tilton on the Hill into the valleys of the adjoining character areas and Leicester city.

Geology

The main geology grouping of High Leicestershire is Jurassic Lower Lias.

Vegetation

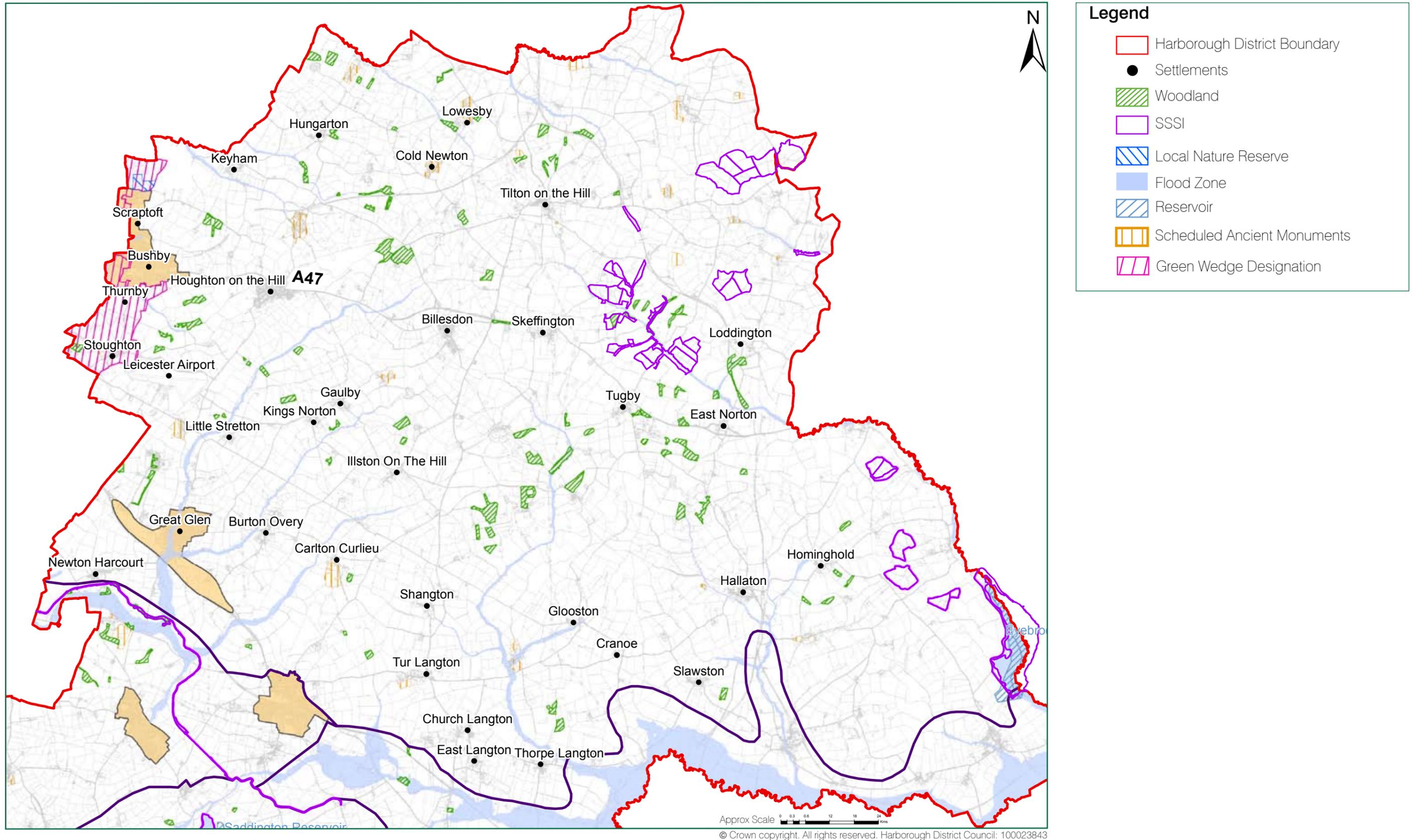
The numerous woodlands which stretch across the hills and valleys of High Leicestershire contribute to the character of the area with larger woodlands and scattered copses prominent across many of the ridges. Owston Woods is the largest of a number of areas of Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland (ASNW) to the north east and is the largest area of woodland at 141 hectares; it is formed from the remains of the Leighfield Forest. Launde Big Wood, Launde Park Wood, Loddington Reddish, Tugby Wood and Tilton Wood, whilst not as large as Owston, are significant woodlands in the area. Woodlands comprise predominantly native species with oak and ash tree



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Figure 1.5: - High Leicestershire- Landscape Character Plan



Legend

- Harborough District Boundary
- Settlements
- Woodland
- SSSI
- Local Nature Reserve
- Flood Zone
- Reservoir
- Scheduled Ancient Monuments
- Green Wedge Designation



Typical gated road of High Leicestershire near Lowesby

species dominating. There are also some mixed species woodlands and coniferous plantations associated with the 19th century sporting estates, with earlier manorial origins in the north of the character area around the villages of Lowesby, Baggrave and Quenby.

The mature hedgerows throughout High Leicestershire define, enforce and enclose the regular agricultural field pattern. Midland hawthorn predominates with ash and oak as the most common hedgerow species and they represent a key characteristic of the area. There are also some ancient hedgerows that are associated with the Parish boundaries. Most of the hedgerows are well maintained, particularly along side roads. Some of the enclosure hedgerows have fallen into decline with gaps forming along them whereas others contain occasional mature trees within their length.

Other areas of visually significant vegetation follow the numerous streams and brooks within the valleys. The dismantled railway to the east has created a wildlife corridor across High Leicestershire from south of Hallaton to beyond Marefield.

Ecology

A large number of Biological SSSIs are present in this region, mainly concentrated along its eastern fringe. Of these, Owston Woods, Launde Big Wood, Leighfield Forest, Allexton Wood and Eye Brook Valley Woods have been notified as they are representative of ancient semi-natural woodland that has developed on heavy clay soil. These are dominated by ash-elm and ash-maple communities with an area of ash-hazel-maple coppice present in Allexton Wood. Owston Woods is the largest continuous area of

ancient semi-natural woodland in Leicestershire (approximately 141 ha) and is one of only three sites in Leicestershire that supports purple small-reed (a local Biodiversity Action Plan species).

Other SSSIs in this area include Eye Brook Reservoir which is one of the more important wintering wildfowl sites in the East Midlands and the Chater Valley which supports neutral grassland and spring-fed marshes. Tilton Cutting SSSI has been notified due to its geological interest (exposures of marlstone rock bed). However, it also forms part of a disused railway line which is an important wildlife corridor through this area and is managed by the Leicestershire and Rutland Wildlife Trust as a nature reserve.

A range of protected and notable flora/ fauna are likely to be present within this region such as bats, badgers, water vole, otter, white clawed crayfish, amphibians, reptiles and notable bird communities.

Land Use

High Leicestershire is a predominantly rural area that is used for agriculture, with a mix of arable farming in the lowlands and pasture on higher ground. The undulating topography and Area of Particularly Attractive Countryside (APAC) designation have prevented encroachment of development in the past leaving only small settlements scattered throughout the area with some more suburban developments to the west of the region, closer to Leicester city.

Urban Influence / Settlement Pattern

Throughout High Leicestershire there is a network of small villages, hamlets and farm buildings connected by narrow country lanes that are enclosed by mature hedgerows. A common feature within villages is the church tower which acts as a landmark on the approach to each village. Country lanes tend to run through the centre of the linear village settlements with small roads and tracks branching off to either side.

Some of the smaller hamlets and farms are connected by the narrow gated roads that run through the open parkland areas to the north of the character area.

Two major roads run through the centre of High Leicestershire character area, the A47 east to west from Leicester towards Peterborough and the B6047 north to south, from Melton Mowbray to Market Harborough.

Along the western edge of High Leicestershire the urban influence of Leicester city becomes far more apparent. Larger suburban centres that are more readily associated with Leicester city than the rural character of High Leicestershire are located in this area including Scraftoft, Bushby, Thurnby and Great Glen.

Green wedge designations and the proposed community woodland greenspace project aim to separate Leicester fringes from these villages.



Keyham Church





East Norton village

Heritage

High Leicestershire is characterised by its pattern of small nucleated villages within large areas of agricultural land. It is clear that the landscape was settled and utilised earlier than the medieval period indicated by the Iron Age Burrough Hill Fort to the north of the character area as well as the Gartree Roman road, which is associated with a number of Romano-British settlements and villa sites within the area. However, it is the medieval and later use of the landscape that influenced its present character.

The isolated settlements and large open areas of agricultural land have developed from the medieval settlement pattern of a village centre with large open fields surrounding the village. There are large areas of ridge and furrow earthworks surrounding many of the villages which indicate the pattern and extent of earlier farming methods. It is a particular characteristic of High Leicestershire that enclosure of the fields occurred earlier than in the rest of the region around

the 15th and 16th centuries and this has affected the nature of the landscape.

There are a number of deserted medieval settlement sites as well as earthworks associated with shrinkage of settlements from the 15th century onwards, particularly to the north of the character area. Many of these sites are designated as Scheduled Ancient Monuments such as Ingarsby, Cold Newton and Noseley. These former or shrunken settlements often with surviving buried archaeological remains as well as ridge and furrow earthworks indicate that the landscape was made up of more isolated settlements than present day, but which became unviable.

There is a concentration of ancient woodland located to the east of the character area centred around Owston. This reflects the surviving remnants of what would have been large tracts of woodland covering the land prior to prehistoric and later forest clearance.

There are three Registered Parks and Gardens and these are all located in the western part of the character area. They comprise Quenby Hall, Lowersby Hall and Baggrave Hall of post medieval date. They are all large houses with parklands attached and are likely to be the sites of former manor houses or at least the centre of the manorial estates that historically supported the hunting sport that developed and was particularly popular in the 19th century. It is a common feature in the area to find these halls and parklands with villages or former villages adjacent and farmed land surrounding them.

In general there has been little modern development which has altered this settlement pattern in this character area.

Capacity: Low to Medium

High Leicestershire is generally an attractive rural character area with small settlements, agriculture and woodland as its major features. The area would have a low capacity to accept any major developments in all but the western suburban areas, where the urban influence of Leicester city is exerted. In general, development should be avoided or minimised in High Leicestershire in all but its most western regions.

High Leicestershire's character would be adversely affected by the influence of any development, other than small scale developments, across the majority of the character area. Any development would need sensitive integration to prevent encroachment on the highly sensitive rural areas of the rest of High Leicestershire.

The western edge of High Leicestershire could accommodate development around the towns of Scraftoft, Bushby, Thurnby and Great Glen closer to the urban fringes of Leicester. In general the smaller settlements throughout High Leicestershire could accommodate little new development.

These areas to the west have the capacity to accommodate some residential and other development which is contiguous and connected to the existing urban area as long as the towns' natural and visual envelopes are maintained and it does not exert built influence over the rest of rural High Leicestershire.

Key Issues

- Development may have an adverse impact on topography and landform which are key defining features of the landscape character of this area. The landscape is particularly vulnerable to negative landscape and visual impacts.
- Traditional features and form of smaller more rural and isolated villages may be particularly vulnerable to development pressure, even on a small scale.
- Inappropriate development may erode the defining characteristics of the landscape setting for smaller scattered villages across the landscape character area.
- Distinctive historic features and elements, which remain within the relatively intact landscape, may suffer adverse and irreversible impacts from inappropriate development.
- Important features and elements of the historic landscape, including parks and gardens, estates and mature hedgerows and woodlands may be threatened by development and prove impossible to replace or replicate once lost.
- Particular development pressures in the urban fringe and setting of the western edge of Leicester may impact on local landscape characteristics if design and mitigation measures are not integral to development planning.

Laughton Hills Landscape Character Area

Key Characteristics

- Distinct ridgeline of rolling hills with steep sides
- Predominantly rural character with areas of woodland
- Arable farming predominantly on the flatter areas to the south
- Pasture on the hillier areas to the north
- Scattering of small attractive villages and hamlets

General Description

The Laughton Hills character area consists mainly of high hills predominantly used for grazing, which flatten out to arable areas towards the south. Medium sized fields are divided by mature declining hedgerows with boundary trees throughout the area. In places some ridge and furrow fields are still apparent. Wooded areas are more common and larger towards the north of the character area. Views are open but limited in extent across the area due to the rolling topography. There are several well established villages that have grown significantly in recent times, such as Husbands Bosworth.

Topography

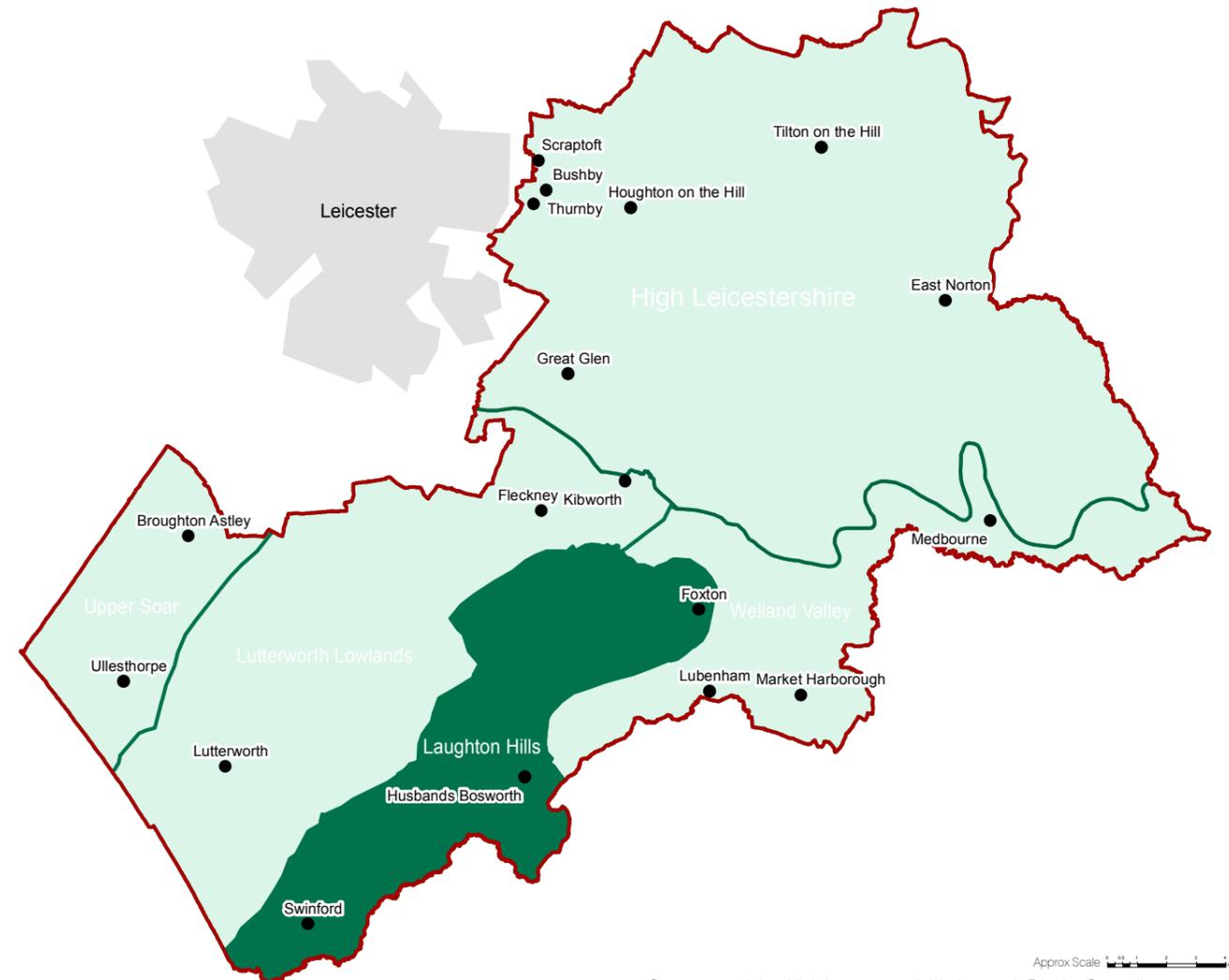
The topography of Laughton Hills follows a distinctive ridge line that adjoins and overlooks the Upper Welland Valley and the Grand Union Canal from the north and west. The area generally becomes lower and flatter towards the south. The ridge line along the Welland Valley border incorporating the Upper Avon Valley south of Laughton reaches above 160m AOD and areas further south around Swinford at 110m AOD. The River Avon forms the southern boundary of the character area.

Geology

The main geology grouping of the Laughton Hills is predominantly Lower Lias, Jurassic with some Middle Lias, Jurassic and Upper Lias, Jurassic.

Vegetation

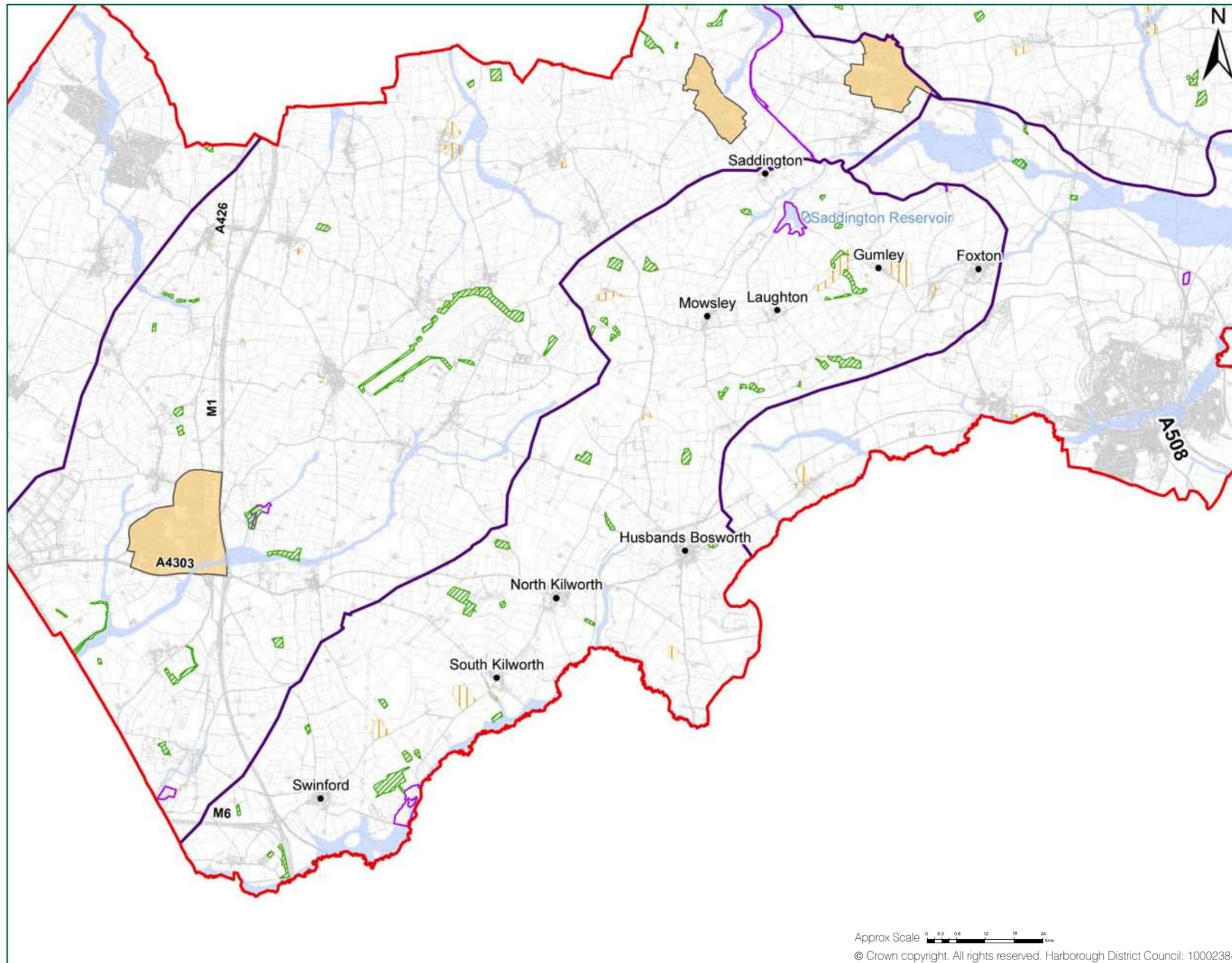
The main wooded areas feature in the north of the character area in particular Gumley Wood beside Gumley and patches along the Laughton Hills' ridge line adjacent to the Grand Union Canal. The woodlands predominantly consist of ash and oak species with ornamental trees such as horse chestnut evident in the village centres. The Rookery (18.4ha) beside Swinford represents the most significant woodland area towards the south with other prominent woodland areas also around North Kilworth. The hedgerows of the Laughton Hills are mature and well established, yet appear in decline due to a lack of ongoing management. Occasional hedgerow trees and dispersed spinneys and copses enclose medium sized fields.



Approx Scale 1:25,000
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Figure 1.6: - Laughton Hills- Landscape Character Plan



Legend

- Harborough District Boundary
- Settlements
- Character Area Boundary
- Woodland
- SSSI
- Scheduled Ancient Monuments
- Flood Zone
- Focus Areas
- Local Nature Reserve
- Green Wedge
- Reservoir

Ecology

The mature hedgerows and woodland areas in this area are likely to be of at least local ecological value due to the species they can support, including ground flora and bird species.

Saddington Reservoir SSSI supports a diverse range of undisturbed wetland communities and is notable for its beetle interest. Stanford Park SSSI in the south of the Laughton Hills area is an area of old parkland which supports the richest assemblage of lichens in Leicestershire.

Protected/ notable species that may be found in Laughton Hills include birds, badgers, bats, reptiles and amphibians.

Land Use

The Laughton Hills are a rural area used predominantly for pasture in medium sized fields. The Foxton Locks and Grand Union Canal provide for recreational activities such as walking and cycling. There are no large developments throughout the character area with the villages of Husbands Bosworth and Foxton acting as the most significant settlements.

Urban Influence/ Settlement Pattern

The character area contains several villages that have retained their traditional high church towers/ steeples which are a prominent feature of the area. However some villages have suffered from recent residential developments out of keeping with their traditional character.

The main roads that run through the area are the A4304 east to west connecting Market Harborough to Lutterworth, the M1 and M6, and the A5199 running north to south connecting to Leicester. Both these roads meet in Husbands Bosworth making the settlement a relatively busy interchange. Some of the roads to the north have steep inclines particularly those crossing the Laughton Hills ridgeline.

In the far south west corner beside Swinford lies the M1, M6 and the A14 which significantly intrudes, both visually and physically, upon the local area, but does not impact on the wider extents of the Laughton Hills.

Heritage

There are no towns within the Laughton Hills character area. The area is agricultural in use and although there is evidence of the land being settled in the prehistoric period, as indicated by a Scheduled settlement near Swinford, it is the Medieval land use and settlement which has provided the pattern of current small villages. There are a number of small settlements surrounded by agricultural land, often with ridge and furrow earthworks visible indicating the longstanding arable use of the landscape. There are also a few deserted medieval settlements scattered throughout the character area.

The Grand Union Canal runs through this character area and was constructed in the early 1800s to transport heavy goods including coal to Kettering and further south. Associated with the canal is the area of Foxton Locks, which allowed canal boats to travel up a 75ft hill using a series of locks. To allow the faster

movement of canal boats an Inclined Plane to the east of Foxton Locks, was designed which acted as a pioneering boat lift, and which is now Scheduled. Stanford Hall is a Registered Park and Garden located in the south west of the character area and is a large country house on the site of a former manor house. Nearby is a deserted medieval settlement of Stormsworth and this reinforces the pattern seen in High Leicestershire of parkland estates, which were likely to have been the former manorial estate with associated villages and surrounding farmland.

Capacity: Low to Medium

The Laughton Hills are a rural area with little existing development. In general the character area has low capacity to accept further development. Along the route of the A4034 and away from the visible plateaus of the north there would be some scope for carefully considered residential development that fits within the existing infrastructure of the villages and the topography of the surrounding landscape.

Where unsympathetic developments have previously occurred at the edge of settlements, sites have the capacity to accommodate further development, which is more in keeping with the scale and form of the traditional settlement pattern and envelope. Many of the villages have some capacity for small scale development internally as infill but care must be taken to not impact further on the surrounding countryside. Some of the villages along the A4034 such as Husbands Bosworth have the residential capacity in landscape terms to accommodate further development.



South Kilworth Village





Foxton Church



Typical hedgerow boundary of the Laughton Hills

Key Issues

- The distinctive ridgeline and steeply sloping sides of the ridge, which characterise the character area, contribute strongly to the area's low capacity to accommodate development. Even minimal development which is inappropriate or poorly sited may impact adversely on landscape character.
- Woodland cover, which is another key feature of the landscape, may be vulnerable to loss through inappropriate development or poor management.
- The rural character of the landscape, both arable and pasture, would be threatened by development. Any development would need careful siting which is sympathetic to landscape setting and landform in particular.
- In developing the tourism potential of Foxton Locks care will need to be taken to minimise the impact on the immediate landscape.

Welland Valley Landscape Character Area

Key Characteristics

- Gently meandering river in wide and shallow valley
- Little tree cover
- Pasture on the floodplains
- Arable farming on the valley sides
- Market Harborough, operating as a traditional market town, is the dominant urban influence

General Description

The Welland Valley character area, is well defined in terms of topography and location, but has a number of landscape characteristics similar to the other character areas, particularly in and around the environs of Kibworth, in the centre of the District. The character area follows the wide shallow valley of the River Welland, which flows from west to east through Market Harborough. The River Welland itself forms the boundary between Leicestershire and Northamptonshire.

The area is mainly a mix of medium sized agricultural fields enclosed by mixed hedgerows with some evidence of hedgerow removal. There is little established woodland with most mature planting following the water courses. The area has extensive views across the valley but is enclosed by ridges of higher land from the adjoining character areas particularly to the north.

Topography

The topography of the Welland Valley is that of a wide flat river valley with sloping, shallow valley sides that stretch to the steeper ridges to the north which form the boundaries to adjacent character areas; High Leicestershire and the Laughton Hills. The character area covers the central valley to either side of the River Welland and runs to the base of slope of the ridges, at approximately 70 m AOD.

Geology

The main geology grouping of the Welland Valley is Jurassic Middle Lias.

Vegetation

The Welland Valley has little in the way of established woodland; the majority of mature vegetation is concentrated around the watercourses and disused rail line in the form of scattered copses of trees. Common species of trees in the area are ash, oak and field maple with some willows that follow the path of the River Welland in small cluster groups towards the east.

The mature hedgerows in the area mainly consist of hawthorn with some field maple and dog rose. There is evidence of hedgerow removal to create larger sized fields to allow modern arable farming practices.

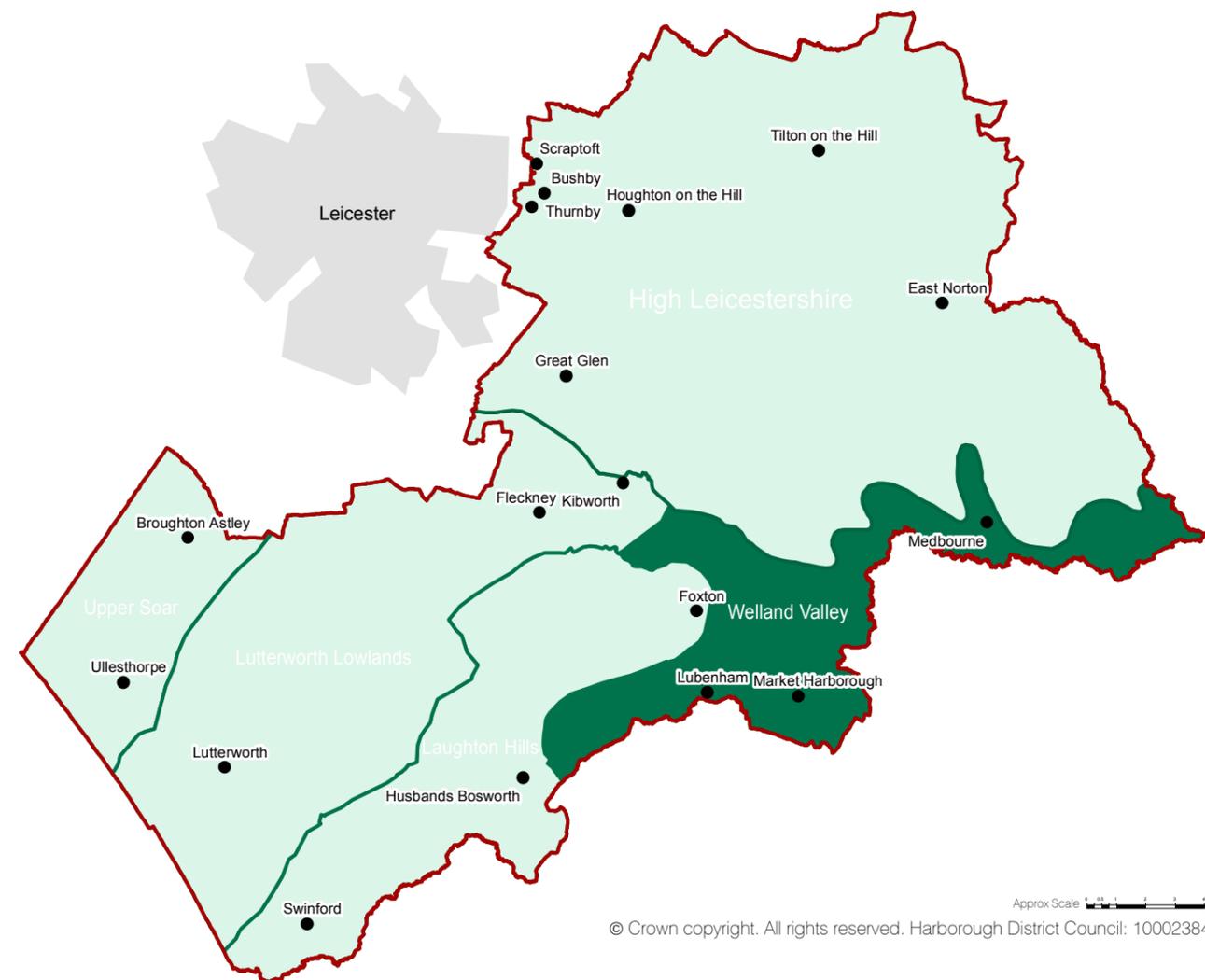
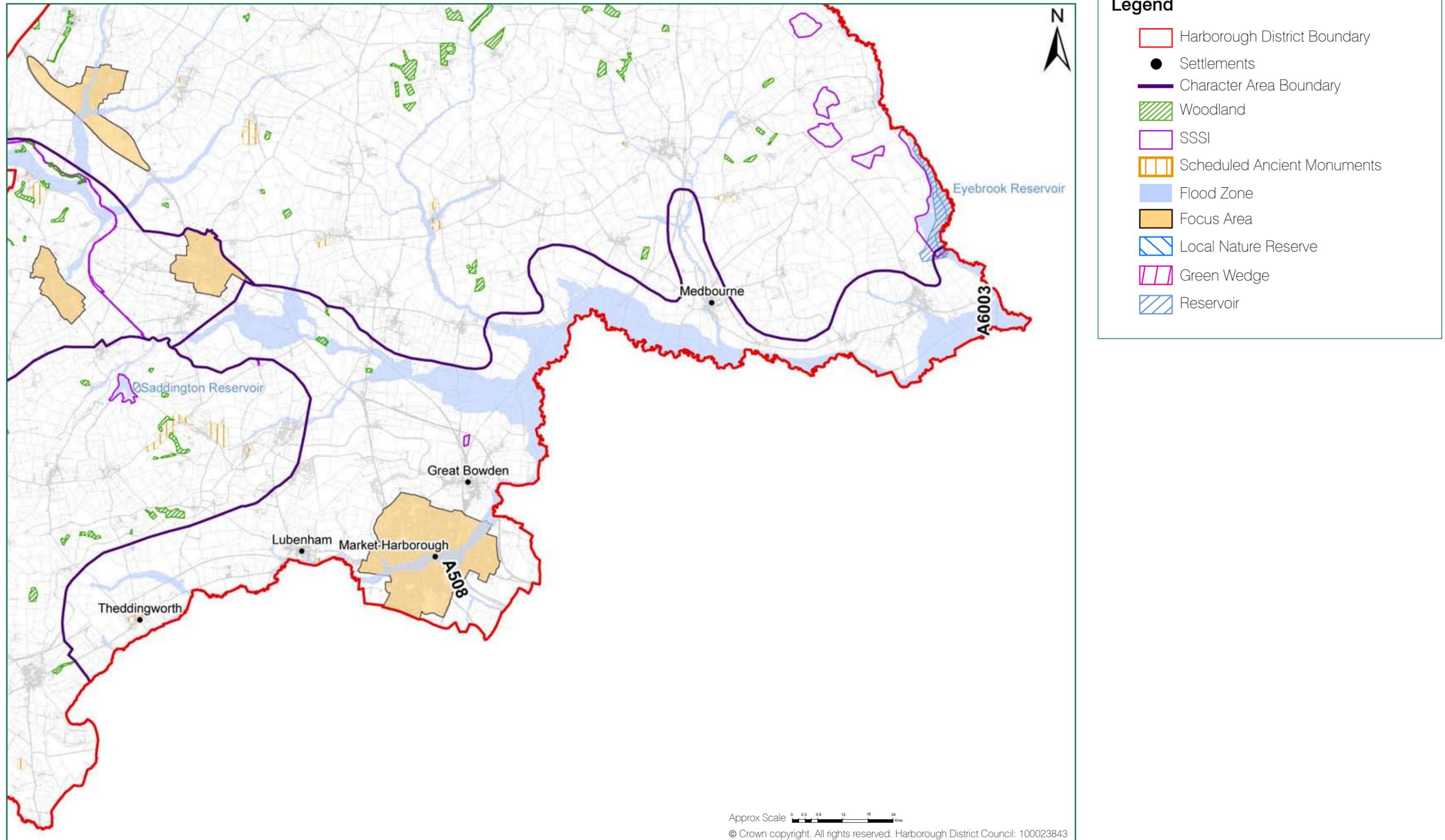


Figure 1.7: - Welland Valley- Landscape Character Plan



Ecology

The River Welland is known to support a range of bird species, small mammals and amphibians have been found in adjacent areas. White-clawed crayfish, water vole, reptiles and otters may also be present.

Other protected/ notable fauna that may be present in this area include badger, bats, amphibians, reptiles and nesting birds (including ground nesting bird species such as skylark and grey partridge in areas of arable land), brown hares may also be present in the arable fields.

One SSSI is present in the Welland Valley – Great Bowden Borrowpit SSSI, notable as it supports a tall fen plant community which is uncommon in the Midlands. Part of the Kilby-Foxton Canal SSSI also clips the western edge of the Welland Valley, although it is mostly located in the Lutterworth Lowlands.

Land Use

The large floodplain of the Welland Valley supports arable farming and grazing. The techniques used in modern farming have led to the creation of larger fields and the loss of hedgerows. Market Harborough is the largest town within the Welland Valley; Lubenham to the south west and Great Bowden to the north east are other main settlements, within this character area.

Urban Influence/ Settlement Pattern

The town of Market Harborough dominates the Welland Valley as a centre for both population and employment for the District. As a traditional market town it retains many of its historic buildings and features in its centre which have become mixed with some newer shopping developments such as St Mary’s Place. The outskirts of Market Harborough have given way to newer predominantly residential, office and retail developments.

Several major roads lead out of Market Harborough and through the Welland Valley including the B6047 to the north, A4304 towards Lutterworth and the A508 into Northamptonshire. The A6 provides an important road connection to Leicester to the north, and Kettering to the south east, Market Harborough is served by a mainline railway station.

There are a range of smaller settlements in the Welland Valley some of which have retained their traditional features such as Medbourne to the north east located along the Medbourne Brook. Many of the other villages in the region have been dissected by the busy through route of the A4304; their character tends to be affected by the through traffic of vehicles.



The Medbourne Brook flowing through Medbourne Village



Heritage

The Welland Valley is made up of a number of villages which have their origins in agricultural activity. Of the Scheduled Ancient Monuments in the character area, the majority of them relate to deserted or shrunken medieval settlements which reflects the agricultural use and settlement of the area during this period. Associated with use of the land are areas of ridge and furrow earthworks surrounding present day or former villages. However, for the most part, the area was used for pasture rather than arable due to its tendency to flood.

Market Harborough itself is first mentioned in 12th century as a manor with 200 tax payers. By the 14th century there was evidence of commercial activity such as wool trading but agriculture was the mainstay of the economy, as with the other villages in the area. Textile and clothing manufacture continued to take place but Market Harborough owes its early prosperity to its location on a good thoroughfare, being equally distanced from Leicester and Northampton. Together with this and the large number of inns and coaching houses, the town was able to provide residences to followers of the Hunts in the region.

The construction of the Grand Union Canal, in the early 1800s meant that Harborough was the centre for distribution of coal to Kettering and onwards to Huntingdon. Later the railway constructed in 1850 helped to develop the industrial growth of the town.

The town remained popular for settlement and with a growing population new large residential developments were constructed. The A6 bypass has helped to calm traffic in the centre maintaining

the market town appearance; however it has grown and developed quite substantially in recent years in comparison to other settlements nearby.

Capacity: Medium

The Welland Valley comprises a generally flat floodplain with predominantly agricultural land use. Due to the general lack of vegetation cover across the floodplain clear views extend across the majority of the valley. The character area has a medium capacity to accept small scale development.

Areas further from Market Harborough, within the more rural areas, have lower levels of capacity and development should be avoided. Within the areas immediately surrounding Market Harborough, development is possible with consideration of issues related to its layout, natural extents and envelope, defined in the main by topographical features.

The character area has the capacity to accommodate some residential development around Market Harborough and to a lesser extent around Great Bowden and Lubenham, the larger settlements within the character area. The villages further away from Market Harborough would have less capacity to accommodate significant development, as the more rural influences of the character area increase.

Key Issues

- The relatively flat and open landscape is vulnerable to adverse visual and landscape impacts of development.
- The immediate landscape setting to Market Harborough is very vulnerable to inappropriately sited development, both in the valley base to the east, above the ridgeline to the north and adjacent to enclosing landscape features to the west and south. It is important that care is taken to prevent further new development that impacts on the ridgeline and valley base, as well as views from the wider landscape setting of Market Harborough.
- The generalised lack of woodland cover across the landscape character area means that new development must be well mitigated to minimise impacts. Opportunities for new woodland screen planting should be encouraged alongside any new development proposals.



Looking east from Paynes Lane across Medbourne village



Grand Union Canal on western border of Market Harborough

Upper Soar Landscape Character Area

Key Characteristics

- Large wide river basin with high ridges
- Forms a small part of larger character area
- Lack of woodland
- Predominantly pasture
- Visible influences from outside character areas
- Urban influence apparent in particular around Broughton Astley

General Description

The Upper Soar is a large character area, which stretches beyond Harborough District with only its easternmost edge falling within the District. Overall, the character is an open, elongated basin serving the River Soar with ridges to the perimeter of the character area looking in on a rolling valley. The characteristics of this eastern edge area are less distinct than those of the character area as a whole. The area is a mix of pasture and arable agriculture with a series of urban settlements set within a tight network of connecting roads. There are few woodland areas with hedgerows acting as the dominant vegetated elements of the area.

Topography

The eastern side of the Upper Soar character area is on the edge of the elongated basin rising up to 130m beside the Lutterworth Lowlands. The high ridge profile of the character area provides generally open outward views across the rest of the Upper Soar area to the west with more enclosed local views found within the lowlands areas.

Geology

The main geology grouping of Upper Soar is Triassic Mudstones, Permian and Triassic.

Vegetation

The wider Upper Soar area has very little established woodland, with no significant woodland within this eastern area. Mature, densely planted boundaries which screen Magna Park Distribution Park represent the most dominant vegetation of the area. The established but declining hedgerows divide the medium to large sized agricultural fields. The hedgerows are generally well maintained and tend to include thorn, field maple and elm trees. There are scattered hedgerow trees and formations of copses, usually found closer to settlements with the most common tree types being oak and ash.

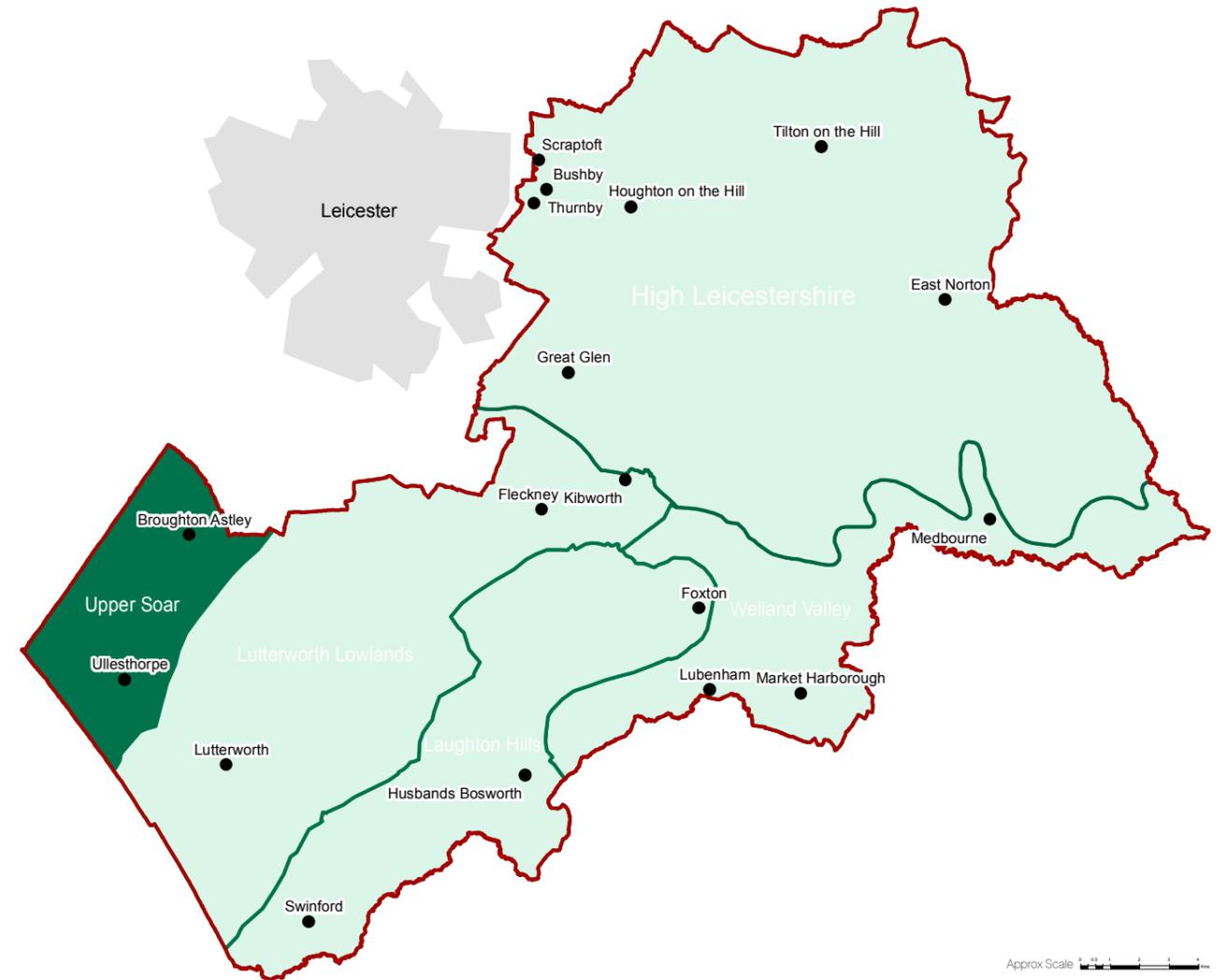
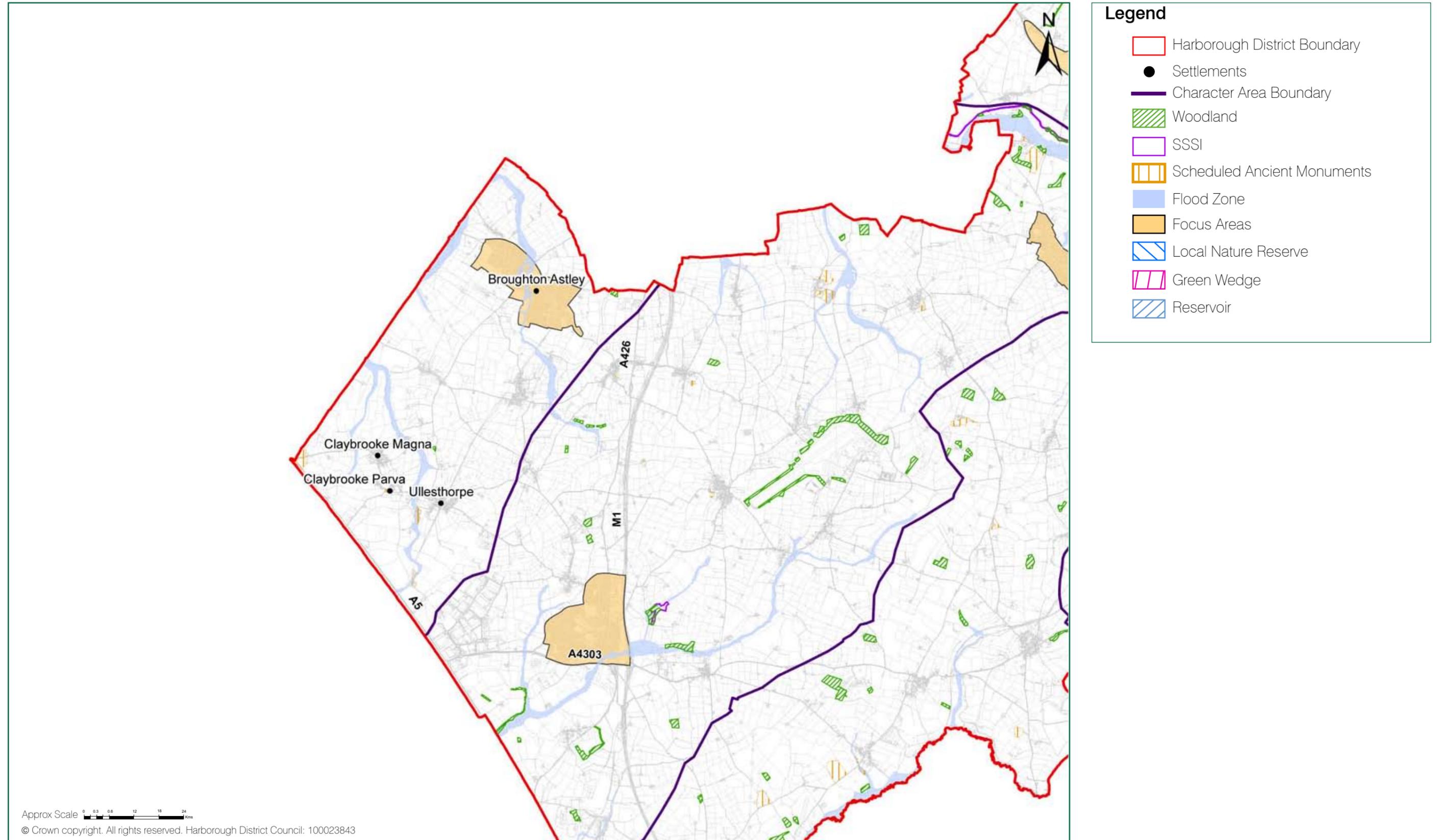


Figure 1.8: - Upper Soar- Landscape Character Plan



Ecology

There are no SSSIs in this area and, with the area being fairly developed and intensively farmed, the River Soar itself is likely to be the main ecological feature.

Otters have been seen on the upper tributaries of the Soar in recent years and it is likely that the river corridor supports a number of other notable/protected species such as water vole, white clawed crayfish, birds, bats, reptiles and amphibians. The farmland areas in this region are likely to support protected/notable species such as badger, brown hare and ground nesting birds. In addition other birds/small mammals and reptiles are also likely to make use of hedgerows.

Land Use

The eastern part of the Upper Soar is on the edge of a basin which supports predominantly pasture. The area is adjacent to a number of large storage units centred on Magna Park which are associated with the major road network in the area. These structures and associated planting along their boundaries, contribute significantly to the land use of the eastern section of the Upper Soar character area. In addition there is a high concentration of settlements in the area which is crossed by a network of connecting road infrastructure.

Urban Influence/Settlement pattern

The Upper Soar is an area of well established relatively large villages. Broughton Astley to the north is the largest and most dominant of the urban



The M1 motorway exerts an influence from the adjacent Character Area

centres and has expanded in recent years, mainly through piecemeal residential developments, around its periphery. Ullesthorpe to the south is the other significant settlement within the character area which has also grown recently.

Magna Park represents a significant area of warehouse and storage units set within the adjacent Lutterworth Lowlands character area but due to the topography is more visible from the Upper Soar. The large scale warehouse units are surrounded by heavily planted boundaries that part screen them from the surrounding boundaries.

There is a relatively high density of roads connecting the settlements within the Upper Soar. The A5 along the southern character boundary follows the Watling Street Roman road and runs north west to south east connecting with Magna Park, Lutterworth and the M1. The M1 is well screened from the Upper Soar although noise from the road is apparent in the more northern areas.

Heritage

The western and southern boundaries of this character area are roads located on the former lines of Roman Roads. To the west is the Fosse Way, which originally ran from Exeter in the south northwards to south Lincolnshire. To the south is the A5, which lies on the former Watling Street. At the convergence of the Fosse Way and Watling Street at the south west of the character area is the Scheduled site at High Cross which was the site of a Roman Settlement. There is little other evidence of Roman occupation and utilisation of the area.

There are two Scheduled moated sites near to Ullesthorpe and are likely to be related to the shrinking of the nearby village of Ullesthorpe and Claybrooke Parva. They represent the remains of what would have been prestigious residences with the provision of a moat as a status symbol. Their presence, near to the remains of a former medieval settlement, provides information about use of the landscape and wealth of the area during this period.

There are a number of larger villages within the character area, the largest two being Broughton Astley and Ullesthorpe. Broughton Astley was mentioned in the Domesday and referred to as Broctone. Broughton Astley expanded in the 1800s due to the industry of machine knitting and hosiery aided by the railway which ran through the village from Leicester onto Rugby in the late 19th century. This railway was later abandoned as were others in the area in the 1960s. During the same time the town's modern residential housing developments were undertaken. This pattern of residential housing estates has continued into the present day.



Capacity: Medium

The rural character of the Upper Soar has already been encroached upon by the urban character of its settlements. The rural character which remains undisturbed requires protection and has low capacity to accommodate change. Conversely, areas in particular around Broughton Astley, have medium levels of capacity to accommodate new residential development.

Overall, the Upper Soar represents a relatively developed landscape with the capacity to accommodate further change. Broughton Astley to the north offers the most potential for expansion. The other villages of the Upper Soar do have some capacity for residential development but on a much smaller individual site scale.

Key Issues

- The wide, open landscape which lacks large scale woodland cover is vulnerable to the adverse visual impacts of development. Appropriate mitigation measures as part of the design process would be important to the successful integration of new development into the landscape.
- Rural landscape characteristics are affected by increasing urban influences towards the north of the character area closer to the urban fringe of Leicester. Development pressures may impact on landscape character and appropriate design and mitigation measures are key.
- Care should be taken to conserve remaining landscape features and elements which otherwise could be lost to inappropriate development.

Lutterworth Lowlands Landscape Character Area

Key Characteristics

- Open and relatively flat, to gently rolling area
- Lack of large woodland areas
- Farming is predominantly grazing
- Scattering of small villages with larger settlements of Kibworth and Fleckney to the north and Lutterworth to the south
- Contains Bruntingthorpe Airfield
- The M1 and the A426 run through the area
- Contains Magna Park Distribution Park to the west of Lutterworth

General Description

The Lutterworth Lowlands is an area of predominantly open, gently rolling pasture. Regular, medium sized fields are divided by mature hedgerows that appear to be declining in extent in places. There is little woodland of any significant size within the character area and where it does feature, it appears to be concentrated around the parkland estates towards the north of the area. The area is characterised by open views across the flatter expanses of the area. Lutterworth, in the south of the area, is the area's main town with the expanding villages of Fleckney and Kibworth towards the north east of the area.

Topography

Overall, the topography of the Lutterworth Lowlands is flat to gently undulating. The only areas of significant incline are along the River Swift to the south of Lutterworth. The River Avon forms the southern boundary to the character area further to the south of Lutterworth. The gently rolling lie of the land undulates between 105 metres AOD along the river valleys to over 135 metres AOD at various high points through the region. While the gently undulating nature of the land presents an open landscape, the views over this area are not particularly distant.

Geology

The main geology grouping of the Lutterworth Lowlands is Jurassic Middle Lias.

Vegetation

Generally, the Lutterworth Lowlands character area lacks significant tree cover with only a scattering of small woodlands across the District. The parkland areas in the north tend to have localised denser tree cover and some wider woodland coverage associated with them, in particular Wistow in the north east and around Misterton and Cotesbach in the south. The predominant tree species in the area are oak and ash.

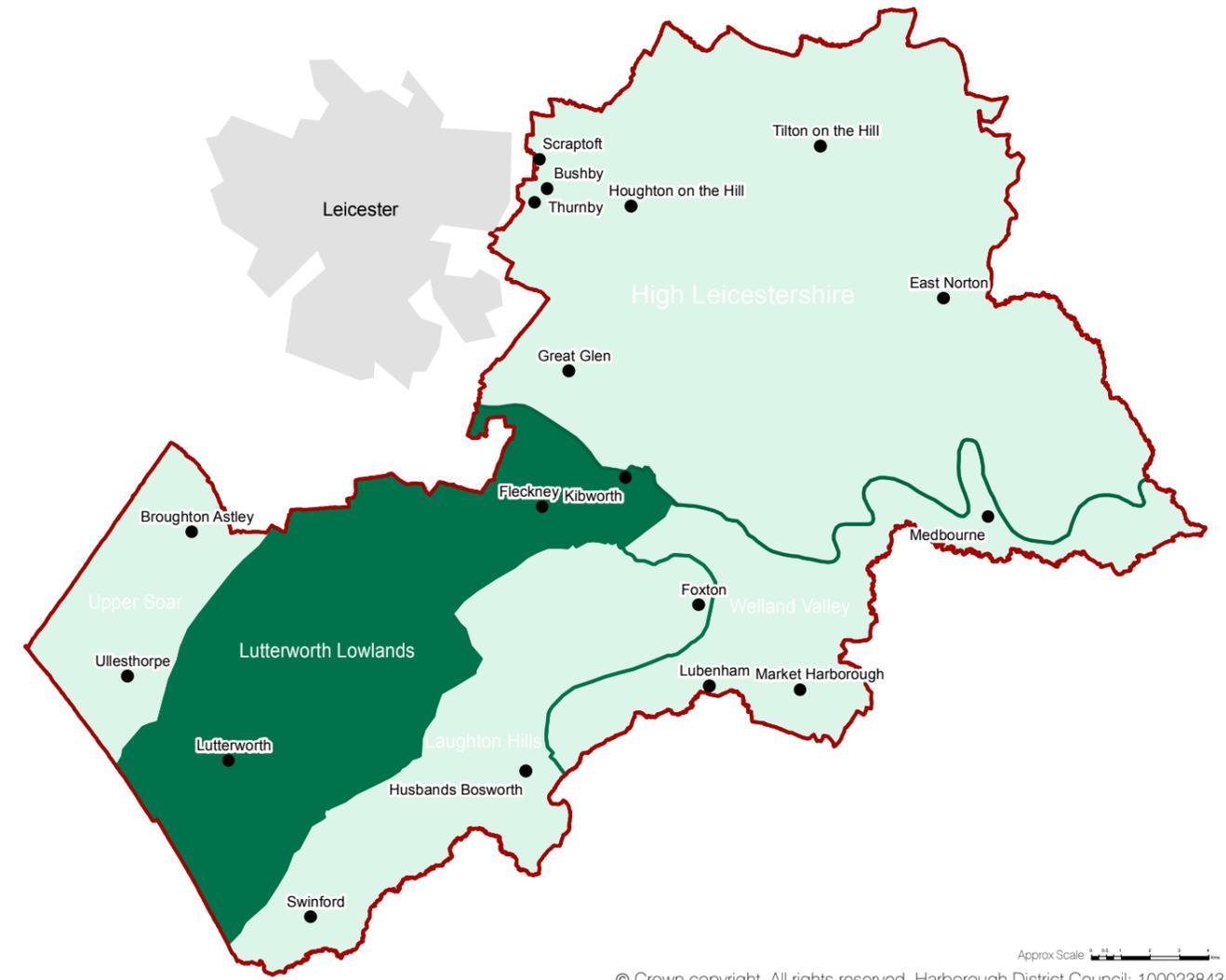
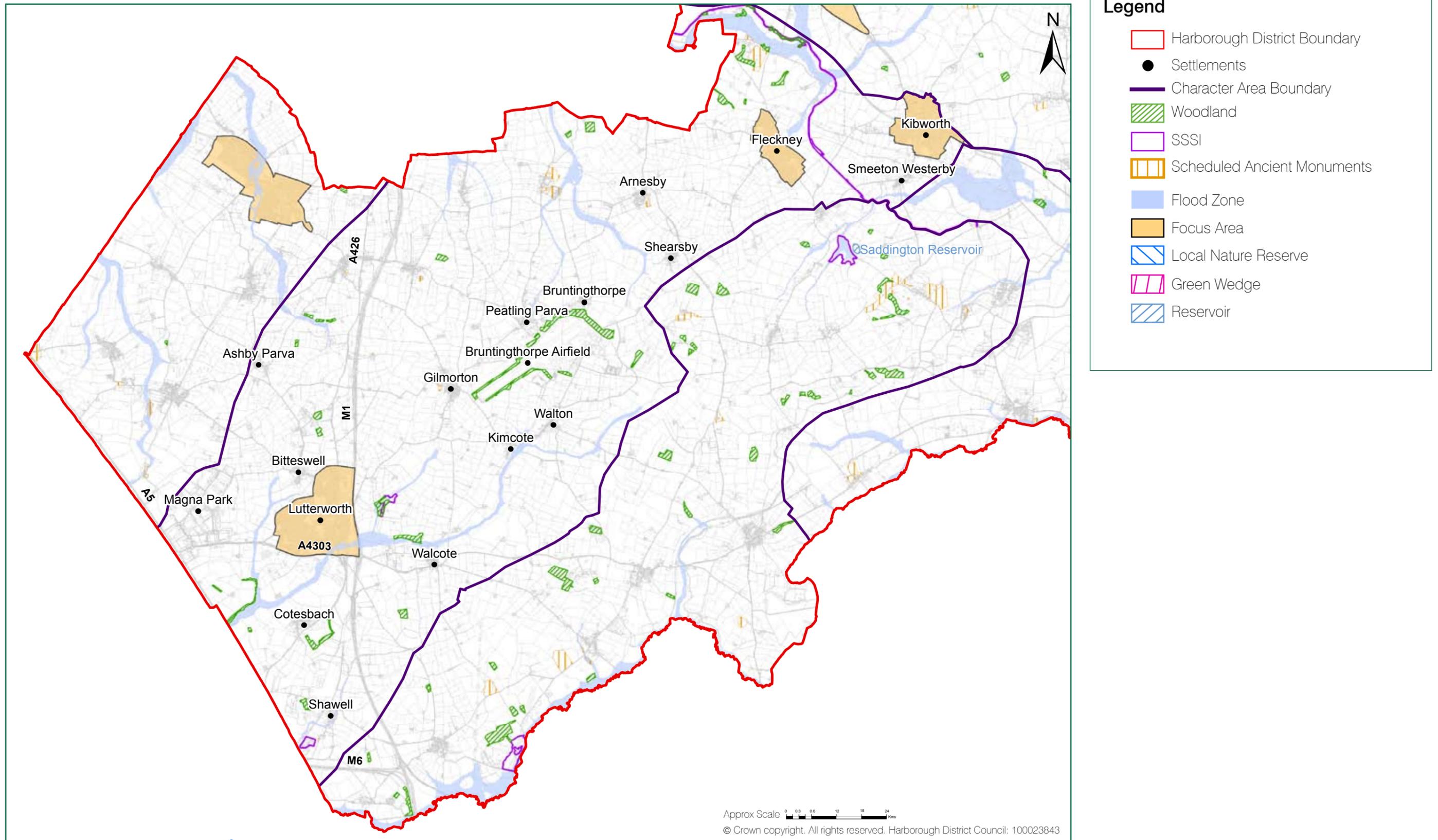


Figure 1.9: - Lutterworth Lowlands- Landscape Character Plan





Looking north along the M1

Other areas of significant vegetation are around the Bruntingthorpe Airfield which has densely planted boundaries giving a locally wooded feel which serves to screen views. Locally visually significant vegetation also runs along dismantled railway lines to the south of Lutterworth and to the west of the M1 giving the impression of well wooded corridors through the character area. There are groupings of vegetation along the tributary streams of the Swift and the Soar. The hedgerows of the Lutterworth Lowlands are mature and well established, yet appear to be in decline due to a lack of ongoing management. Occasional hedgerow trees frequent the field boundaries and there are isolated instances of spinneys and copses in the area.

Ecology

The three SSSIs present in this area all support wetland habitats.

Cave's Inn Pits SSSI in the south of the area is one of the best remaining areas of neutral marsh in Leicestershire, while Misterton Marshes SSSI is one of the largest remaining blocks of unimproved wetland habitat in Leicestershire.

The Kilby-Foxton Canal SSSI which runs through the north-eastern part of this area supports a well developed and diverse assemblage of plants including a range of pondweeds as well as swamp, tall fen and emergent communities. A significant roost of Daubenton's bats is also present in one of the canal tunnels in this area. This watercourse is likely to support a range of bird species as well as small mammals possibly including water vole.

White clawed crayfish are known to be present in watercourses in this area, while other protected/notable fauna such as water vole, otter, badger, bats, notable bird species, reptiles and amphibians are also likely to be present.

Land Use

The Lutterworth Lowlands is predominantly an area of rural farmland split into two catchment areas. The southern half of the area's rivers and streams are tributaries which serve the River Swift and those in the northern section serve the River Soar. Farming is mixed but mainly pasture, with post enclosure farms scattered across the area. The Lutterworth Lowlands serves a mix of settlements ranging from small villages to an established town at Lutterworth. The Bruntingthorpe Airfield is of local importance although well concealed in the landscape. Magna Park, a 124.8 hectare Distribution Park is located to the west of Lutterworth.

Urban Influence/ Settlement Pattern

There is an even spread of established villages and farms throughout the area with two larger villages in the north, Kibworth and Fleckney, and the town of Lutterworth to the south. Lutterworth is the urban centre of the area, and has expanded in recent years mainly through piecemeal residential developments. The traditional church spires/ towers of the region are evident in the more traditional villages around the airfield. The villages have also seen a mix of newer modern residential developments predominantly on their peripheries.

The M1 motorway runs north to south parallel with the A426 and divides the character area towards the west, passing Lutterworth. The motorway acts as a significant barrier across the landscape in visual, noise and connectivity terms. A series of bridges along the M1 and A426 connect the otherwise separated segments and provide continued links along the A4303/A4304 towards Market Harborough and other local routes. A network of minor roads runs through the Lutterworth Lowlands connecting the larger settlements with the spread of villages and farms scattered across the area. Traffic noise generated by the larger roads is locally intrusive.

Other significant developments within the area include Magna Park Distribution Park; a locally visually prominent warehousing and distribution centre to the west of Lutterworth, along the A5. The current layout is relatively successfully screened by woodland planting around the boundary. To the north east around Dunton Bassett sand and gravel extraction occurs in the generally open and flat landscape. There is also a large quarry near Shawell.

Heritage

There are a number of villages in this character area and three larger settlements comprising Kibworth, Fleckney and Lutterworth. There are a number of Scheduled sites in this area which are related to moated sites. These sites indicate wealthy residences of the 13th and 14th centuries and are often attached to the edges of settlement or former settlements. The pattern of isolated scattered farmsteads located within large areas of open landscape is a particular pattern of this character area and is in contrast to those farmsteads which cling to the edges of settlements in the east of Harborough District.

Lutterworth itself is thought to be of Saxon origin being a favourable settlement due to its proximity to the River Swift. In the 1200s it was granted a charter to have a market and it is from this trade and market origins that Lutterworth has developed. Its prosperity as a town developed further as it provided an ideal



Roundabout on the edge of Lutterworth



stopping point on the way to Oxford and London. The Great Central Railway was relatively late in coming to the town by 1899, and so the town missed out on earlier industrial prosperity, in particular Victorian development. However, it did undertake some textile weaving and hosiery manufacture.

Bruntingthorpe Airfield was constructed in the 1940s and originally used as a satellite to North Luffenham. It was used briefly by Frank Whittle who developed the jet engine but the site was handed over to the United States Air Force in the 1950s. In the early 1960's, the M1 was constructed which runs north/south through the character area. More recent development has taken place in the town of Kibworth, Fleckney and Lutterworth as well as a large distribution estate known as Magna Park which is located to the west of Lutterworth and the M1.

Capacity: Medium to High

The Lutterworth Lowlands character area represents a changing landscape with many recent developments around the fringes of existing settlements. Expansion due to new development areas may mean that the area is under threat of losing some of its rural characteristics. The area has some limited capacity to accommodate localised development in particular around the larger settlements but the more rural parts of the area towards the north would not be appropriate, nor would the farmland south of Bruntingthorpe Airfield.

The Lutterworth Lowlands character area has the capacity to accommodate further residential development. Lutterworth, Fleckney and Kibworth in particular have the capacity and infrastructure in place to allow for further development, within and adjacent to their current urban envelopes. The smaller villages of the area have much lower capacity and would need to be considered on a case by case basis.

Key Issues

- Given the degree of change already experienced in the landscape character area further development proposals should be carefully assessed to avoid additional adverse or irreversible change to the remaining landscape character.
- Landscape character is relatively open, with a lack of enclosing landscape elements, such as mature woodlands and hedgerows. Any new development should take account of longer distance visual impacts on the landscape setting.
- There is a general lack of vegetation cover across the character area where both mature woodlands and hedgerows have been previously lost. Remaining vegetation cover therefore needs adequate protection against detrimental impacts and supplementary planting where opportunities arise.
- The northern part of the landscape character area contains existing larger settlements such as Kibworth and Fleckney, which may be able to accommodate development within their natural landscape envelopes, as long as care is taken to minimise impacts on the immediate landscape setting.
- Elsewhere, the southern parts of the landscape character area contain fewer and smaller settlements, with the exception of Lutterworth. Any development, even small scale should preserve remaining landscape features and mitigate against adverse impacts in the wider landscape.



Magna Park viewed from southern edge of Lutterworth



Summary

Following an impartial landscape based approach to assessing the overall landscape character of Harborough District, the District has been divided into five landscape character areas, based on the Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Landscape report as follows:

- High Leicestershire
- Welland Valley
- Laughton Hills
- Lutterworth Lowlands
- Upper Soar.

In overall terms topography is the major defining characteristic which distinguishes one character area from another. As a result, the character areas are named according to their topographic features i.e hills, valleys etc.

Other key characteristics are also important in the definition of the character areas; High Leicestershire is defined by its retention of rural land use and traditional settlement patterns; Lutterworth Lowlands is defined by larger settlements set within an open landscape with high levels of change in the form of road and industrial interventions. The key characteristics of each of the different landscape character areas are described in detail and summarised on the previous landscape character sheets.

Whilst there are evident differences in landscape character across the District these are not marked and as noted above relate mainly to differences in topography, woodland cover and the extent and scale of built development and other infrastructure features. Inevitably, the character areas tend to merge one into the other with gradual and sometimes subtle changes.

Character areas have been established that cover the whole district to an appropriate level of detail given the scope of the project. At any level it is possible to determine variation within the character areas where a

particular area might be able to accept development. For example, whilst the majority of High Leicestershire has a low capacity to accommodate development, the western edge of the character area, on the urban fringes of Leicester has the potential to accommodate development to a much higher degree than the rest of the character area. This urban fringe area has been taken forward as one of the Focus Areas and has been considered in greater detail in relation to capacity to accept development in the next section of the report.

Clearly, it will be necessary as development or change proposals come forward to evaluate each on its own merits and go through a process of sensitivity analysis as part of a standard impact assessment process. All the landscape character areas have been assessed and rated according to landscape capacity, to gauge the ability of each of the character areas to accept development without detriment to their key characteristics.

The following table summarises the Landscape Character Areas capacity for change and is based upon the following definitions;

High Capacity

An area able to accommodate development or change with only minor compromise and impact on existing landscape character. Mitigation measures should potentially address landscape impacts.

Medium Capacity

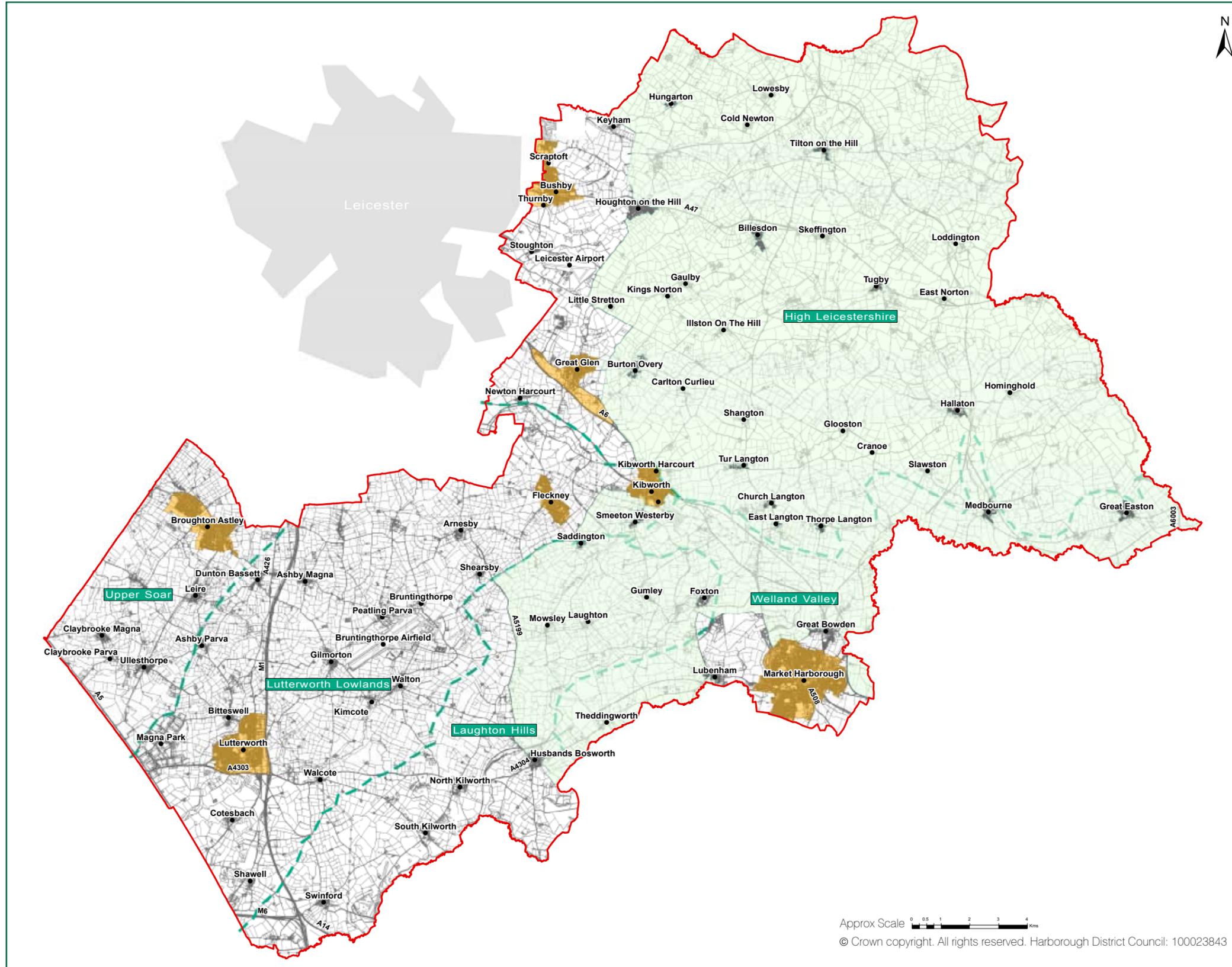
An area able to accommodate development or change with some degradation of existing landscape character. Mitigation measures would be required to address adverse landscape impacts.

Low Capacity

An area that is unlikely to be able to accommodate development without significant degradation in existing landscape character. Mitigation measures are unlikely to be able to address adverse landscape impacts.

Landscape Character Area	Landscape Capacity
High Leicestershire	Low- Medium
Laughton Hills	Low- Medium
Welland Valley	Medium
Upper Soar	Medium
Lutterworth Lowlands	Medium- High

Figure 1.10: Harborough District Landscape Character Plan with APAC Boundary



Legend

- Harborough District Boundary
- Settlements
- Urban Fringe/ Settlement Areas
- Harborough District Character Areas
- APAC Designation

The boundary of the current APAC designation, as illustrated in Figure 1.7, runs in an approximately north – south direction across the centre of the district, with the eastern side falling within the designation. The APAC boundary does not correlate to landscape character as defined by the five Harborough landscape character areas. The APAC boundary matches most closely to the High Leicestershire landscape character area, the majority of which falls under the designation. The Welland Valley landscape character area falls mainly under the designation. The Lutterworth Lowlands and Laughton Hills landscape character areas partly fall within the designation, the Upper Soar character area does not.

This study is based on the premise that current best practice advocates a move away from rigid designations towards character based projection policy. This landscape character assessment provides the basis for policy which is based on the inherent characteristics of the Harborough landscape itself. On this basis and because the APAC designation does not correlate well with the landscape characteristics and features on the ground. It is recommended that the designation is removed and the five defined landscape character areas used as a basis for defining policy and making development decisions instead.

Part 2 - Focus Areas Assessment

Introduction and Methodology

This section of the report explores the nature of the relationship between a selected number of settlements within Harborough District and their surrounding urban fringe/ settlement edge landscape. The study analyses the areas around the perimeter of seven settlements, with a population of over 3,000, with a view to assessing their potential to change and their capacity to accept additional development, based on a basic landscape and visual assessment process.

In the light of development pressures across Harborough District, and in accordance with current policy, it is important that Harborough District Council takes account of landscape character in accommodating new development. This report will offer a landscape-based assessment of fringe/ settlement edge areas against which to consider possible locations for new development.

The existing land uses within urban fringe settlement areas vary greatly with sporadic and isolated edge of settlement housing, areas devoted to market gardening, garden centres, recreational uses, open space and agriculture. Given their proximity to settlement edges these areas are often influenced by urbanising elements or built form associated with urban areas. The presence of pylons, structures, highway lighting, or the engineered appearance of former country lanes can blur the edges and distinctive underlying landscape character of these urban fringe areas.

This assessment seeks to evaluate the existing landscape quality and integrity of the land surrounding the chosen settlements, as well as determine which sites have the capacity to change without adverse impact upon the landscape setting of the settlement or wider countryside edge character.

To establish the capacity for change the sites have been assessed in terms of their ability to accept development. For the purposes of this high level assessment, it is assumed that development

will be predominantly two storey built form and of predominantly residential use. Other types of development will require an individual site check, particularly if large scale or tall development is proposed, to assess particular or specific landscape or visual impacts.

The settlements selected for assessment are those with a population in excess of 3,000, representing the largest settlements within the District. Harborough District Council may need to consider new development adjacent to the largest settlements in order to accommodate development requirements.

This study will offer a guide to how sites can be considered for development in relation to landscape and visual characteristics only in each of the seven settlements. The settlements are :

- Scraftoft, Bushby and Thurnby
- Great Glen
- Kibworth
- Market Harborough
- Lutterworth
- Fleckney
- Broughton Astley

The methodology for the assessment included a two stage process, desk top followed by field survey undertaken by qualified Landscape Architects. The process followed the principles of landscape and visual assessment, with particular emphasis on assessing the landscape for its capacity to accept change. A traffic light approach was employed to evaluate all land adjoining the perimeter of the settlements, to assess the settlement/countryside edge in landscape and visual terms, and determine its capacity for change. The traffic light methodology is based on a three tier system of designating sectors (where each sector represents a collection of field size units) of the settlement edge, according to:

- **Red** - Land considered unsuitable for development in landscape terms. Landscape character should be protected through the prevention of development.
- **Amber** - Land considered to have the potential for consideration of development in landscape terms. Appropriate mitigation measures would need to developed through fuller landscape assessment at the site design/ masterplanning stage.
- **Green** - Land considered appropriate for development in landscape terms. Development proposals would need to be accompanied by a fuller landscape assessment at site design/masterplanning stage.

During the desk study stage the search areas around each of the settlements were roughly defined through consultation with Harborough District Council officers and the steering group, determined in part by sites which had planning applications submitted previously and by 'natural or man made' boundaries or features beyond which the land would not be considered contiguous with the settlement edge. Land within currently defined Limits of Development was not mapped. Baseline GIS information was provided by Harborough District Council.

At the next stage of the desk work prior to site visits, consideration was also given to other aspects, which will limit development to further refine the search area including:

- Areas affected by flooding;
- Designations such as Scheduled Ancient Monuments, SSSIs, Local Nature Reserves;
- Presence of footpaths adjoining/ crossing the search areas, obtained from 1:20,000 OS Maps;
- Existing woodland, tree belts, hedgerows and Ancient Woodland.

- Open/enclosed nature of the landscape
- Association with the settlement/countryside edge

For this level of assessment, it was not possible or necessary, to undertake detailed searches for footpaths, rights of way, individual listed buildings or individual habitats or species; this would be carried out at the next stage of assessment for individual sites, alongside site impact assessment and masterplanning.

The first mapping exercise helped to subdivide the urban fringe/ settlement edge areas into potential sectors, or collection of fields, which have common character, features, or environmental considerations. Site visits were undertaken around the perimeter of the settlements to view the urban fringe/ settlement edge areas, refine the search envelope, confirm key landscape features and assess the landscape and visual capacity of the landscape to accept change. To determine the rating for individual sectors the areas were rated in terms of capacity to accommodate two storey residential development within the following categories, which are fully defined as:

- Red** – Land considered unsuitable for development in landscape terms. Landscape character should be protected through the prevention of development. Land would include one or more of the following:
- Ridgelines, hilltops and visually prominent hillsides;
 - Steep valley sides and river valleys or corridors including floodplains;
 - Ancient Woodland, woodland blocks, significant tree belts, hedgerows and locally distinctive vegetation patterns;
 - Land not contiguous with the settlement edge.

These areas will be of strong positive landscape character with landscape features which are locally distinctive and essential to protect by the prevention of development.

- Land already affected by infrastructure or disturbed, derelict or damaged land;
- Land contiguous with the existing settlement edge.

Amber – Land considered to have the potential for consideration of development in landscape terms. Appropriate mitigation measures would need to be developed through fuller landscape assessment at the site design/ masterplanning stage. Land would include one or more of the following:

These areas may vary in quality of landscape character but if they have lost former character or locally distinctive features, they may benefit from enhancement, creating new landscape structure as a part of a site’s overall capacity for change. These sectors are able to accommodate development, but must involve good masterplanning practice to make

- Land including ridgelines which are not fully visible;
- Sloping land which is partially visible or partially concealed by woodland and where visual impact can be mitigated with planting;
- Small enclosed fields adjoining the settlement edge where visual impact can be mitigated with planting.

The perimeter of each settlement edge has been mapped and rated according to its traffic light designation- red, amber or green, with each sector, or collection of fields, designated by an individual letter. Site photos have been taken to illustrate the individual landscape characteristics and setting of different sectors. Findings are set out in a tabular format to aid comparison of sites and their features, with a concluding statement which explains the assessment decision for each area, as follows:

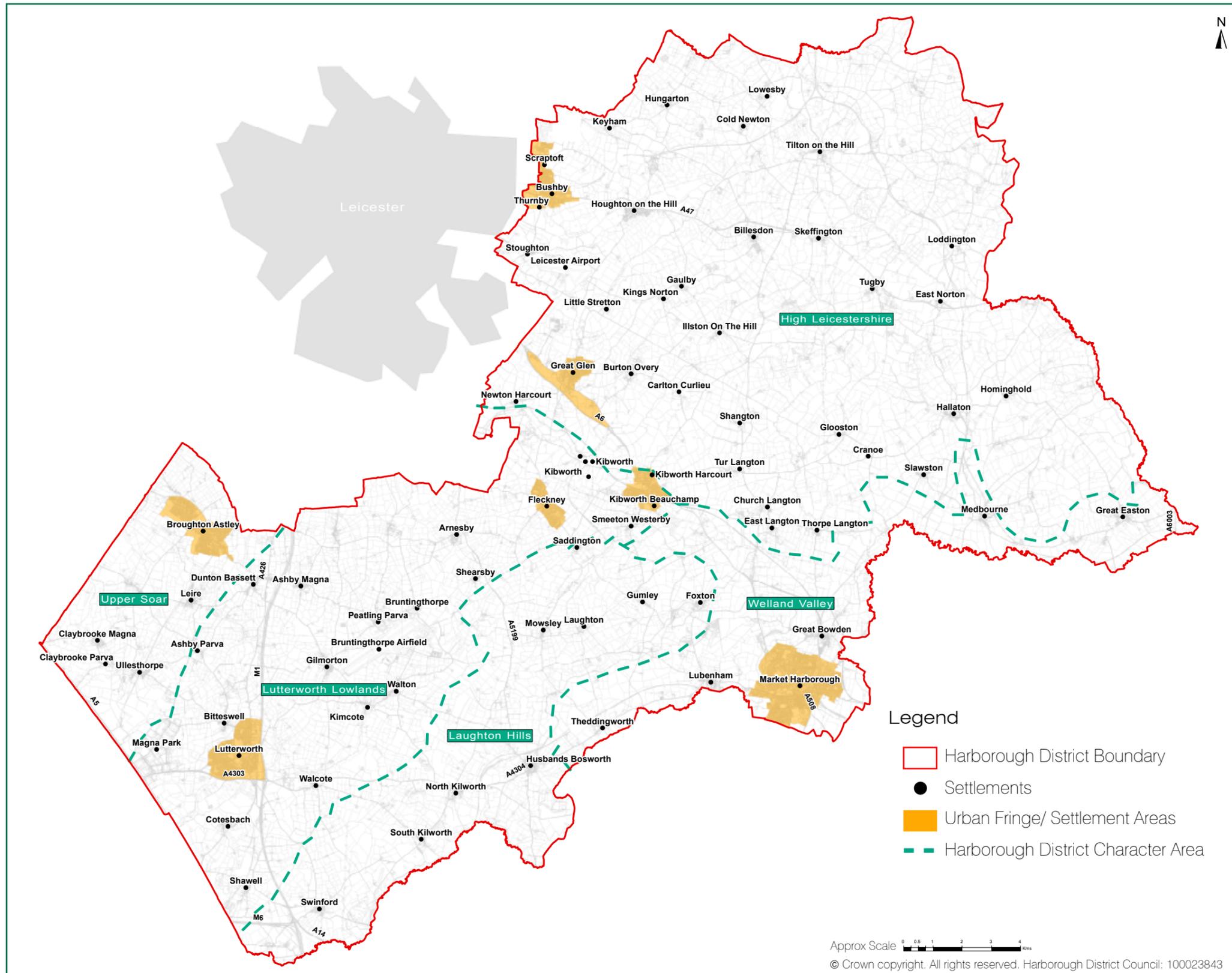
These areas may possess strong positive landscape character with features which are locally distinctive and important to conserve. There may be some degradation of landscape features which can be restored through sensitive design. These sectors can be considered for development with appropriate impact assessment and good design practice incorporated at the masterplanning stage (for example good layout may mitigate adverse impacts).

- Site Context
- Topography
- Vegetation
- Designations
- Integration with settlement edge and countryside edge
- Visibility and Enclosure
- Traffic light rating and explanation

Green – Land considered appropriate for development in landscape terms. Development proposals would need to be accompanied by a fuller landscape assessment at site design/masterplanning stage. Best use of the sites’ potential. Land would include one or more of the following:

- Flat or shallow sloping land which is not highly visible from a distance; and can be mitigated through planting;
- Land visible from a limited number of properties or viewpoints; which can be mitigated through planting;

Figure 2.1: Urban Fringe/ Settlement Areas and Character Areas Plan



Urban Fringe/ Settlement Areas

The adjacent plan illustrates the location and context of each of the seven Focus Areas across Harborough District in relation to the Landscape Character Area boundaries in the previous section of this report. The Focus Areas were chosen for detailed study, as being the largest settlements in the District with populations of over 3,000.

The Focus Areas are located close to major transport routes connected to the urban conurbation of Leicester situated to the north west of Harborough District, or Market Harborough in the south, including the M1, the A6 and the A47.

The Scraptoft, Bushby and Thurnby Focus Area is located on the eastern edge of Leicester, and the Great Glen Focus Area, located directly south on the A6, leading from Leicester to Market Harborough on the western extremes of the High Leicestershire. The Welland Valley Landscape Character Area includes the largest and most dominant of the settlements, Market Harborough, situated on the River Welland on the southern boundary of the District. The Laughton Hills Landscape Character Area does not contain any of the Focus Areas. The Lutterworth Lowlands Landscape Character area contains three of the District's Focus Areas- Lutterworth towards the south of the character area, located directly on the M1 motorway, and Fleckney and Kibworth towards the north of the character area. Fleckney is the smallest of the settlements whilst Kibworth, located on both sides of the A6 road is actually two joined settlements – Kibworth Harcourt and Kibworth Beauchamp. Kibworth as a whole is located directly on the boundary between the Lutterworth Lowlands and High Leicestershire Landscape Character Areas. The final Focus Area, Broughton Astley, sits within the Upper Soar Landscape Character Area.

Scraptoft, Bushby and Thurnby

Scraptoft, Busby and Thurnby are three 'separate but coalesced' settlements situated on the far eastern fringes of Leicester. The settlements sit within the High Leicestershire Landscape Character Area on its western edge, contiguous with the urban edge of Leicester. The A47 connects the three settlements to the centre of Leicester. As a result of their direct association, physical connection and proximity to the edge of the city they are typical 'urban fringe' settlements. Scraptoft, Bushby and Thurnby experience considerable development pressures, particularly for residential commuter development. Their rural situation on the edge of the sensitive High Leicestershire Landscape Character Area makes the settlements an even more attractive prospect for residential development pressures.

To the east of the Scraptoft, Bushby and Thurnby Focus Area the typical undulating landform of High Leicestershire opens up views to and from the countryside. Landform plays an important role in enclosing views to and from the Focus Area, where lower lying land is visually sheltered and development can be screened from longer distance views. Higher locations on ridge tops present open views where development would be highly visible and should be avoided. The Focus Areas are surrounded in the main by sloping arable farm fields which are sensitive to the impacts of development.

In addition, the prevention of complete coalescence has a bearing on potential development sites in the Scraptoft, Bushby and Thurnby Focus Area. Currently the Green Wedge designation, along with a protected local nature reserve to the north of the Focus Area, has constrained development and prevented coalescence between the settlements and Leicester. The designation has an additional function to provide green access routes and spaces linked to the wider countryside, as part of a linked green infrastructure system.

The landscape surrounding the three settlements can accommodate change but to a limited degree, constrained in the main by impacts on the sensitive rural characteristics of the adjacent High Leicestershire Landscape Character Area.

The photos illustrate the issues involving the combined effects of topography, land use and aspect on the ability of particular sites to accommodate potential development. Photo 1 shows the land between Thurnby and south west Leicester with the majority of housing overlooking the land on the northern and southern borders. The majority of this land should remain protected but there is some capacity for parts of this land to accept development whilst preventing the coalescence of the settlements. Views into and out of the urban fringe areas are high and large scale development would be intrusive.

Photo 2 shows the open farmland sloping down towards the border of Thurnby and demonstrates the exposed nature of the area. These open agricultural areas can accommodate further development without impacting on the landscape character of the immediately surrounding landscape.

Photo 3 shows the edge of Bushby stretching out into High Leicestershire and demonstrates the limited capacity for development. There are some pockets of potential development land to be found on the fringes of the settlements but they can only be considered for small scale development with careful mitigation.

The sensitive nature of the High Leicestershire Landscape Character Area creates additional emphasis on careful evaluation of the individual sites capacity to accept development. Generally, the Focus Area is unsuitable for any large scale development but there is potential for some smaller individual sites that would not intrude visually or physically into the High Leicestershire landscape. Small scale development change is possible in smaller plots which remain within or contiguous to the existing settlement edges.

The following plans and tables illustrate the findings in detail, by assigning 'traffic light' designations for potential to accommodate development in landscape

Figure 2.2: Aerial Photo of Scraptoft, Bushby and Thurnby

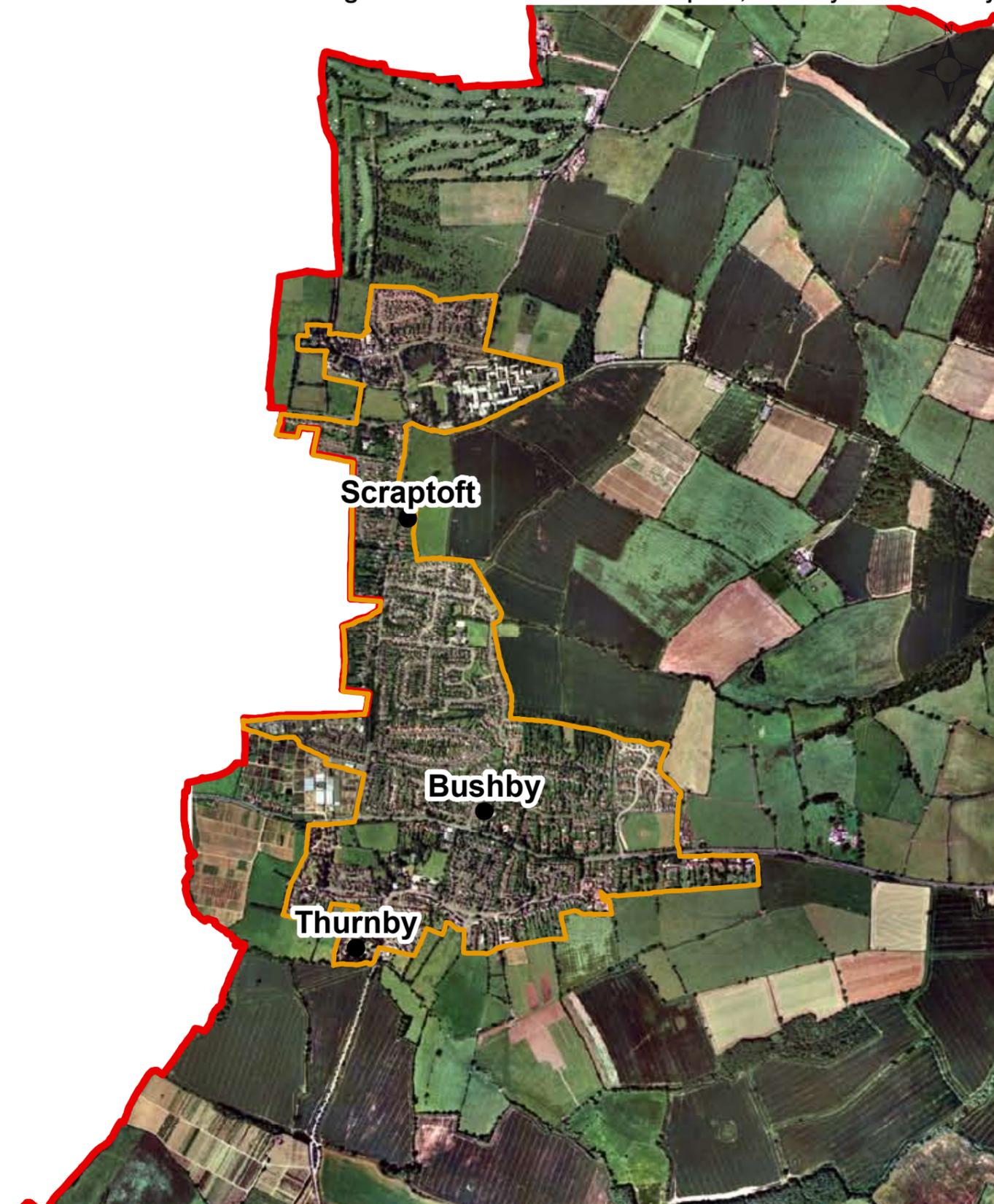




Photo 1: View from Thurnby Road, looking south-west across Area L



Photo 2: View from Stoughton Road, looking north west across Area J towards Thurnby

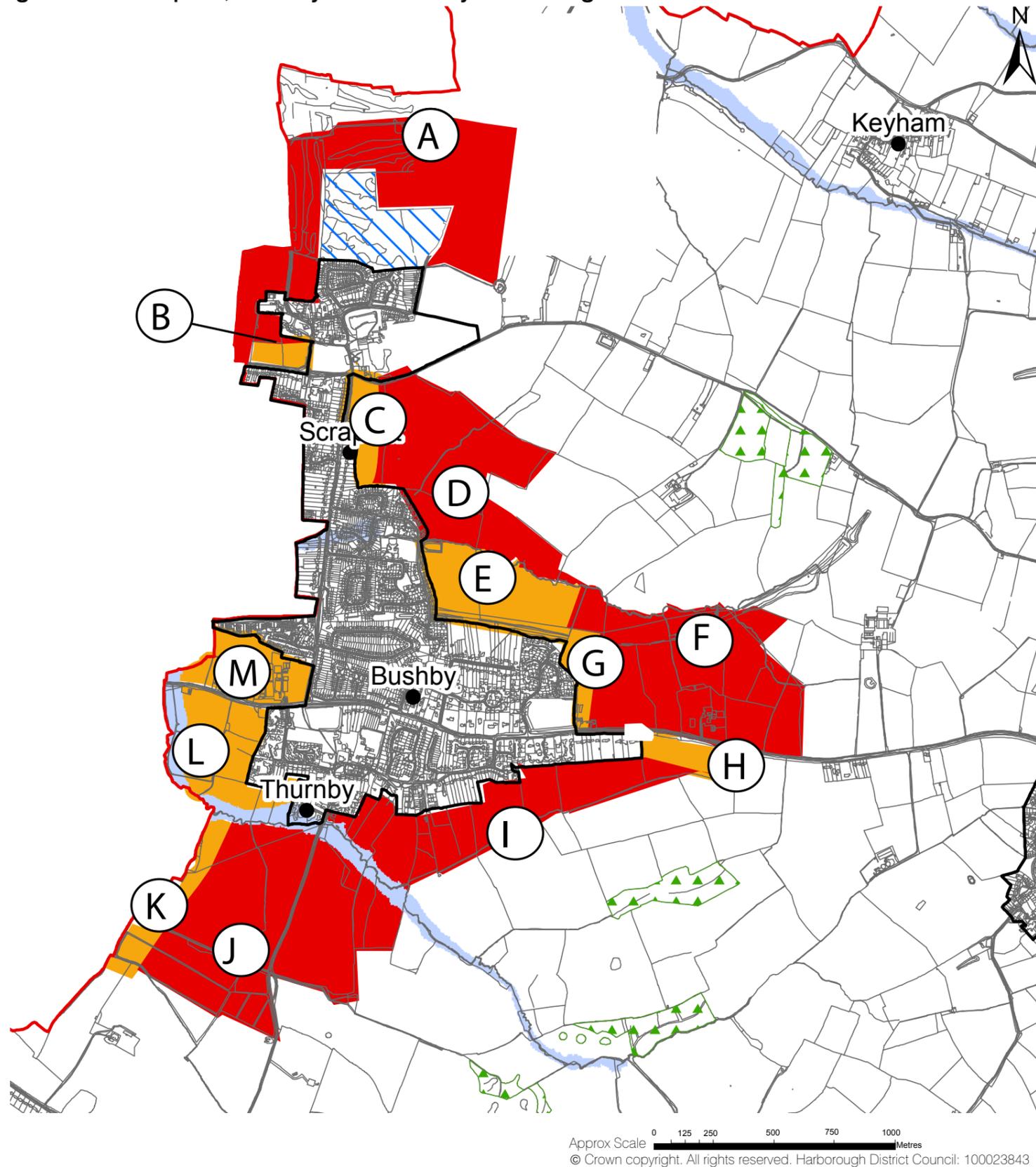


Photo 3: View from Stoughton Road, looking north east towards the Southside of Bushby and Area I

terms and provide brief explanations for each of the Focus Area sites examined around Scraptoft, Bushby and Thurnby.

The aerial photo shows the development pattern of the settlement and the vegetation pattern of the surrounding area as an aid to understanding their landscape setting.

Figure 2.3: Scraptoft, Bushby and Thurnby: Traffic Light Plan



Key

(A) Focus Area sector relating to table

— Limits to Development

Red – Land considered unsuitable for development in landscape terms. Landscape character should be protected through the prevention of development.

Amber - Land considered to have the potential for consideration of development in landscape terms. Appropriate mitigation measures would need to be developed through fuller landscape assessment at the site design/masterplanning stage.

Green - Land considered appropriate for development in landscape terms. Development proposals would need to be accompanied by a fuller landscape assessment at site design/masterplanning stage.

Blue Floodplain

Green with triangles Woodland

Area	Site Context	Topography	Vegetation	Designations
A	The site is set to the north of Scraptoft, to the east of Hamilton Lane and to the south of Scraptoft Golf Course.	Slopes in towards Scraptoft and to the north from ridge line high point on eastern boundary.	Partially covered with mature vegetation from adjacent Nature Reserve and Golf Course	Green Wedge Adjacent to a Nature Reserve
B	The site is to the west of Hamilton Road beside Scraptoft.	Gently sloping away from road	Mature planting along borders	Green Wedge
C	Site to the south of Covert Lane over from the University grounds. Bushby is set to the south of the site.	Steep slope down from north to south with eastern site boundary ridge line.	Scattered trees and mature hedgerows along borders.	Separation Area
D	Site is set to the east of Scraptoft and Bushby to the south of Covert Lane.	Steeply sloping valley	Scattered trees and mature hedgerows along field boundaries.	Separation Area
E	Set against the northern settlement edge of Bushby and the back of development along Station Lane.	Slopes up from north to south into Bushby	Mature vegetation belt along the southern border	Separation Area
F	This is a large site located along the northern side of the A47 and to the east of Bushby.	Steeply sloping valley side	Scattered trees and mature hedgerows along field boundaries	-
G	The site is located along the northern side of the A47 and beside the eastern edge of Bushby.	Top half of sloping valley side	Scattered trees and mature hedgerows along boundary	-
H	The site runs along the southern side of the A47 adjacent to housing on the edge of Bushby.	Sloping up from west to east	Mature hedgerow along roadside border	-
I	The site is set along the southern settlement edge of Bushby.	Steeply sloping	Mature hedgerows and scattered trees	Green Wedge

Area	Integration with settlement edge and Countryside	Visibility and Enclosure	Rating	Brief Explanation
A	Site's southern boundary is separated from Scraptoft by a Nature Reserve. Development to the east finishes at Hamilton Lane. Development of this site would encroach upon the countryside particularly to the north of the site.	Open to views from the south, ridge to the north partially encloses southern part of site	Red	The site is adjacent to a nature reserve within the Green Wedge and has associations with the wider countryside and would therefore not be suitable for development.
B	Development along western, southern and north eastern borders. Limited association with the greater countryside.	Enclosed by roads, development and vegetated borders.	Amber	Site designated as Green Wedge but from a landscape perspective the site is enclosed by development with limited views from the wider countryside. Mitigation methods and careful site planning could further reduce the impact of potential development.
C	Adjacent to road and existing development. Natural separation from the country due to topography.	Limited long distance views due to ridge line and mature hedgerows along eastern boundary. Wooded area to north of Bushby also conceals the site. Northern quarter of the site is far more visible.	Amber	Site is enclosed by landform and existing vegetation and bears a close association with the settlement edge. Some mitigation and careful site planning would be required to reduce the potential impact any development would have.
D	Site is associated with the countryside. Only its south eastern border is adjacent to existing development.	Site is open to long distance views.	Red	The site is highly visible from the wider countryside and does not bear an association with the settlement edge.
E	The western and southern sides adjoin the existing developments of Bushby and Scraptoft. The north and western sides open out onto the valley.	Topography conceals site from long distant views but would be highly visible from Scraptoft. Immediate site is open but enclosed by the wider topography.	Amber	The association with the settlement edges and its relative enclosure give the site potential for some development. Mitigation and careful site planning would be required to minimise the impact of any potential development particularly to views from the north and east.
F	The north western corner of the site is adjacent to the edge of Bushby.	Site is open to long distance views.	Red	The site is exposed to the wider countryside and bears no direct association with existing development. Mitigation methods would be unable to significantly reduce the impact of any potential development.
G	The site is situated on the A47 and it's western side is adjacent to Bushby. There is housing on the opposite side of the road. The site is situated towards the top of the valley.	Site is partially enclosed by planting to long distance views.	Amber	The site bears a close association with the settlement edge of Bushby and the existing vegetation and landform partially enclose the site from distant views. Through mitigation and careful site planning some development could be considered on this site.
H	Site set along A47 and adjacent to existing housing. Ridgeline to the east connects out to the wider countryside.	Limited long distance views from the south. Road, ridgeline and existing housing enclose site from other long distance views.	Amber	The site is enclosed from views to the north, east and west and there is an association with the existing settlement edge. Some mitigation would be required to reduce the impact of potential development in particular to views from the south.
I	Adjacent to Thurnby but would bring development down along the valley side. Site more associated with the countryside except for small pocket areas that could be considered for development.	Highly visible from the south and an exposed site.	Red	The majority of the site would not be suitable for development because of the site's visibility from, and association with, the wider countryside. Mitigation around some of the pocket development sites could potentially integrate them into the settlement edge.

Area	Site Context	Topography	Vegetation	Designations
J	Set to the south of Bushby either side of Stoughton Road.	Sloping site facing Thurnby	Mature hedgerows and scattered trees follow field boundaries and the road. Woodland belt along the southern boundary.	Green Wedge
K	Set to the far west of Stoughton Road adjacent to the settlement edge of Thurnby.	Gently sloping	Mature hedgerows and a wooded boundary to the south.	Green Wedge
L	Site between Bushby and Thurnby to the south of Thurnby Hill.	Sloping up from west to east	Mature tree planting along the borders and a hedgerow along the road. Coppice within site parameters.	Green Wedge
M	Set between Bushby and Thurnby on a current Garden Centre site.	Sloping up from west to east with a flat area to the east.	Nursery site with much shrub planting across the site. The borders have hedgerows and some scattered trees.	Green Wedge

Area	Integration with settlement edge and Countryside	Visibility and Enclosure	Rating	Brief Explanation
J	The river floodplain and sloping Valley divide the site from existing developments. Area adjacent to Stoughton Road readily identifiable as countryside.	The topography makes the site quite open with views from Thurnby and parts of Bushby into the site.	Red	The site is set within a Green Wedge area and bears associations with the wider countryside and is open and exposed.
K	The western edge runs adjacent to a residential area. The majority of the countryside is cut out by the steep incline of the ridge.	The ridge to the east and wooded belt to the south enclose the site with some open views in towards Thurnby.	Amber	Site set within the Green Wedge. In landscape terms is enclosed by the settlement edge, landform and vegetation of a relatively flat site. Mitigation and careful site planning would be required to reduce the impacts potential development could have here, in particular to the north and east.
L	The site is set within existing development with the south eastern corner opening out into the countryside along the stream course.	The site is enclosed on three sides by the A47 and existing development. The sloping topography provides open views of the site from adjacent development.	Amber	Site set within the Green Wedge. In landscape terms is enclosed by development on three sides and has strong associations with the settlement edges. Mitigation and careful site planning would be required to reduce the potential impact on the wider countryside to the south east.
M	Site is set along the A47 within an established residential area. There is no direct association with the outer countryside.	The site is visible from the west but enclosed from the east mainly due to the topography.	Amber	Site set within the Green Wedge. In landscape terms the site is well enclosed and associated with the surrounding development. There are no direct views from the wider country. Mitigation and careful site planning would be required to integrate the development into the surrounding settlements.

Great Glen

Great Glen is located to the south of the urban area of Leicester, directly adjacent to the route of the A6 as it connects Leicester to Market Harborough. The A6 'by passes' Great Glen to its southern side providing a direct route into the centre of Leicester. Great Glen slopes up from London Road, parallel to the route of the A6 to the north east, and the current settlement edge is retained by the rising landform in the north. Great Glen is located within the High Leicestershire Landscape Character Area, facing similar issues to other settlements in close proximity to the edge of Leicester.

Directly connected by the A6 to the centre of Leicester, whilst set within the attractive rural countryside of the undulating High Leicestershire Landscape Character Area, Great Glen is likely to experience pressure for development, particularly residential.

The High Leicestershire Landscape Character Area, which surrounds Great Glen is characterised by a rolling landform of ridges and valleys in a predominantly rural landscape. The pattern of field boundaries is intact, with mature hedgerow trees. The landscape character of this area is vulnerable to development pressure particularly on exposed and steeply sloping land.

To the north and west of the settlement edge the landform rises making the northern side of the development exposed to long distance views. The ridgeline beyond the northern edge of Great Glen should not be exceeded to prevent development imposing on the wider attractive character of High Leicestershire. Photo 4 (overleaf) shows the land to the north of Great Glen and the ridgeline beyond. Any development on the land beyond the ridgeline would be very exposed to long distance views creating an impact on the landscape.

The settlement edge of Great Glen to the east is both concealed and well defined by a combination

of landform and vegetation and there are few opportunities for further development. Photo 5 (overleaf) shows the views of the eastern edge of Great Glen with some of the residential dwellings to the north clearly visible.

The land to the immediate south of Great Glen is a flat strip between the A6 and London Road. The land lying further south on the southern side of the A6 slopes up and is exposed to long distance views making any development unsuitable. There is some potential for development further to the west of this contiguous strip adjacent to the existing development edge.

The western edge of Great Glen is exposed to distant views and there is a clear settlement edge boundary demarcated by the road line. Further west of Great Glen on the eastern borders of the Oadby and Wigston District there may be opportunities for some development sites which are closer to the current urban edge of Leicester.

Overall, the potential development sites for Great Glen which are appropriate in landscape terms are limited in the main by rising landform. Great Glen itself is surrounded by rising or high slopes on almost all sides, which exposes a range of potential sites to long distance views. Development would be limited to small sites that are contiguous to the current settlement edge and fit within the natural envelope. Overall, visibility of development from the wider landscape precludes most sites. However to the north and west of Great Glen, stretching along the north of the London Road sites may be accommodated by fitting into an extension of the urban edge along the route of the road.

Figure 2.4: Aerial Photo of Great Glen





Photo 4: View from footpath along Burton Brook looking north west towards Great Glen across Areas I and K

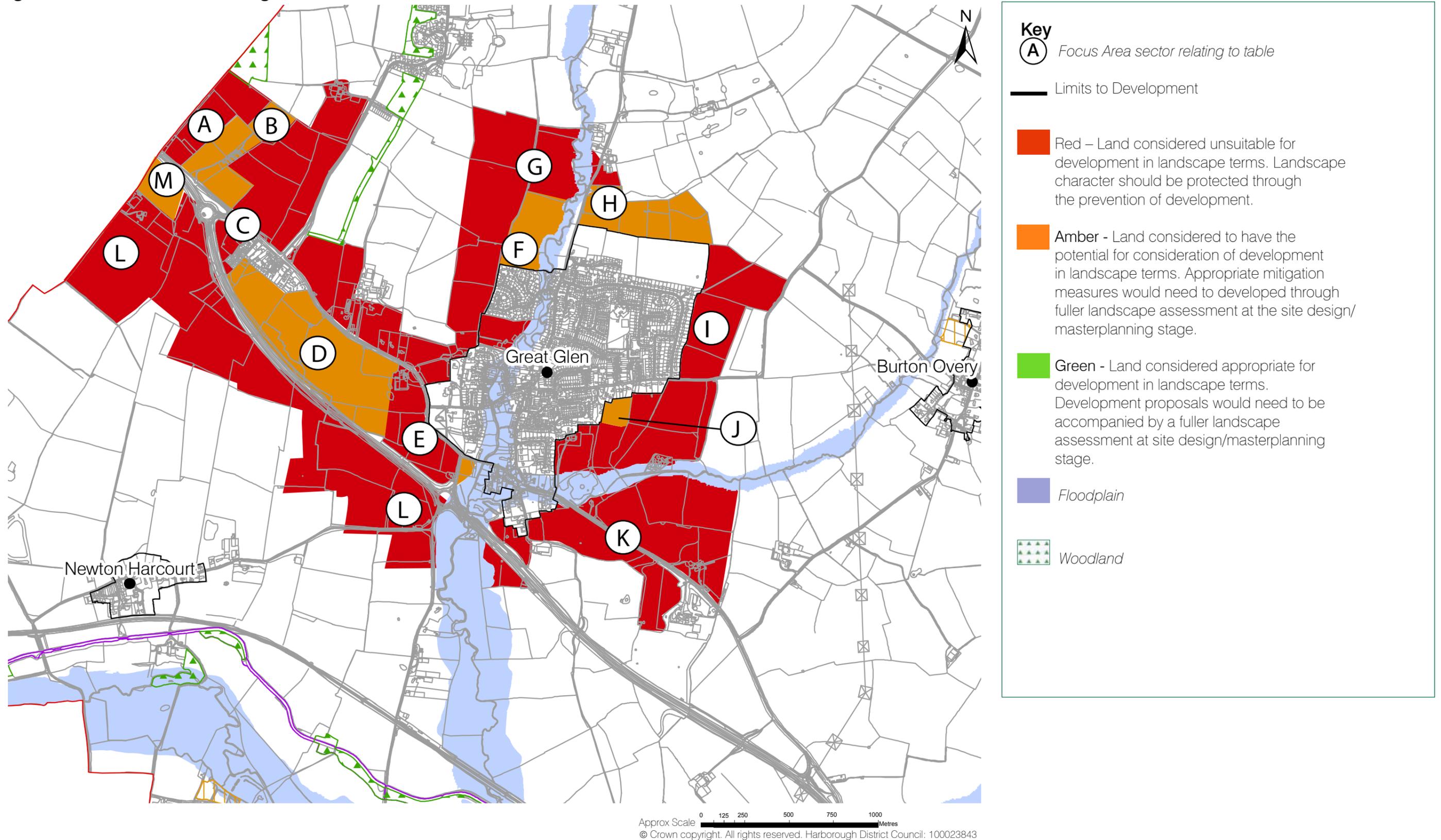
The following plans and tables illustrate the findings in detail, by assigning 'traffic light' designations for potential to accommodate development in landscape terms and provide brief explanations for each of the Focus Area sites examined around Great Glen.

The aerial photo shows the development pattern of the settlement and the vegetation pattern of the surrounding area as an aid to understanding their landscape setting.



Photo 5: View from footpath off London Road looking west across Area E

Figure 2.5: Great Glen: Traffic Light Plan



Area	Site Context	Topography	Vegetation	Designations
A	Located on the south eastern edge of Oadby along the northern edge of the A6.	Gently sloping from south east to north west	Hedgerows along field boundaries.	-
B	A site set to the west of Great Glen along the northern side of London Road and the A6. The eastern edge runs against the settlement edge of Great Glen.	Steeply undulating between 130m down to 100m, west to east across the site.	Cover of mature hedgerows along field boundaries, some coppices and scattered trees.	
C	Small site set between London Road to the north and the A6 to the south, beside the roundabout.	Gently sloping from south up to north 120m.	Hedgerows along boundaries.	Motorists Service Area
D	Site is set between London Road to the north and the A6 to the south adjacent to some existing development to the north west.	Gently sloping from east 120m up to west 125m	Mature hedgerows along field boundaries and mature line of trees along the northern border.	-
E	Site is set between London Road to the north and the A6 to the south Beside the roundabout to the south east.	Sloping down from north east 120m down to south west 100m.	Mature hedgerows along field boundaries and mature trees line the northern boundary.	-
F	Site is set to the north of Great Glen to the west of Stretton Road and the River Sence.	Gently sloping site falling to 100m along the centre of the site and up to 105m along the east and western borders. The western edge of the site runs along a flood plain.	Mature hedgerows along field boundaries.	-
G	Site is set to the north of Great Glen to the east of Stretton Road and adjacent to Pennbury Farm.	Undulating landform rising up to 130m to the east, down to 100m in the centre and up to 110m in the west. Site crosses a flood plain running north to south.	Mature hedgerows and scattered trees along field boundaries.	-
H	Site is set along the northern settlement edge of Great Glen to the east of Stretton Road.	Sloping site from the west 105m up to the east 120m.	Wooded belt along northern boundary with hedgerows along other field boundaries.	
I	The site is set along the eastern settlement edge of Great Glen and to the west of Glen Oaks.	Land slopes up from 95m in the south to 130m in the north.	Glen Oaks woodland lies east of the site and a wooded area lies to the south west. The field boundaries are defined by hedgerows and clusters of trees.	-
J	The site is set along the south eastern edge of Great Glen.	Land slopes up from 110m in the south to 115m in the north.	The field boundaries within the site are bound by hedgerows.	-
K	The site is set to the south of Great Glen, along London Road to the south of Burton Brook.	Land slopes up from 95m in the north west beside the settlement edge of Great Glen up to 125m beside Stoneygate School.	Wooded areas follow London Road up towards Stoneygate School with mature hedgerows along the field boundaries.	
L	The site is set along the southern edge of the A6.	The land rises up from the south west from 100m up to a 120m plateau. To the north the site falls away into the start of a valley at 105m.	Large ploughed fields with some hedgerow planting along the A6 to the north and a tree belt that follows Newton Lane to the south.	-
M	The small site is set adjacent to the south eastern settlement edge of Oadby.	The site gently slopes down from 120m in the north west to 115m in the south east.	There is vegetation along the roadside and against the property boundaries.	-

Area	Integration with settlement edge and Countryside	Visibility and Enclosure	Rating	Brief Explanation
A	Adjacent to settlement edge to the west and A6 to the south. Opens up to the sloping countryside to the north east.	Partially enclosed by the A6 to the south, Oadby to the west and land rising up to the north and west.	Amber	Concealed from long distant views and adjacent to existing development. Would not greatly impact on the wider countryside with mitigation.
B	Much of the site abuts a well defined western edge of Great Glen. The site is more associated with the open countryside of the north and west.	Site is open to varying long distance views particularly from the north and west.	Red	Undulating topography makes the site highly visible. Development would encroach upon the countryside and have a negative impact that mitigation could not negate.
C	Set within two roads and adjacent to some peripheral development.	Open to views along the valley to the south, along the A6 coming from Leicester and to partial views to the north.	Red	Prominent and highly visible position that would impact upon the area.
D	Set within two roads and adjacent to peripheral development. Site faces open agricultural fields.	Enclosed between two major roads with mature vegetation belt to the north enclosing the site further. Open views to the south from arable fields and the A6.	Amber	Views from the north are limited. Views from the south are from an unpopulated agricultural field and the A6. Mitigation planting and careful site design could screen these views.
E	Bound on three sides by roads with Great Glen to the north east. The open nature of the site sets it as an attractive rural space on the approach to Great Glen along the A6.	Site enclosed to the north by line of trees and hedgerow. The site opens out and is highly visible to views to the south and south east due to the sloping form of the site.	Red	Highly visible from the south east. Any development would have a negative impact on the character of the countryside and due to the slope across the site, could not be effectively mitigated against.
F	The site is set along the northern edge of Great Glen. The site is set between a footpath to the west and Stretton Road to the east. The northern boundary has a mature hedgerow along it. The site is associated with Great Glen although the northern edge bears a close relationship with the wider countryside.	The site is enclosed from the south by the settlement edge of Great Glen and to the east by Stretton Road. The land form partially encloses the site but there are some distant views to the north.	Amber	A relatively enclosed site that could accommodate some development if mitigation is provided and careful consideration is given to site design in particular along the northern and western boundaries.
G	The site is set away from the settlement edge of Great Glen and is generally associated with the countryside.	The site is exposed and open to many views from the north and west due to its steep topography.	Red	An open site that encroaches upon the countryside. Mitigation techniques would not be able to negate the impact any potential development would have on the area.
H	The site is associated with the northern settlement edge of Great Glen.	The topography and vegetation enclose the site to the north and west. The settlement boundary to the south further encloses the site. The site opens up to the rising land and countryside to the east but there are no long distance views.	Amber	The site has potential for development due to its association with the edge of Great Glen and the landform which conceals it from any long distance views. Mitigation along its borders would be needed in particular to the east.
I	The site's western edge does bear some association with the eastern edge of Great Glen. The site as a whole is more exposed to the east and is therefore more closely associated with the wider countryside.	The site is open to views from the south and the east. The incline of the land prevents long distance views from the north. The eastern settlement edge of Great Glen overlooks and partially encloses the western edge of the site.	Red	The sites topography is relatively steep and opens up views across the countryside. Mitigation across the site would not be able to prevent views into the site and the wider adverse impacts of development on the landscape.
J	The site is associated with the south eastern borders of Great Glen that back onto the site. The south western edge of the site is more associated with the countryside.	The site is enclosed by the settlement edges on the north and western boundaries of the site. The site opens up slightly to partial long distant views to the south west but these are distorted by the form of the land and hedgerow planting.	Amber	The association with Great Glen and the partial wider views into the countryside make this site a potential for development provided careful site planning and mitigation is used to reduce visual impact.
K	The northern tip of the site meets with the southern periphery development of Great Glen. The form of the land and areas of woodland readily associate the site with the countryside.	The site is open to views back across to Great Glen. The sloping land form shields further views from the south west and the planting along London Road conceals some parts of the site.	Red	Sloping land, with clear open views closely associated with the countryside.
L	The site is on the southern side of the A6 away from the Great Glen. The site is associated with the wider countryside with no settlement influence upon or directly adjacent to the site.	The site is quite exposed and open with little vegetation to conceal views. The main views are across from Great Glen and from the south.	Red	The site is exposed to views from the north and south and is not directly associated with any settlement. Mitigation techniques would not be able to reduce the adverse impacts of development.
M	The site is on the southern side of the A6 on the borders of Oadby adjacent to some development along Mere Lane. The site does have partial association with the wider countryside to the south west.	The site is partially enclosed by the development to the north west, the A6 to the north and in general to the form of the land. There are some open views from the southern agricultural fields.	Amber	The association the site has with existing development, the A6 and the partial enclosure of the site make it a potential for development requiring mitigation. Some mitigation and careful site planning would be needed to reduce the impact of development, to the south in particular.

Kibworth

Kibworth is located to the south east of Leicester situated directly on the A6 to Market Harborough, roughly dividing the village into two halves; the majority of Kibworth Harcourt lies to the north and Kibworth Beauchamp to the south. The northern settlement edge of Kibworth Harcourt fronts onto the High Leicestershire Landscape Character Area with the village itself set within the Lutterworth Lowlands. The association of Kibworth with the High Leicestershire character area and the direct access into Leicester along the A6 increases the residential development pressures on the village.

The northern side of Kibworth Harcourt has a well defined edge that fronts onto the undulating hills of High Leicestershire. Pasture fields rise and enclose the northern edge of Kibworth Harcourt with distant views back towards the village from higher land within High Leicestershire. Photo 6 (overleaf) shows the land rising to the north of Kibworth with a view towards the village. There is a strong settlement boundary on the northern edge of Kibworth and the exposed landform rising away from the village edge would be sensitive to development.

The southern half of Kibworth, Kibworth Beauchamp looks out onto the gently sloping and more enclosed Lutterworth Lowlands Landscape Character Area. The land slopes gently from west to east and the sense of enclosure is created by the mature hedgerows and copses along the field boundaries and the wooded belt to the east. School fields, a recreation ground and paddock fields provide a green buffer between the southern settlement edge of Kibworth and Smeeton Westerby. The land separating these two villages needs to remain undeveloped in order to prevent coalescence. The south eastern side of Kibworth is more exposed to views from Smeeton Westerby and the wider countryside. The enclosed fields south west of Kibworth are overlooked by existing development and offer some opportunity for development. Photo 7 (overleaf) shows one of the paddocks to the south of Kibworth overlooked by existing development on the settlement edge.

The western side of Kibworth is relatively enclosed with the land facing in towards the village and established vegetation shielding the land on higher ground. A train line and the associated vegetation belt run through the centre of Kibworth. A ridgeline runs to the west of Kibworth with far reaching views out across the Lutterworth Lowlands Landscape Character Area. Any development beyond the ridgeline would have a high impact on the surrounding area. Photo 8 shows an enclosed area of land on the western edge of Kibworth adjacent to the bowling green.

The eastern side of Kibworth is partially exposed to long distant views across the relatively flat land to the east and overlooked to the north by the hills of High Leicestershire.

The following plans and tables illustrate the findings in detail, by assigning 'traffic light' designations for potential to accommodate development in landscape terms and provide brief explanations for each of the Focus Area sites examined around Kibworth.

The adjacent aerial photo shows the development pattern of the settlement and the vegetation pattern of the surrounding area as an aid to understanding their landscape setting.

Figure 2.6: Aerial Photo of Kibworth





Photo 6: View from footpath off Carlton Road looking south towards Kibworth over Area B

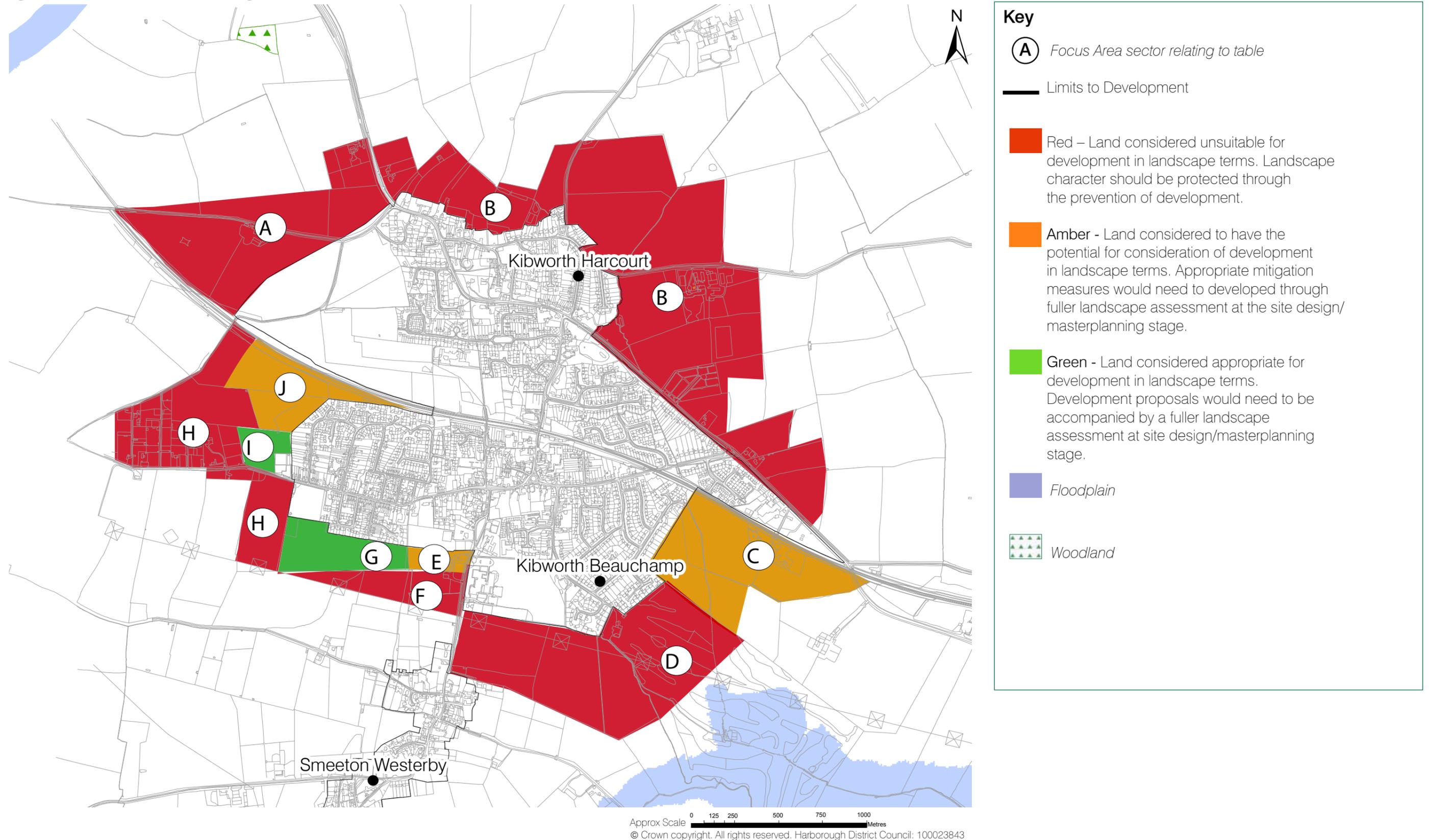


Photo 7: View from footpath off Smeeton Road, through Beaufield Farm looking north west towards Kibworth across Area G



Photo 8: View to the north of Fleckney Road beside the bowling green

Figure 2.7: Kibworth: Traffic Light Plan



Area	Site Context	Topography	Vegetation	Designations
A	Located to the north west of Kibworth to the north of the rail line and Warwick Road.	Sloping west to east away from Kibworth	Low hedgerows along field boundaries.	-
B	Set along the north and north eastern settlement edge of Kibworth, east of the A6.	Sloping. Western side slopes away from Kibworth. Eastern side slopes into Kibworth.	Hedgerows and scattered trees follow the field boundaries.	Area of Particularly Attractive Countryside
C	Located along the eastern edge of Kibworth to the south of the A6 and rail line.	Flat	Hedgerow planting and mature planting associated with the golf course to the south.	Area of Particularly Attractive Countryside
D	Located along the southern settlement edge of Kibworth to the north east of Smeeton Westerby.	Gently sloping from east to south west, away from Kibworth.	Hedgerows and scattered trees along field boundaries and the planting associated with the golf course.	Area of Particularly Attractive Countryside
E	Site to the south of Kibworth adjacent to the recreation ground.	Flat	Mature vegetated borders to the north and south with mature hedgerows to the east and west.	Area of Particularly Attractive Countryside
F	Site to the south of Kibworth and the north west of Smeeton Westerby.	Gently sloping east to west.	Hedgerow field boundaries with a mature vegetation belt to the north.	Area of Particularly Attractive Countryside
G	Site along the south western edge of Kibworth.	Sloping	Mature hedgerow field boundaries with scattered trees.	Area of Particularly Attractive Countryside
H	The site is set to the south west of Kibworth to the north of Fleckney Road and the east of Warwick Road.	Flat	No border planting along majority of road. Hedgerows and scattered trees line the field boundaries. A dense vegetation belt follows the rail line and dense vegetation surrounds the existing residential area.	Area of Particularly Attractive Countryside
I	The site is set on the western edge of Kibworth adjacent to the bowling green.	Flat	Mature vegetated borders.	-
J	The site is set along the western edge of Kibworth and has the train line along its northern border.	Gently sloping towards Kibworth.	Field boundary hedgerows and vegetation belt along rail line to the north. Well established planting along much of the southern and south western boundaries.	-

Area	Integration with settlement edge and Countryside	Visibility and Enclosure	Rating	Brief Explanation
A	Separated from settlement edge by fields with densely vegetated borders. The topography of the site faces out onto the countryside.	Enclosed along western border with Kibworth. Rest of the site is open to long distance views from the countryside.	Red	The site is exposed to long distance views to the west and is not associated with the settlement edge of Kibworth.
B	The site is associated with the wider countryside of High Leicestershire. The further development of the settlement edge would greatly encroach upon the countryside.	The site is open with long distant views from the north. The backdrop of Kibworth to the south encloses the site from this side.	Red	The site infringes upon the wider countryside, in the High Leicestershire Character Area. The site is sloping and has open distant views. Mitigation would not be able to reduce the impact of development significantly enough.
C	The site is overlooked by existing development along two of its borders. The site is associated with the settlement to the west but opens out into the countryside to the east.	Site is enclosed by the A6, rail line and the golf course. There are limited views into the site from the wider area.	Amber	The site is well enclosed by the rail line to the north and settlement edge to the east which it is also readily associated with. The land is flat and there are only limited distant views out to the east. Mitigation methods and careful site planning can reduce the impact of the development in particular to the east of the site.
D	The site adjoins a school and a golf course on the edge of Kibworth and does not integrate well with the settlement edge. The site is associated with the open countryside.	The site is open to views from the south and is enclosed by Kibworth and the golf course planting to the north.	Red	The site is open to views from the south and associated with the wider countryside and also prevents coalescence between Kibworth and Smeeton Westerby. Mitigation methods would not be able to significantly reduce the impact of development on this site.
E	The site is used as a paddock and associated with the Country although views are blocked off by the mature vegetation.	Site is enclosed by a road and the mature vegetated borders block distant views into the site.	Amber	The site is well enclosed by vegetation and partly associated with the settlement edge of Kibworth through the recreation ground. Mitigation and careful site planning would be required to ensure minimum impact upon the surrounding area.
F	Separated from Kibworth by fields and their planted borders. Site is associated with the countryside and does not directly border any existing development.	Site opens out to distant views to the south.	Red	The site is open to views from the south and associated with the wider countryside and also prevents coalescence between Kibworth and Smeeton Westerby. Mitigation methods would not be able to significantly reduce the impact of development on this site.
G	The settlement edge currently overlooks the site and the mature vegetation belt to the south prevents direct association with the wider countryside.	Site enclosed by existing settlement edge to the north and by a mature vegetation belt along the southern boundary. There are no direct long distant views into the site.	Green	The site is well enclosed, directly associated and overlooked by some dwellings within the settlement edge of Kibworth.
H	The site is set away from the main settlement of Kibworth. The site is associated with the scattered rural residential development along Fleckney Road. The site bears a direct relationship with the open countryside, the southern part of the site is a recreation ground.	The site is open to long distant views from the west as the land falls away from the site. The rail line to the north and existing development to the south partially enclose the site in these directions.	Red	The site is visible from the wider countryside and does not bear a direct association with the settlement edge. Mitigation methods would not reduce the impact of any potential development significantly enough.
I	The site is set adjacent to Kibworth bowling green and connects the two residential areas along the road leading westward out of Kibworth. There is no direct association with the wider countryside.	The site is well enclosed and there are no distant views into the site.	Green	The site is well enclosed and associated with the settlement edge of Kibworth. There are no distant views and the site connects the residential development along Fleckney Road.
J	The site is set adjacent to the eastern edge of Kibworth and the topography slopes into the village. The far western side of the site is partially associated with the countryside.	The site is enclosed by the gentle slope, rail line and the settlement edge. There are no long distant views from within the site, but the site does open out into the countryside to the west.	Amber	The site is associated with and faces into the settlement edge of Kibworth. There are no direct views out into the wider countryside and the site has potential for some development. Mitigation methods and careful site planning will be required to reduce the potential impact of any development in the area, in particular along the western side of the site.

Market Harborough

Market Harborough is the largest of the Focus Areas and is situated to the south of the District along the River Welland and is well connected by a railway line, the A6, A427, A4304 and the A508. The network of A roads, train line and the River Welland divide the town up into segments and have encouraged development along the key routes.

Across the northern edge of Market Harborough runs a large ridge line concealing any distant or local views of Market Harborough from the north. The ridge itself is used for arable farming with large open fields and a wooded belt across the top of the ridge. Great Bowden to the north east is separated from Market Harborough by the ridge line preventing coalescence between the two settlements. Photo 9 (overleaf) shows a view of the ridgeline taken from the western edge of Great Bowden concealing the edge of Market Harborough. The edge of Great Bowden is relatively flat and enclosed by mature areas of vegetation.

To the east of Market Harborough the landform rises steeply to the peak of Clack Hill and is exposed to distant views. Market Harborough within the Welland Valley can be viewed from the approach roads of the A6, A4304 from the east and west and A427 and A508. The Welland Valley flood plain creates flat, open and exposed areas to the north and east in particular. Great Bowden to the north east is 'separated' from the bulk of the urban area of Market Harborough by a narrow strip of open land, less than a couple of fields in places. Consequently, it is constrained by the same landscape features as the main town and can be considered as an extension of the potentially developable area in landscape terms.

The southern edge of Market Harborough opens up into the wider countryside and a set of hills to the south part enclose the area. Sports pitches, allotments and open arable fields form the current perimeter of the southern border of Market Harborough. Views to the south east open up following the vegetation belt along the train line and Braybrooke Road, with

mature hedgerows along the field boundaries partially enclosing parts of the area. Photo 10 (overleaf) shows the rural setting adjacent to the south eastern side of Market Harborough.

To the north west of Market Harborough runs the Great Union Canal, providing a natural boundary to the western edge of Market Harborough. Photo 11 shows the well defined settlement edge overlooking the Grand Union Canal and the open countryside beyond the mature vegetation belts running along the bank of the canal. The river represents a limit to the western development of Market Harborough with arable fields stretching out into the gently undulating countryside. The dismantled railway running from the south west into Market Harborough supports a mature vegetation belt restricting open views. The rising landform beside the south western edge restricts the direct association with Lubenham from Market Harborough.

The following plans and tables illustrate the findings in detail, by assigning 'traffic light' designations for potential to accommodate development in landscape terms and provide brief explanations for each of the Focus Area sites examined around Market Harborough.

The adjacent aerial photo shows the development pattern of the settlement and the vegetation pattern of the surrounding area as an aid to understanding their landscape setting.

Figure 2.8: Aerial Photo of Market Harborough





Photo 9: View from Leicester Lane looking south across Area A towards the ridge along Market Harborough's northern settlement edge

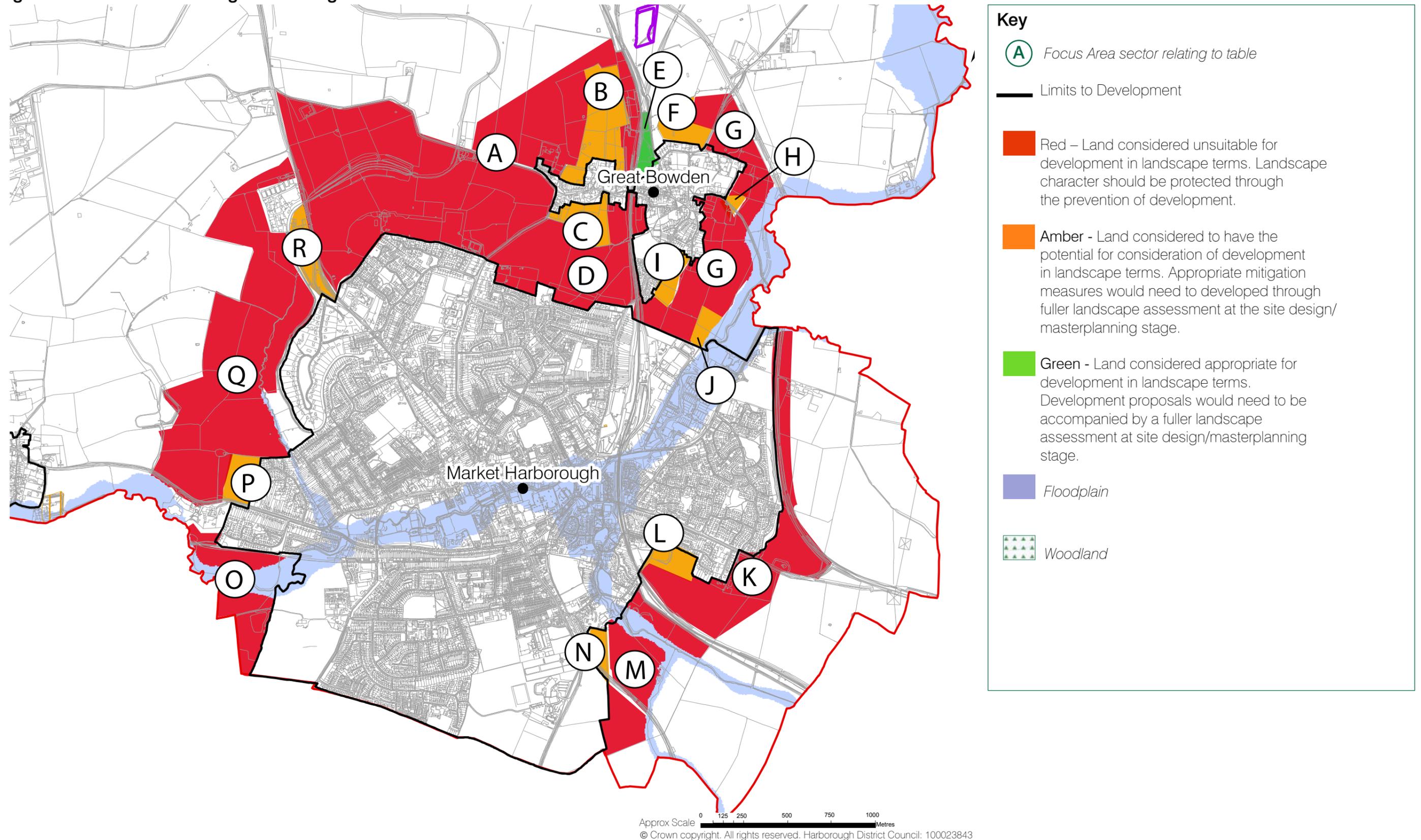


Photo 10: View from Braybrooke Road looking west across Area M towards the A508



Photo 11: View from a footbridge across Grand Union Canal beside the B6047 looking south across Area Q

Figure 2.9: Market Harborough: Traffic Light Plan



Area	Site Context	Topography	Vegetation	Designations
A	This large site is set to the north of Market Harborough between the settlement edge and Leicester Lane. The Grand Union Canal flows through the site with the B6047 along its western boundary and the periphery of Great Bowden to the east.	The land falls away steeply from the south of the site close to the settlement edge from 125m down to 105m beside the Grand Union Canal. The site rises gently on the northern side of the canal to 115m beside Leicester Lane.	There is hedgerow planting along the field boundaries and roads. To the south at the top of the ridge is a mature belt of vegetation.	Area of Particularly Attractive Countryside
B	The site is set to the north west of Great Bowden with the train line running to the east and Leicester Lane to the south. An existing public footpath cuts across part of the eastern side of the site.	The land rises from 100m in the south west to 125m in the north east.	The train line banks to the east are lined with mature planting and there is mature hedgerow planting along the field and property boundaries.	Area of Particularly Attractive Countryside
C	The site is set to the south west of Great Bowden beside Top Yard Farm. A footpath crosses the western edge of the site.	The site is relatively flat at 85m.	There are thick clusters of vegetation and hedgerows that follow the field boundaries.	Separation area & northern edge within Conservation Area
D	The site is set beside the train line along its eastern border, the ridge line and settlement edge of Market Harborough to the south and road leading into Great Bowden to the north and west.	The site is steep sloping up from 85m in the north to 110m in the south.	The southern boundary along the ridgeline has a mature belt of vegetation. Mature hedgerows and scattered trees line the field boundaries.	Separation Area
E	Set to the north west of Great Bowden narrowly located between the train line and Langton Road.	The site is flat at 80m.	There is a significant vegetation along the train line and hedgerows along field boundaries.	Area of Particularly Attractive Countryside
F	Site is to the north of Great Bowden. Langton Road runs along the western border with the train line beyond to the north and west. Welham Road is along the eastern border and the settlement edge along the southern boundary.	The site is flat at 75m	Hedgerows and some trees follow the field boundaries, roads and the train line.	Area of Particularly Attractive Countryside
G	Site is to the west of Great Bowden with the A6 running along its north western border and the industrial area to the south. Peripheral development of Great Bowden and Langton Road abuts the western boundary to the north with the settlement edge of Great Bowden along the southern half of the western boundary.	The site slopes down from 75m in the north to 58m in the south.	There is mature tree planting around the peripheral developments and hedgerows along the field boundaries.	Area of Particularly Attractive Countryside, Western edge within Conservation area. Separation Area.
H	Small site to the east of Great Bowden on the northern side of Dingley Road adjacent to the peripheral development of Great Bowden.	The site is flat at 75m.	Mature hedgerows with tree planting line the field boundaries.	Area of Particularly Attractive Countryside
I	Site set behind existing development along Station Road and to the north of Market Harborough industrial estate along the River Welland.	The site is flat at 85m	The field boundaries across the site and in adjacent field are lined with hedgerows and some trees.	Separation Area

Area	Integration with settlement edge and Countryside	Visibility and Enclosure	Rating	Brief Explanation
A	The site is associated with the wider countryside and has no direct visual or physical relationship with Market Harborough.	The site is exposed to long distant views from the north along the flood plains of the Grand Union Canal and is particularly exposed along the hillside sloping away from Market Harborough's settlement edge.	Red	The site is very visible from the wider countryside and is not enclosed. Development of Market Harborough should not infringe upon the ridgeline a natural settlement edge for the area.
B	The site extends from existing associated development along Leicester Lane. The western side of the site has greater association with the countryside.	The site is enclosed by the rail line to the east, existing development to the south and the ridgeline across the north to the south west of the site. The north western corner is open to views from the north and the south western edge of the site is partially exposed to the west.	Amber	The site is associated with existing development and relatively well enclosed by the rail line and ridgeline. Some mitigation and careful site planning would be required to prevent adverse impact on the countryside to the north and west.
C	The site is set behind existing development along Leicester Lane. The site is partially associated with the countryside to the south that rises up towards the ridge containing Market Harborough.	The site is enclosed by the rail line to the east, existing development to the north and the sharply rising land form to the south.	Amber	Site set within a separation area and small part within a Conservation Area but in terms of landscape the site is flat and contained by the southern edge of Great Bowden and the rising ridge line to the south. Some mitigation would be needed to integrate the site further with the countryside.
D	Parts of the northern boundary are adjacent to the settlement edge and the southern boundary comes up close to the edge of Market Harborough. The site although partially enclosed by development is associated with the countryside due to the steep landform, in particular to the rural areas to the west.	The steepness of the land form makes the site exposed to long distance views from the north and Great Bowden in particular.	Red	The site is exposed to long distance views and is not contiguous with the existing settlement edge. Mitigation techniques would not be able to lower the adverse impacts significantly.
E	The site has been sub-urbanised by the impact of the rail line and road. Some development backs onto the site to the south.	The site is well enclosed by the train line and associated vegetation to the west, Langton Road and hedgerows to the east and existing development to the south.	Green	The site is enclosed and there is no direct association with the countryside.
F	The southern edge of the site is adjacent to the settlement boundary of Great Bowden. Northern part of the site is partially associated with the wider countryside but urban factors including the 3 roads, rail line and existing development around the site give it a closer association with Great Bowden.	The site is well enclosed by Langton Road and the embanked and vegetated train line beyond, along the western and northern borders. The eastern boundary is enclosed by Welham Road and Great Bowden is set to the south. There are more open views to the north east but these are distorted by the A6.	Amber	The flatness of the site and its association with urban elements make the site suitable for some development. Mitigation and careful site planning will be required particularly along the north of the site.
G	The peripheral development of Great Bowden integrates the settlement edge well with the countryside. The site has a closer association with the wider countryside despite some urban influences.	The site is open to views from the north and west despite some distortion by the A6. To the south and south west the site is open to views from Market Harborough.	Red	The site is open to views from its northern western and southern sides. The peripheral development creates an integration between the wider countryside and Great Bowden that any development would destroy. Mitigation could not significantly reduce the impact of development in this area.
H	The site is set along Dingley Road with peripheral development along and due to its enclosure is associated with the settlement edge.	The site is enclosed by planted boundaries and peripheral development, partially opening up to views from the east.	Amber	Site is well enclosed and adjacent to peripheral development. There are some partial views from the east that can be reduced through mitigation and careful site planning.
I	The site is bordered to the west and the north by existing development of Great Glen. The site opens up to the countryside to the east but the urbanised elements of the major A roads distort this association. This site bears a closer association to Great Glen.	The site is enclosed along its western and northern boundaries by existing development along Station Road. There are some distorted views from the A6 and A247 toward the site and the existing development beyond.	Amber	The site is associated with the adjacent settlement and views are distorted by the existing vegetation. Through mitigation techniques and careful site planning these adverse impacts could be reduced further.

Area	Site Context	Topography	Vegetation	Designations
J	Site is set along the western banks of the River Welland adjacent to its floodplain and set along the northern edge of the industrial estate.	Site is flat at 75m.	The field boundaries around the site are lined with hedgerows and some trees.	Separation Area
K	The site lies on the south eastern edge of Market Harborough. Incorporating the A6 and Clack Hill with the train line running across the south of the site.	The site rises up steeply from 95m to the top of Clack Hill over 130m.	The site has hedgerow planting along its field boundaries.	Part Area of Particularly Attractive Countryside
L	The site is to the north of the rail line and to the south east of the Market Harborough settlement edge.	The site slopes down from 100m in the east to 90m in the west.	There is mature vegetation along the western boundary and the train line to the south.	-
M	The site's northern boundary runs along Braybrooke Road just south of the train line. To the far west of the site runs the A508. The River Jordan flows south to north through the site and part of the site is set within the floodplain.	The site slopes up from 80m in the north to 90m in the south.	There is a mature line of trees along Braybrooke Road and small clusters of mature vegetation across the site. Hedgerows line the field boundaries.	-
N	The majority of the site is set between the Broad Valley Way and the A508.	The site gently slopes from 85m in the north to 90m in the south.	There is some hedgerow planting along the A508 and across field boundaries.	-
O	Site located to the far south west of Market Harborough. The River Welland runs through the site and the floodplain covers part of the site. The disused rail line runs across the northern boundary with the A4304.	The site gently slopes up from 85m in the north to 95m in the south.	There is significant vegetation along the disused train line and hedgerows following the field pattern.	Essential Washland
P	This site is set on the western edge of Market Harborough to on the northern side of the A4304.	The land rises up to the west away from the edge of Market Harborough to 110m and slopes down to 90m beside the brook	There is mature vegetation belt following the brook and hedgerow planting along the roadside.	
Q	The site is set to the west of Market Harborough and to the west of the Grand Union Canal. The B6047 runs to the north east of the site and the A4304 along the southern edge of the site.	The land rises up to 119m to the west of the site and down to 90m beside the Grand Union Canal in the east.	Along the eastern border with the Grand Union Canal runs a mature vegetation belt and a further belt of vegetation running along the adjoining brook.	Airfield Farm EM/ 11
R	A small site located between the Grand Union Canal and the B6047.	The site is gently sloping from 105m in the south to 110m in the north.	There is mature planting along the canal and the B6047.	Airfield Farm EM/ 11

Area	Integration with settlement edge and Countryside	Visibility and Enclosure	Ratings	Brief Explanation
J	The site bears a close association with the industrial estate to the south. The floodplain prevents the consideration of the area up to Rockingham Road. There is association with the open space between Market Harborough and Great Bowden that connects through to the wider countryside.	The site is enclosed from the south by the industrial estate and Rockingham Road rises up toward the east of the site over from the River Welland. There are some partial views back towards Great Bowden from the north.	Amber	The site is partially enclosed and set adjacent to Market Harborough Industrial Estate. There would be a need for mitigation and careful site planning to reduce adverse visual impacts particularly to views from the north, and Great Bowden.
K	The site is set adjacent to some development but the steep incline creates a closer association with the wider countryside rather than the settlement edge.	Much of the site is exposed to open views from Market Harborough and the wider countryside due to the steep gradient of the land.	Red	The site is highly visible and exposed and has an association with the wider countryside and mitigation could not significantly reduce the impact of development.
L	The site is associated with the adjacent settlement edge and has no direct association with the wider countryside.	The site is enclosed by the sloping topography east to west, the rail line and associated planting along the south western border and the existing settlement edge to the north. The mature vegetation along the borders further conceals the site.	Amber	The site is well enclosed and associated with the adjacent settlement edge. Mitigation and considerate site planning will be required to minimise the impact of development towards the east of the site.
M	The north western border of the site abuts some peripheral development but the site as a whole bears a closer association with the wider countryside.	The site is enclosed to the north by the rail line and Braybrooke Road but opens up to long distance views to the south and west.	Red	The site is open to long distance views, has much planting on it and bears a closer association with the countryside. Mitigation could not reduce these impacts significantly enough.
N	The site is associated with the A508 and its peripheral development. The eastern side of the site starts to open up to associations with the countryside.	The site is partially enclosed to the south by the steeply rising countryside up to 130m. To the west the road and its associated peripheral developments enclose the western side of the site. The eastern extents are open to views from the wider countryside which are partially screened by patches of mature vegetation and hedgerows.	Amber	The inclining landform to the south prevents long distance views to the south and partially encloses the site. The area is associated with the peripheral development along the A508 and with some mitigation and careful site planning the impact on views to the east could be reduced.
O	The site is associated with the wider countryside in particular to the west and the south. There is some association with the settlement edge to the north but this is compromised by the disused rail line due to severance.	The site is open to views from the west and south west. The site is partially enclosed by the rising landform to the south and by the disused rail line and settlement edge to the north.	Red	The site is open to long distant views from the west and south and the site has a closer association with the countryside than the settlement edge. Mitigation methods could not reduce the impact significantly enough.
P	The site is adjacent to existing development to the west and is set along the A4304 to the south.	The site is enclosed to views from the west by the ridgeline. There are some distant views to the north.	Amber	The site is partially enclosed by the landform and the A4304 and is adjacent to existing development to the east. Some mitigation and careful site planning would be required to prevent adverse impact on the countryside to the north.
Q	The site adjoins the Grand Union Canal separating it from the well defined western edge of Market Harborough. The site does not bear a direct association with the developed perimeters of Market Harborough and is readily associated with the countryside.	The site is open to long distant views from the north and the rising landform exposes part of the site to the west. The site is partially contained to the south by the landform.	Red	The Grand Union Canal separates the site from the edge of Market Harborough and the site is exposed to open views particularly from the north. Mitigation could not reduce these impacts significantly enough.
R	The site is set along the B6047 and there is some development to the north. There is an association with the wider countryside through the canal and arable fields beyond.	The site is enclosed by the development to the north and the vegetation around the sites borders.	Amber	A small site with potential for limited development due to the enclosure of the site and existing development to the north. Some mitigation would be needed to integrate the site further with the surrounding countryside.

Figure 2.10: Aerial Photo of Lutterworth

Lutterworth

Lutterworth is located along the western side of the M1 at junction 20 with the A4303 running along its southern edge. Set in the south west of the Lutterworth Lowlands, the flat or gently undulating surrounding landform provides open views towards Lutterworth. The development pressures on Lutterworth stem from its convenient transport connections to the M1 and its rural setting.

The relatively flat landform and open nature of the arable fields to the north of Lutterworth provide views from along the approach road of the A426 towards the perimeters of Lutterworth. The northern settlement edge of Lutterworth is contained by Bill Crane Way with properties facing out across the open arable land that falls away to the west. Running parallel with the A426 is a dismantled railway alongside the M1 creating an enclosed parcel of land to the north of an existing industrial warehouse area. The dismantled railway has created a vegetation belt running along the western edge of the M1. Photo 12 (overleaf) shows the enclosed land to the north of the industrial area and photo 13 (overleaf) shows the approach into northern Lutterworth and the line of housing fronting the farm land.

The eastern edge of Lutterworth is defined by the M1 and the dismantled railway restricting the extent of development. Further to the south, adjacent to the east of Lutterworth the land falls away to the south, distant views open up into the countryside with partial enclosure on the higher points beyond the ridgeline. Photo 14 (overleaf) is from the northern extreme of Lutterworth looking south towards the town.

To the south of Lutterworth runs the A4303 which defines the southern extent of Lutterworth. The parcels of elevated open land between the southern edge of Lutterworth and the A4303 are partially concealed by the ridgeline and roadside planting. Further south the land falls steeply away along the banks of the stream opening up into the wider countryside to the south. Photo 15 (overleaf) shows some of the partially

exposed, elevated land adjacent to the A4303 that can be seen from south of Lutterworth.

The western settlement edge of Lutterworth is formed by Brookfield Way with the land falling away to the west before rising up towards Magna Park. The western edge of Lutterworth is exposed to open views from the wider countryside and the imposing Magna Park. A stream runs north east to south west across the area creating a flood plain along Lutterworth's western borders. There is open farmland to the west of Lutterworth with regular hedgerows enclosing some of the area. The village of Bitteswell is located to the north west of Lutterworth and is under threat of coalescence with the north western edge of Lutterworth.

The following plans and tables illustrate the findings in detail, by assigning 'traffic light' designations for potential to accommodate development in landscape terms and provide brief explanations for each of the Focus Area sites examined around Lutterworth.

The adjacent aerial photo shows the development pattern of the settlement and the vegetation pattern of the surrounding areas as an aid to understanding their landscape setting.





Photo 12: View from footpath to the west of the M1 looking south across Area F towards the A4303



Photo 13: View from Borehams Lane looking south across Areas C and D towards the Lutterworth Industrial Estate

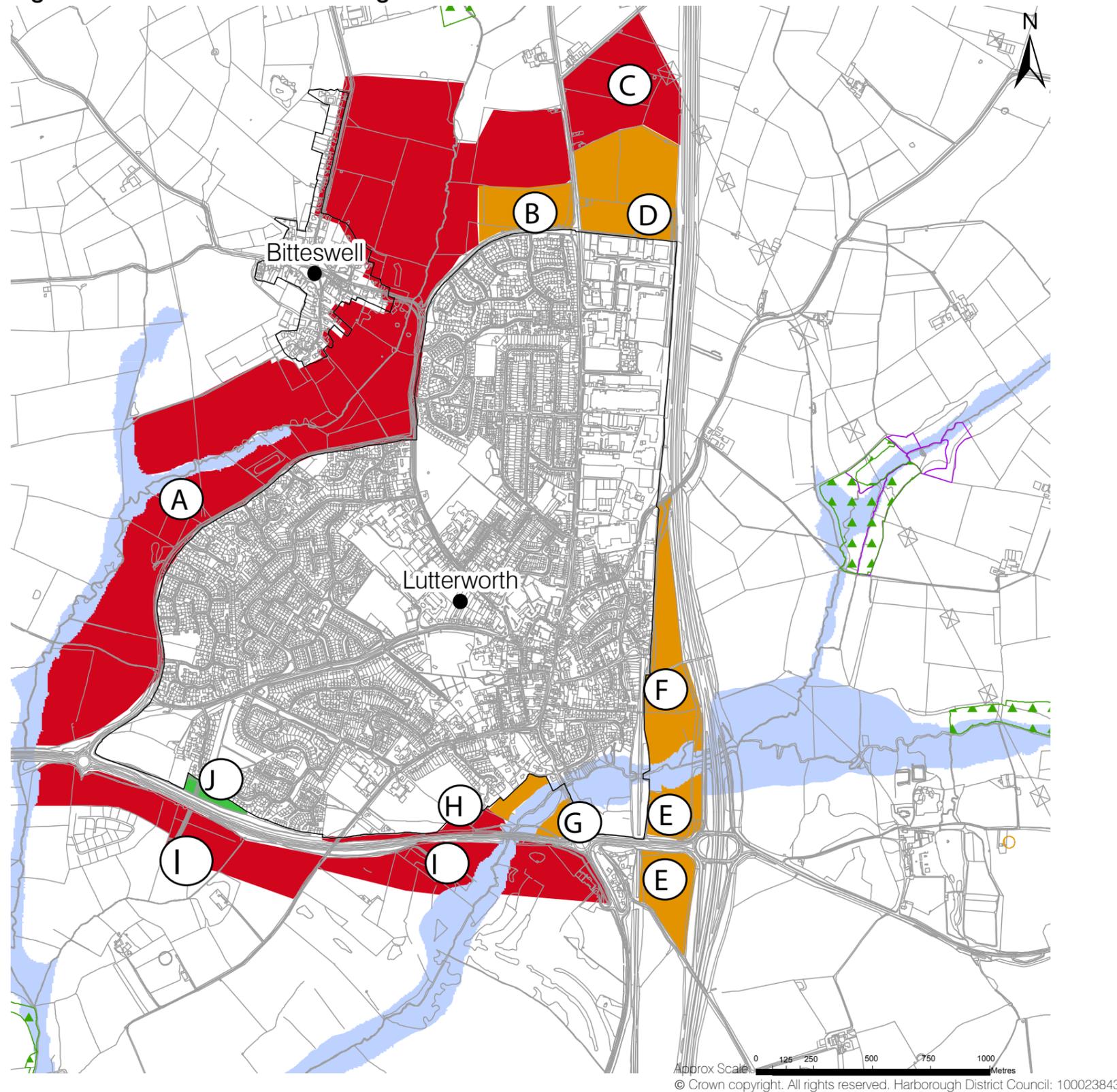


Photo 14: View from the A426 looking south across Area A and B towards the northern edge of Lutterworth



Photo 15: View from Northern side of the A4303 looking north towards the southern edge of Lutterworth

Figure 2.11: Lutterworth: Traffic Light Plan



Key

(A) Focus Area sector relating to table

— Limits to Development

Red – Land considered unsuitable for development in landscape terms. Landscape character should be protected through the prevention of development.

Amber - Land considered to have the potential for consideration of development in landscape terms. Appropriate mitigation measures would need to be developed through fuller landscape assessment at the site design/masterplanning stage.

Green - Land considered appropriate for development in landscape terms. Development proposals would need to be accompanied by a fuller landscape assessment at site design/masterplanning stage.

Floodplain

Woodland

Area	Site Context	Topography	Vegetation	Designations
A	This large site is set along the north western and western side of Lutterworth running along Brookfield Way, Bitteswell Road and Bill Crane Way. The site contains a spring and the associated floodplain.	The land slopes down away from the road at 120m to 110m.	Hedgerows line the field boundaries with mature trees clustered along them.	Separation Area
B	Set to the north of Lutterworth on the northern side of Bill Crane Way.	The land gently slopes between 120m to 115m, south to north.	The site is bound by a low hedgerow on all sides. To the west and north of the site is a mature strip of trees and shrubs.	-
C	The site is set between the M1 along its eastern border and the A426 to the west. Pylons cross the site and it is set adjacent to Milford's Farm.	The site is flat at 130m.	The M1 corridor is densely planted and hedgerows line the other boundaries of the site.	-
D	The site is set between the M1 along its eastern border and the A426 to the west. Lutterworth's Industrial Estate fronts onto its southern boundary and pylons cross over the site.	The site is flat at 135m.	The M1 corridor is densely planted and hedgerows line the other boundaries of the site.	-
E	The site is set between the M1 along the eastern boundary and the dismantled railway to the west. The River Swift and the A4303 cut across the centre of the site.	The site steeply descends from 125m to 110m then rises back up to 115m in the south.	The M1 corridor is densely planted and hedgerows line the other boundaries of the site.	Washland
F	The site is set between the M1 along the eastern boundary and the dismantled railway and the edge of Lutterworth along the western boundary. A series of footpaths cross the site.	The site steeply descends from 125m and the land south of the site falls away to 110m along the River Swift.	The M1 corridor is densely planted and hedgerows line the other boundaries of the site.	-
G	The site is set to the north of the A4303 on the north western side of the roundabout. The River Swift flows across the centre of the site.	The site is relatively flat at 110m.	The site has mature tree and hedgerow planting along all of its borders.	Washland
H	Set to the north of the A4304 and to the south of Lutterworth along Moorbarns Lane.	The site slopes up from 110m in the east to 120m in the west.	The site has low planting along its borders.	-
I	The site is on the land along the south of the A4304.	The site steeply undulates from 120m in the east down to 105m beside the River Swift and back up to 120m before falling away again in the west.	The site has hedgerow planting along its borders with some tree planting.	-
J	A small site set to the North of the A4304 and to the South of Lutterworth	The site is flat at 115m	Maturely planted borders	-

Area	Integration with settlement edge and Countryside	Visibility and Enclosure	Rating	Brief Explanation
A	The site is associated with the wider countryside and the development of Lutterworth is contained within the Brookfield Way, Bitteswell Road and Bill Crane Way.	The site is highly visible from the north west, Bitteswell and Magna Park. Site is enclosed along its south eastern side by the settlement edge of Lutterworth.	Red	This is an open site that is more associated with the countryside than the settlement edge. Mitigation methods would not be able to reduce the impacts significantly enough to warrant potential development.
B	Associated with the settlement edge of Lutterworth. The further north and away from the road the greater association the site has with the wider countryside.	The site is visible from the northern approach into Lutterworth but set against the backdrop Lutterworth. There are some distorted views from the west around Bitteswell. The site is enclosed from the south by the settlement edge of Lutterworth and to the east by the A426.	Amber	This site is associated with northern Lutterworth and the open views to the site are limited by the flat nature of the site and clusters of vegetation to the west. Careful site planning and mitigation would be required to integrate the new settlement edge into the countryside.
C	The site is associated with the countryside and is not adjacent to any significant development.	The site is enclosed by the M1 to the east and the A426 to the west. The site does open up to distant views from the north.	Red	The site is not associated with any significant development and is open to long distance views from the north. Mitigation would not reduce the visual impact significantly enough to warrant develop the site.
D	The site is set adjacent to and associated with the Lutterworth Industrial Estate. The northern boundary of the site does have some association with the wider countryside.	The site is enclosed by the M1 to the east, the A426 to the west and Lutterworth Industrial Estate to the south. There are some distant views to the north.	Amber	The association with the Lutterworth Industrial Estate, with the enclosure to the east and west and the flatness of the site make it a suitable site for partial development.
E	The site is open and associated to the wider countryside. There are urban influences around the site but the level of exposure relates it more closely to the wider countryside.	The site is enclosed by the M1 to the east and the disused rail line to the west. The steepness of the site to the north and the positioning of the site to the south leave it open to distant views from the south and west.	Red	The site although partially urbanised is exposed to long distant views that mitigation would not be able to reduce the impact of.
F	The site is associated with the settlement edge of Lutterworth to the west. The southern edge of the site does open up to the wider countryside.	The site is enclosed to the east by the M1 and to the west by the settlement edge of Lutterworth. There are distant views to the south.	Amber	The site is enclosed by the M1 to the east and is associated with the settlement edge of Lutterworth to the west. Mitigation and sensitive site planning will be required to reduce the potential impact development would have on the wider countryside towards the south of the site.
G	The site is associated with the adjacent settlement edge and the A4304 that runs along its southern boundary.	The site is enclosed by maturely planted borders, the A4303 to the south and the settlement edge. There are no long distance views into the site.	Amber	The site is flat, well enclosed and has no association with the wider countryside. Mitigation and careful site planning will be required in particular around the flood plain area through the site.
H	The site is associated with the wider countryside and there is little association with adjacent settlement except from very local views from the settlement edge.	The site is prominently positioned overlooking the wider countryside to the south. The site is open to distant views from the south and east.	Red	The site is open to long distance views and bears an association with the wider countryside. The site is partially across some land owned by schools. Mitigation methods could not considerably reduce the impact of development upon this site.
I	The site is associated with the wider countryside and is separated from the settlement edge of Lutterworth.	The site is exposed to views from the south. The site is contained by the A4303 along its northern border.	Red	The site is exposed to open views from the south and bears no association to the settlement edge of Lutterworth. Mitigation methods could not reduce the potential impact development would have on this area.
J	The site is associated with the settlement edge of Lutterworth and is influenced by the presence of the A4303.	The site is well enclosed by the A4303 to the south and the backs of the settlement edge of Lutterworth.	Green	The site is well enclosed, with no distant views and bears a close association to the settlement edge of Lutterworth.

Fleckney

Fleckney is the smallest settlement within the Focus Areas, situated close to Kibworth and facing similar issues in relation to landscape setting, landscape character, location and development pressures. As a small, but expanded settlement, Fleckney is focused on the confluence of a number of secondary roads leading to and from surrounding smaller villages. It is also located relatively close to the A6, the major route running between Leicester and Market Harborough. The current settlement envelope is concentrated in the main to the south west of the road running between Wistow and Saddington.

Fleckney is located towards the northern side of the Lutterworth Lowlands Character Area, which is generally gently undulating with predominantly pasture farmland. Immediately around Fleckney the topography varies considerably, with the centre of Fleckney set on the lower slopes of land which rises steeply to the north west and the south east. Longer distance views to Fleckney are limited by high ridges of land beyond the settlement to the west and south, meaning that Fleckney is contained locally by its rising landscape slopes. The lower slopes offer the potential to accommodate development in small plots contiguous to the existing settlement edge which are shielded and screened by the surrounding landform from wider views.

Photo16 (overleaf) illustrates the view from the higher ridge of land to the north of Fleckney. The settlement sits further down the slopes, virtually hidden from view by the falling slopes. The northern higher land therefore naturally contains the settlement; any development which encroaches onto the higher ridge of land would impact on the wider landscape.

Photo17 (overleaf) is located in the lower land to the centre of Fleckney showing the eastern edge of the settlement. The lower and flatter slopes adjacent to the centre of Fleckney have the potential to accept development with careful mitigation to screen impacts, given that the pattern of the landform itself

will limit long distance views. On the steeper slopes to the north and south development would exert a higher impact on the landscape to the south and west of the settlement. The surrounding landscape shows more localised undulations on a field by field basis, which emphasises the need for evaluation of individual plots on a site by site basis to take full account of landscape impacts. Photo 18 (overleaf) illustrates the western side of Fleckney showing local land undulations.

Given its contained setting Fleckney can accommodate small pockets of development within the envelope contained by its surrounding rising slopes, but beyond the natural boundaries of the settlement impacts would affect the characteristics of the Lutterworth Lowlands Landscape Character Area.

The following plans and tables illustrate the findings in detail, by assigning 'traffic light' designations for potential to accommodate development in landscape terms and provide brief explanations for each of the Focus Area sites examined around Fleckney.

The adjacent aerial photo shows the development pattern of the settlement and the vegetation pattern of the surrounding area as an aid to understanding their landscape setting.

Figure 2.12: Aerial Photo of Fleckney





Photo 16: View from Leicester Lane looking south towards Fleckney across areas A and R

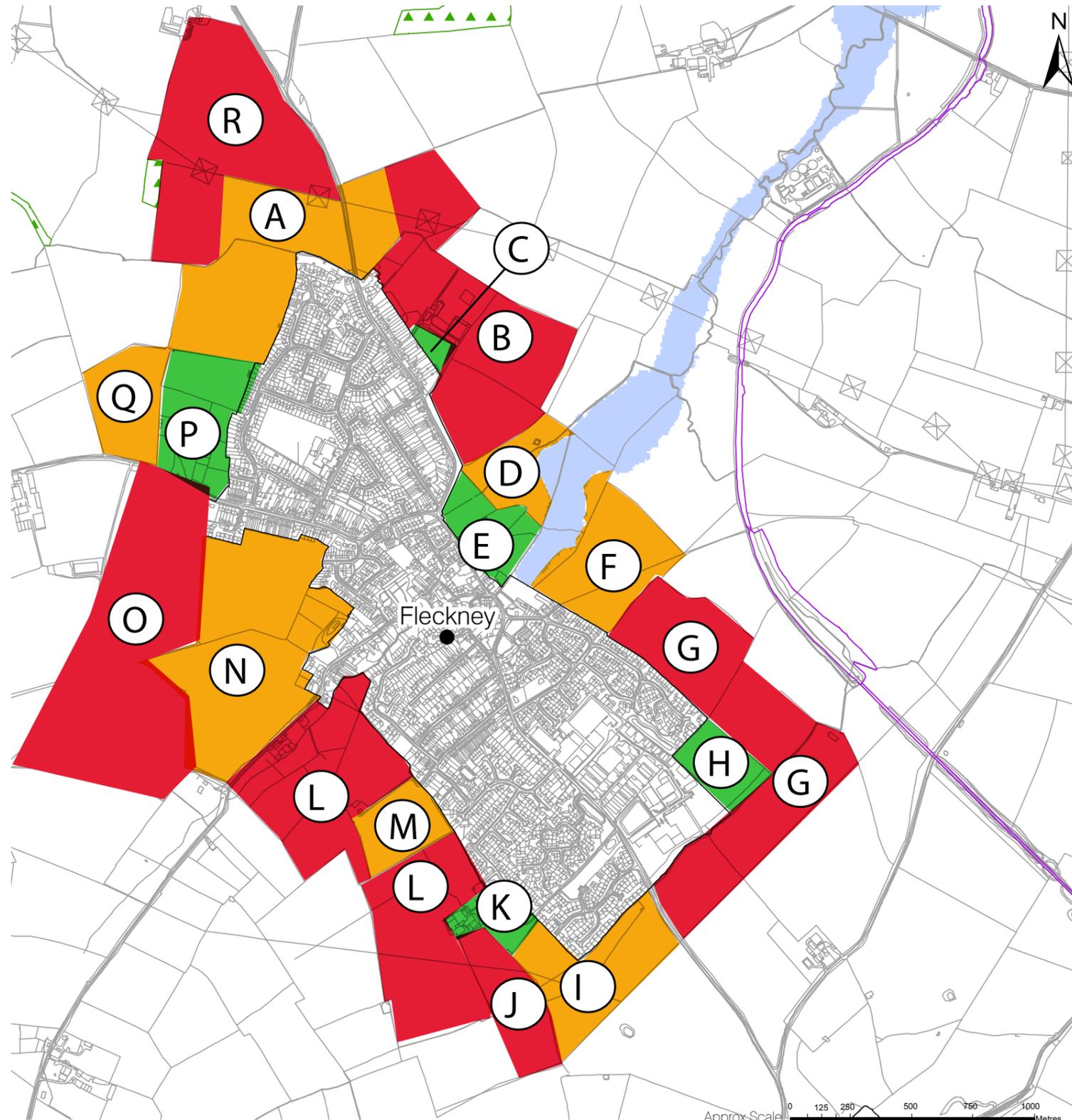


Photo 17: View from footpath to the east of Fleckney looking west across area D



Photo 18: View from a track off footpath leading south off Main Street looking east towards Fleckney across areas M and O

Figure 2.13: Fleckney: Traffic Light Plan



Approx. Scale 0 125 250 500 750 1000 Metres
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Key

- (A)** Focus Area sector relating to table
- Limits to Development
- Red** – Land considered unsuitable for development in landscape terms. Landscape character should be protected through the prevention of development.
- Amber** - Land considered to have the potential for consideration of development in landscape terms. Appropriate mitigation measures would need to be developed through fuller landscape assessment at the site design/masterplanning stage.
- Green** - Land considered appropriate for development in landscape terms. Development proposals would need to be accompanied by a fuller landscape assessment at site design/masterplanning stage.
- Blue** Floodplain
- Green Triangles** Woodland

Area	Site Context	Topography	Vegetation	Designations
A	Located at the northern tip of Fleckney to either side of the road leading to Wistow	Flat level land on the higher land at the north of Fleckney. Land rises further to the east towards Fleckney Grange	Low vegetated hedgerows around field boundaries	
B	The site is set to the north eastern side of the settlement	Site slopes down towards the canal, relatively steeply, with south east facing slopes	Mature vegetated field boundaries	
C	Small site on edge of settlement envelope to eastern side of Fleckney	Relatively flat site	Enclosed by mature vegetation on boundaries of site	
D	Site on the north eastern side of the settlement	Gently sloping lower slopes	Hedgerow boundaries around fields	Adjacent to floodplain
E	Site directly adjacent to the centre of the north eastern side of the settlement	Relatively level small plots situated at the base of slopes	Localised mature vegetation around plot boundaries	Adjacent to floodplain
F	Site is located on the north eastern side of Fleckney	The lower slopes of the valley sides face northwards , sloping gently	Hedgerow boundaries to perimeter of site. Low hedgerow to boundary with residential estate	Adjacent to floodplain
G	Site is set around the south eastern 'corner' of Fleckney, directly adjacent to the residential estate	Slopes rise increasingly steeply towards the south and Kibworth Road	Well vegetated hedgerows between fields	
H	Contained site on the south eastern corner of the settlement , directly adjacent to residential estate	Relatively flat site, localised undulations	Mature planting belt to southern side of site. Vegetated boundaries to all sides	
I	Site set on the southern tip of the village, south west of Fleckney Road	Gently sloping and flat land	Vegetated field hedgerows	
J	Site on the south western tip of Fleckney	Land rises to the south to height of approx 130m	Some mature field hedgerows	
K	Small site to south western side of Fleckney around Fleckney Lodge	Relatively level site	Some isolated mature vegetation and vegetated field boundaries	
L	Site to the north of Fleckney Lodge and south of Arnesby Road, includes local playing fields.	Sloping land facing to the north west	Mature vegetation around playing field boundaries	

Area	Integration with settlement edge and Countryside	Visibility and Enclosure	Rating	Brief Explanation
A	Site is adjacent to the northern edges of Fleckney, associated with the residential estate	Site is towards top of slopes with limited views from the north and west to the outer boundaries of the site.	Amber	Site is integrated to Fleckney along the main road to the north, Development on the higher flatter land may be screened and shielded by mitigation planting and by retaining development on the core areas of the site
B	Site contains sports centre complex, adjacent to residential edge of Fleckney	Sloping fields are visible to open views from the east and south	Red	Site is open to views from the wider countryside due to its slope and aspect
C	Small site well associated with settlement	Well enclosed site with limited views into the site from outside	Green	Site is suitable for small scale development due to enclosure and overlooking
D	Site is open to the wider countryside leading towards the canal but in close proximity to the centre of Fleckney	Site is open to wider views to the east on the higher and sloping land	Amber	The site is next to the floodplain and visible to an extent from the east, but with mitigation the lower, flatter slopes could contain development once visual impacts softened by planting
E	Collection of small sites almost within the current settlement edge, well integrated and with close associations with the heart of the village	Well enclosed and visually linked with the current edge of settlement; limited views from the east partially screened by the settlement edge itself.	Green	The site is enclosed and associated with Fleckney. Any distant views can be mitigated by good site layout and screening to the eastern edge
F	Directly adjacent to residential edge of Fleckney the site also shows integration with the countryside to the east and the wider Lutterworth Lowlands character area.	The site is visible from the east but the lower slopes contain and enclose the site	Amber	The site is associated with both the settlement and the countryside. The lower gentler slopes limit external views, additional mitigation methods would reduce visual impacts, but the site could extend the eastern boundary of the existing settlement in to the countryside
G	Site is associated with the wider countryside of the Lutterworth Lowlands Character Area	Site is very visible from raised viewpoints to the east near White Stacks Farm, along Kibworth Road	Red	Site is very visible and connected to the wider countryside, and unsuitable to accommodate development. Mitigation methods would not reduce impacts significantly.
H	Site is associated with the urban residential edge of Fleckney adjacent to a small industrial estate	Strong screened boundaries enclose the site and limit long distance views from all sides	Green	The site is acceptable for development due to well developed boundary screen planting and its proximity to current development
I	Connected to the residential edge of settlement with some association with the wider agricultural countryside to the south	Rising landform to the south west contains and encloses the site	Amber	Site can accommodate development with screening to mitigate inward views
J	Site separated and therefore not integrated with settlement edge although rising topography faces residential edge	Rising slopes makes site visible from distant views	Red	Disconnected site with rising slopes mean that mitigation measures would not reduce impacts of development
K	Small site situated around site of abandoned Fleckney Lodge with clear association to the residential urban edge	Vegetation and landform limit external views from the west so the site is well contained	Green	Good enclosure and connection to Fleckney make the site suitable for development. Mitigation measures will allow good integration to the countryside to the west of the site.
L	Sloping land along is exposed to the influence of the agricultural countryside to the west rather than the settlement edge.	Land is visible from the south west and from along Arnesby Road	Red	The land is unsuitable for development given its countryside nature and its sloping aspect facing toward the countryside. Mitigation is unlikely to reduce visual impacts to make development acceptable. The site contains playing fields which are unsuitable for development

Area	Site Context	Topography	Vegetation	Designations
M	Site to the north of Fleckney lodge	Relatively level field with gentle slope to north west	Vegetated hedgerow boundaries	
N	Site to north of Arnesby Road	Relatively steeply sloping fields with south east facing aspect	Low hedgerow boundary planting	
O	Large site to western edge of Fleckney between Arnesby Road and Kilby Road	Sloping land reaching above 125m	Hedgerow field boundaries	
P	Land directly north of Kilby Road	Relatively level land	Well vegetated mature hedgerow boundaries	
Q	Land directly north of Kilby Road, towards Lyndon Lodge Farm	Gently sloping land rising toward the north and west	Low hedgerow vegetation around boundary of site	
R	Land to northern tip of Fleckney towards Watermans Spinney	Ridge top land, level and flat	Hedgerow boundaries	

Area	Integration with settlement edge and countryside edge	Visibility and Enclosure	Potential Development	Brief Explanation
M	Site is well connected with and adjacent to the residential estate on the south western side of the village	Small site in middle of sloping land which is level so that views are reduced from long distance viewpoints.	Amber	Site can potentially accommodate development due to its level landform, which helps to reduce visibility form further afield to the west. Direct association with the existing estate means that with mitigation the development can be integrated with Fleckney
N	The site is set on slopes facing the adjacent residential edge of Fleckney north of Arnesby Road so that settlement overlooks the site.	The aspect of the slopes means that long distance views are limited from the settlement edge, rather than the wider countryside.	Amber	The site is associated with the settlement edge of Fleckney. Distant views are limited and the site connects with residential development on the north western side of the village.
O	Separated from Fleckney, the site is associated with the wider countryside to the west	The exposed site slopes steeply with clear views from the edge of Fleckney making it highly visible	Red	The site is exposed and faces the existing edge of Fleckney. Associated with the wider countryside and separated from the edge of Fleckney, the site is unsuitable for development
P	Well integrated with the residential estate to the north of the village	Vegetated boundaries screen the development well and its location on flat land mean long distant view are limited	Green	The site is well enclosed, well connected and associated with the edge of Fleckney. Mitigation would ensure good integration to the settlement
Q	The site is associated with the countryside due to its location along Kilby Road	Slopes begin to rise meaning that views are possible although the aspect of the slopes face onto the developed edge of the village, rather into the countryside	Amber	The site would need careful mitigation to integrate the countryside edge, making development possible to minimise impacts.
R	On the extremes of the village the site is not connected to the village, but associated with the wider Lutterworth Lowlands character area to the north	Views are limited by its flat ridge top location but possible from viewpoints to the north and along the road from Wistow	Red	Given its separated location and potential visibility issues the site is unsuitable for development since mitigation can not significantly reduce potential impacts

Broughton Astley

Broughton Astley is situated on the western side of the District, to the south west of the edges of the city of Leicester. Broughton Astley is located close to the route of the M1 motorway but without direct access. Local access to and from the settlement is confined to a network of secondary roads that cross and extend around Broughton Astley, connecting to the surrounding villages. Broughton Astley itself shows a relatively unique pattern of development – ‘dumb bell’ in shape, with two areas of development separated by a central open space area where Cosby Road and Folesworth Road meet. The two areas of development appear almost as two separate settlements, with a lack of connection between the two.

Broughton Astley is located towards the north eastern edge of the Upper Soar Landscape Character Area, generally characterised as an open landscape predominantly under pasture. The landscape immediately surrounding the settlement is relatively flat (compared to other Focus Areas), but within a relatively open wider landscape setting, the impact of exposed development is increased.

To the north eastern side of Broughton Astley slopes rise gently to the north east constraining development on all but the lower slopes in the centre of the settlement. Elsewhere development on the rising slopes would be visually intrusive. Careful mitigation measures are required to integrate the central development sites into the existing settlement envelope.

Photo 19 (overleaf) shows the view from the higher land to the north down towards the centre of Broughton Astley on the lower land. On the south eastern side of the settlement a large amount of relatively recent residential development has taken place; constrained by the line of a dismantled railway line running to the east of the settlement. Beyond the railway, the land begins to rise to the east, on more exposed slopes. But small plots of land contiguous to

the existing settlement edge would be well screened from long distance views.

Photos 20 & 21 (overleaf) illustrates the large open fields around Broughton Astley, which can accommodate potential development close to existing development.

Land slopes away from Broughton Astley to the south and west in the direction of Folesworth, so that Broughton Astley appears to sit on a ridge of higher land from viewpoints in the south and west. Development is possible on the level land immediately adjacent to the southern edges of the settlement, but any further developments that would encroach onto the sloping land would be visible for long distances and make a high impact on the surrounding open landscape. Elsewhere pockets of potential development, for example close to Sutton in the Elms, are suitable where appropriate site specific mitigation is taken into consideration.

Overall, Broughton Astley is capable of accommodating an amount of development around its edges, where topography allows the new development to connect with the existing settlement edge without exposure to open views or impact on the character of the Upper Soar countryside.

The following plans and tables illustrate the findings in detail, by assigning ‘traffic light’ designations for potential to accommodate development in landscape terms and provide brief explanations for each of the Focus Area sites examined around Broughton Astley.

The adjacent aerial photo shows the development pattern of the settlement and the vegetation pattern of the surrounding area as an aid to understanding their landscape setting.

Figure 2.14: Aerial Photo of Broughton Astley





Photo 19: View from Cosby Road looking south across area B

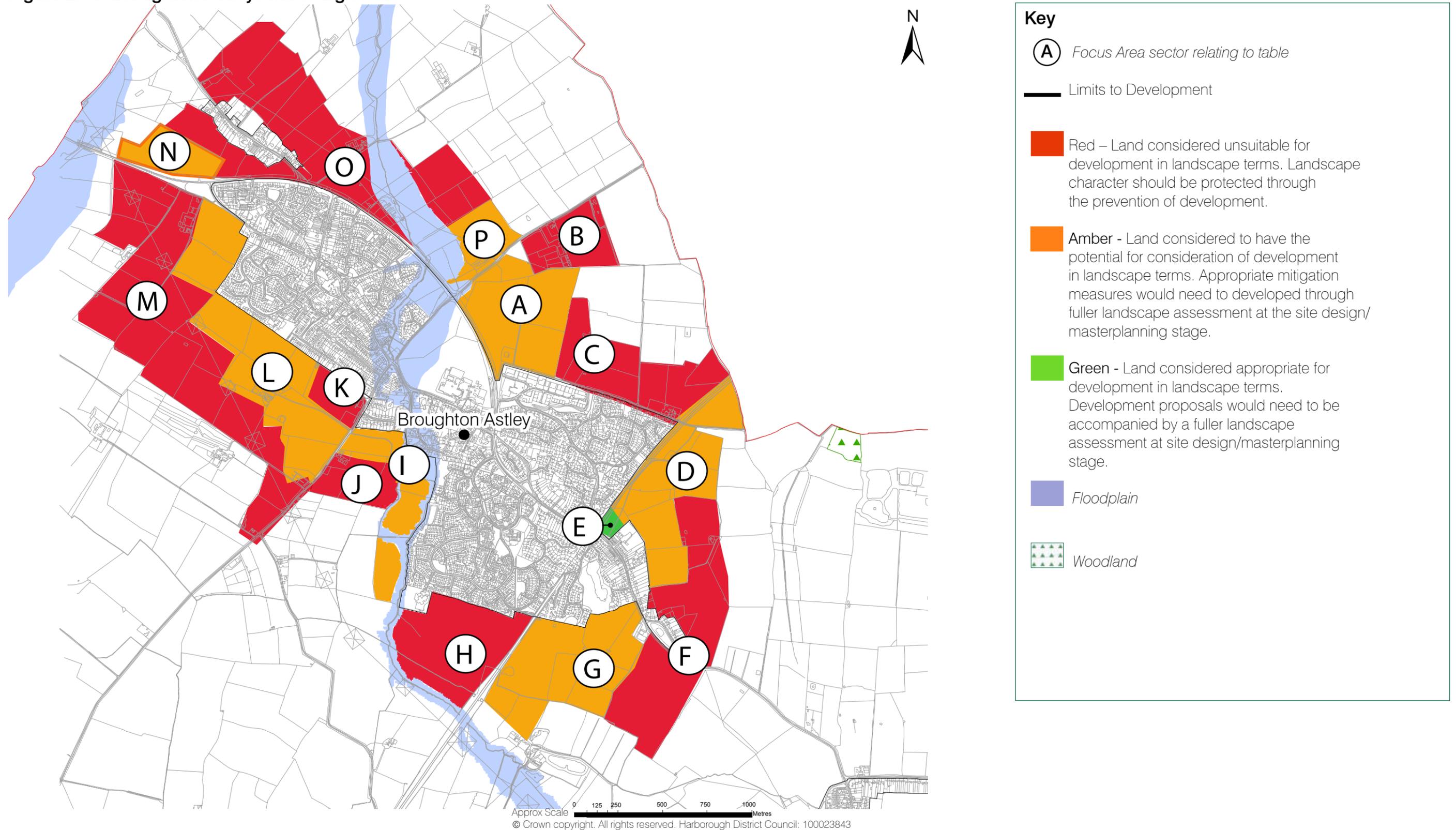


Photo 20: View from Cosby Road looking south east across area A



Photo 21: View of land adjacent to Broughton Astley

Figure 2.15: Broughton Astley: Traffic Light Plan



Area	Site Context	Topography	Vegetation	Designations
A	Located between Cosby Road and Cottage Lane, on the lower slopes	Lower fields of south west facing slopes, towards Broughton Astley	Large sized fields enclosed by low hedgerow boundaries	
B	Land along Cosby Road to either side of Witham Villa, the equestrian centre	Higher land rising above Broughton Astley, facing south west	Hedgerow boundaries, open fields	
C	Site to north of Cottage Lane	Land rises to the north and east, site fairly steeply sloping	Large size fields with low hedgerow boundaries	
D	Land to eastern side of Broughton Astley alongside route of dismantled railway	Gently sloping/ level	Some mature vegetated boundaries	
E	Small site adjacent to Dunton Road and dismantled railway line	Level	Some mature vegetated boundaries	
F	The sites are set on either side of Dunton Road along the eastern edge of Broughton Astley	Land gently rising eastwards	Hedgerow planting to field boundaries	
G	Located directly south of Broughton Astley, between dismantled railway and Dunton Road, around slopes of Clump Hill	Sloping land, facing north towards southern edge of Broughton Astley behind top of slopes of Clump Hill at 121m	Hedgerow field boundaries	
H	Large single site to southern edge of Broughton Astley, west of dismantled railway line.	High land at 99m slopes down to river valley at base of slope to west	Hedgerow planting to external boundaries of site	
I	Collection of small sites along course of river located next to residential estates of south western edge of Broughton Astley	Low lying land along course of river	Mature vegetation along water course and field boundaries	
J	Site to east of Frolesworth Road	Relatively flat land	Vegetated hedgerows and field boundaries	
K	Recreation ground and facilities	Flat	Boundary planting	

Area	Integration with settlement edge and Countryside	Visibility and Enclosure	Rating	Brief Explanation
A	Separated from built edge by open space associated with school. Site topography faces towards centre of Broughton Astley	Relatively well enclosed on lower fields by landform and aspect of slopes. Long distance views from wider countryside minimised by south facing landform.	Amber	Despite lack of immediate connection to built development of Broughton Astley, the site is well enclosed and would further enclose the empty centre of Broughton Astley itself. Development would need containment and screening to keep to lower slopes
B	Separated from Broughton Astley by height and location, associated with open countryside of Upper Soar	Site visible from the north and along Cosby Road. Equestrian Centre acts as local landmark, feature visible for long distances	Red	Site is associated with the wider countryside with open and distant views from the north, due to its height and aspect. Mitigation measures would not sufficiently mitigate visual impacts.
C	Industrial estate located to the south of Cottage Lane is well screened with a mature vegetated boundary. Residential estate from well vegetated edge to Broughton Astley. Site associates more with agricultural countryside than settlement	Open site visible from north west and south due to steeply sloping fields. Vegetated boundary forms visible boundary to current development edge	Red	Cottage Lane forms well screened edge to Broughton Astley, which is well contained. Development north of Cottage Lane would encroach onto open sloping fields of wider countryside.
D	Site directly behind properties to rear of Dunton Road	'Hidden' site behind dismantled railway embankment, well enclosed with little visibility	Amber	Well enclosed site currently under agriculture related to Station Farm. Development could fit within lower land directly associated with Broughton Astley.
E	Small field and abandoned factory site directly adjacent to residential properties on main road	Well enclosed from distant view	Green	Small site, well enclosed and connected to Broughton Astley
F	Site to both sides of short row of housing on outskirts of Broughton Astley, to both sides of Dunton road. Located away from main settlement.	Lack of long distance views to sites but associated with open countryside to north, east and south.	Red	Site associated more with Upper Soar character countryside than with settlement due to its location on the outskirts of Broughton Astley.
G	Site is connected to residential edge and hidden from wider countryside by Clump Hill	Enclosed site to the northern side of Clump Hill. With limited long distance views from the south and Dunton Road	Amber	Well enclosed site, connected to and overlooked by the southern residential edge of Broughton Astley. Mitigation can minimise visual impacts from the south
H	Directly adjacent to residential estate located to north of site. School and grounds sit adjacent to the site	Current edge of development well screened from external views. Extension to development on sloping fields would be visible from the west	Red	Site would be visible from the wider countryside to the west and south, although screened to an extent by the railway embankment to views from the east.
I	Location is directly adjacent to the residential edges of Broughton Astley but on either side of the water course. The lower fields do not have a direct association to the wider countryside because their aspect faces towards the settlement edge.	Low sites are not visible from the open countryside west and south due to a combination of fields slope towards the east and vegetation screening effects.	Amber	Location at base of slope adjacent to water course but which can consider accommodating development with good design layout to allow integration and access to settlement edge.
J	Separated from settlement edge non contiguous with existing settlement edge and more closely associated with wider countryside.	Flat site visible from wider countryside and Frolesworth Road	Red	Site is exposed to views from countryside and disconnected to edge of Broughton Astley.
K	Site is recreation ground directly south of residential estate	Relatively well enclosed site	Red	Recreation ground unsuitable for development

Area	Site Context	Topography	Vegetation	Designations
L	Located along western edge of Broughton Astley,	Relatively flat	Hedgerows to field boundaries	
M	Located along north western edge of Broughton Astley, stretching towards Broughton Way.	Fields located on ridge top and higher land	Hedgerows line the field boundaries	
N	Located to the north of Coventry Road	Gently sloping land facing toward the west	Mature vegetation along the field boundaries	
O	Sites east and north of Sutton in the Elms and Broughton Astley	Sloping site facing west and south with varying steepness	Vegetated field boundaries with low hedgerows dividing fields	Adjacent to floodplain
P	Small site between B581 and Cosby Road	Relatively flat	Dense mature vegetation to Cosby Road boundary	

Area	Integration with settlement edge and Countryside	Visibility and Enclosure	Ratings	Brief Explanation
L	Sites directly adjacent and associated with settlement edge of Broughton Astley	Site relatively well enclosed and visually connected to settlement and residential estate.	Amber	Enclosed site due to location on edge of settlement. Mitigation through screen planting would integrate development with current residential edge. External edge of development would need careful integration to make sure it doesn't encroach onto more exposed slopes
M	Sites further from edge of settlement, not directly connected to existing development edge.	Sites open to long distance views from wider Upper Soar character countryside due to location on edge of ridge of higher land.	Red	Open sites visible from long distances to the west. Mitigation would not be able to reduce visual impacts significantly due to site location on edge of ridge at top of south west facing slopes
N	Site separated from main settlement edge by route of Coventry Road	Site relatively well screened due to combination of vegetation and topography. Some distant views from the west.	Amber	Opportunity to consider development despite site not directly associated with main settlement of Broughton Astley.
O	Minimal integration with developed edge of Broughton Astley, associated with smaller settlement of Sutton in the Elms and agricultural countryside towards the north	Sloping sites exposed to wider countryside	Red	Sites disconnected from main residential edges of Broughton Astley by B581. Mitigation would not reduce visual impacts on sloping land to the north.
P	Not directly integrated with settlement edge due to floodplain area and main road	Enclosed site, with mature planting acting to screen inward views.	Amber	Site location not directly connected to centre of Broughton Astley, but presents opportunity to develop within a well contained site with limited views which can be mitigated.

Focus Areas Summary

The aim of this section of the report is to analyse the landscape context and setting for each of the Focus Area urban fringe/ settlement edge areas to:

- Outline the nature of the relationship between each settlement and its immediate landscape setting and wider landscape character area
- Assess the capacity of the edge of the settlements to accept development in landscape and visual terms
- Attach ratings to sectors of the edge of the settlements to guide development considerations

By employing the traffic light approach to designate sectors of the settlement edge according to a simple red/ amber/ green system, a traffic light plan has been produced to illustrate which sectors of the settlement edge are unsuitable for development change, or can be considered for development change. The analysis behind the choice of rating attached to each sector is outlined in a summary table accompanying the traffic light plans, with analysis covering a range of categories including: topography and landform, vegetation cover, views, and integration with the settlement and countryside.

The purpose of the traffic light plans and tables is to provide an easy and accessible guide, based on landscape criteria, to consult when development proposals are considered for each settlement.

The Focus Areas analysis has concentrated on the seven largest settlements in Harborough District, with a population of over 3,000, with a view to considering and accommodating development in or around the existing large settlements in preference to other areas of the District, such as new sites or existing smaller settlements.

The Focus Areas most closely associated with development pressures from Leicester's urban areas, Scraftoft, Bushby and Thurnby, and Great Glen, are both located within the landscape character area with the least capacity to accept development, the High

Leicestershire Landscape Character Area. However, by analysing each settlement at a closer and more local level of detail a number of areas that can be considered for development have been identified in both Focus Areas.

In Scraftoft, Bushby and Thurnby potential developable sites are limited to full or part field sites directly contiguous with the existing settlement edge, which do not encroach significantly into the wider High Leicestershire countryside. The rolling landform of ridges and valleys plays an important role in determining which sites will physically and visually intrude into landscape character. Enclosed and flatter sites are more suitable for potential development, such as B and G. Sites with steep slopes such as sites A, D and I preclude development in order to protect landscape character and elements. Overall development opportunities are confined to small contiguous sites when assessed in landscape terms. However this does not take into account issues of settlement coalescence. Sites such as C and E are designated as Separation Areas but are potentially able to accept development based on landscape criteria. The next stage of assessment, should these sites be put forward as planning applications, should be to analyse landscape and visual impacts in detail. It may be that by including green open space areas as part of new developments separation is adequately maintained.

For the Great Glen Focus Area, which suffers from similar development pressures to Scraftoft, Bushby and Thurnby, potential development sites tend to be situated away from the existing central settlement of Great Glen, particularly to the outer extents of radial road corridors leading away from the centre. Sites A and M are at the northern extremes of the Focus Area to either side of London Road. The sites are either gently sloping or benefit from enclosure by mature vegetation which limits long distance views. To the northern side of Great Glen sites F and H are similarly gently sloping, well enclosed and

contiguous with existing settlement. Otherwise Great Glen is surrounded by steeper slopes on other sites which limit the capacity of the landscape to accept development without significant visual impacts. In landscape terms the most important determining factor in protecting Great Glen's landscape setting is preventing development encroachment on higher, steeper slopes.

Kibworth Focus Area shows a relatively simple pattern for potential development in landscape terms, which roughly divides the settlement edge into two sections. The northern side of Kibworth, Kibworth Harcourt, is contiguous with a wider landscape character area with a low capacity to accept development, High Leicestershire landscape character area. The majority of the northern edge of Kibworth is unsuitable for development.

On the southern side of Kibworth, Kibworth Beauchamp, there are a number of contiguous sites which offer the potential to be considered. The surrounding landscape is more able to accept development, contained within the Lutterworth Lowlands landscape character area, being generally flatter with less long distance views to Kibworth. Sites C, E, G and I all offer options for providing developable sites. However careful consideration of individual sites at detail level in and around Kibworth will be critical to retaining key aspects of the settlements character. All development needs to take account of local distinctiveness and relationship to landscape setting, through site level landscape and visual assessment.

Conversely, the potential development pattern for Market Harborough is comparatively complex despite the landscape setting for the settlement being easy to define; there is a strong high ridgeline which wraps around the north of the town, and to the south landscape character is influenced by the river and floodplain. The ridge precludes development opportunities to the north, particularly in site A; any

development above the ridgeline would be highly visible from the wider Welland Valley countryside, and should be avoided. To the west and south of the town, such as N and L can offer development sites. Views to these sites are limited and can be appropriately mitigated by screening measures as part of site design. To the north east around Great Bowden a number of potential small sites can be considered in landscape terms, such as B, F, H, I and J but will require additional detail consideration in relation to issues of coalescence between Great Bowden and Market Harborough. Great Bowden is contained by the same landscape form and features as Market Harborough and separated in places by a narrow strip of open land. It falls within the same 'landscape and visual' envelope to be considered as partially developable in the area.

Lutterworth Focus Area falls within the Lutterworth Lowlands Landscape Character Area, which has potentially the greatest capacity to accept development change in landscape terms of all the landscape character areas across the District. It is an open and relatively level landscape generally characterised by high degrees of change and intervention. However, the immediate landscape setting for Lutterworth does not offer much potential for development being relatively constrained by local landscape features which act as natural limits to the settlement, and man made features such as the M1 motorway which constrains Lutterworth to the east. The north and western sides of Lutterworth, covered by sites A and C, are attractive open landscape which slope down to the valley base in the west. Views from the west towards the western side of Lutterworth are clear and open. Brookfield Way, Bitteswell Road and Bill Crane Way acts as a natural landscape boundary to the settlement edge. Similarly the southern bypass road presents a natural southern edge; development on sites such as I and E, beyond the road would be non contiguous and encroach into the wider landscape.

Elsewhere small sites closer to the settlement envelope offer potential sites, such as B, D & F, but will require local level and detail landscape and visual analysis to propose mitigation measures which visually link the development sites with the settlement rather than the surrounding landscape. Overall, Lutterworth would appear to offer potential for accommodating change but with close analysis of the immediate landscape Lutterworth can be defined as a well contained settlement with a clearly definable envelope which should be protected; development outside this envelope should be avoided in landscape terms.

Fleckney, the smallest of the Focus Areas to be assessed, offers a relatively large number of options for development sites when considered against landscape criteria. It also falls within the Lutterworth Lowlands Landscape Character Area. There are potential sites to all sides of Fleckney, including sites such as P, B and E, H and K which are located on lower and flatter land which is less visible from external views. Fleckney benefits in landscape terms from being enclosed to a degree by higher surrounding land away from its immediate landscape setting, particularly to the west and south. Views are limited by the surrounding higher landform from the wider Lutterworth Lowlands landscape. However whilst a number of sites offer potential, all the sites will need detail level analysis to consider the local level impacts on adjacent areas of the existing settlement, including sites D, E and F. Landscape mitigation measures will minimise local impacts but need to be balanced by local landscape and visual impact assessment to avoid significant impacts at the local level.

The final Focus Area, Broughton Astley, is the only Focus Area located within the Upper Soar Landscape Character Area. The existing settlement is based around a 'dumb-bell' shape with two almost separate areas of development with open space connecting

them in the centre. The settlement edge offers a range of potential development sites suitable for development in landscape terms. Sites A and P lie on the lower slopes facing the open space in the centre of the settlement, well enclosed from external views. Similarly sites D and G are inward facing sites on the southern side of the settlement which are hidden from views from the wider landscape. To the western side of Broughton Astley land falls steeply away towards the west, and whilst site M is unsuitable for development because it would be highly visible from the Upper Soar wide open valley landscape, careful development on site L on the flatter top of the ridge could be possible with well located landscape mitigation to minimise visual impacts.

In summary the traffic light approach offers a simple and clear analysis to illustrate potential development sites for consideration on the settlement edges of each Focus Area, alongside sites which are unsuitable for development change where it is important that landscape character is protected according to a range of landscape and visual criteria.

At this level of analysis sites are suggested which have the capacity to be considered as potential development sites but will require further more detailed analysis to include landscape and visual assessment of impacts during the design and masterplanning stage. It is recommended that individual development applications are considered on a site by site basis but which take into account both the results of the landscape character assessment and the Focus Areas analysis, presented in this report

Summary and Conclusions

Summary and Conclusions

This report presents an impartial landscape based study of landscape character across the whole of Harborough District, as well as a complementary study of the urban fringe/ settlement edge of seven focus areas around the largest settlements in the district.

A key objective of the report is to serve as a tool to guide decision making and policy planning with regard to accommodating development across the District, by focusing on the capacity of the landscape resource to accept development change. Obviously a range of other factors affect planning allocations for development, including accessibility, infrastructure and ownership. Landscape is a factor to consider alongside these issues.

This report aims to present a method of assessing and evaluating the landscape resource, compatible with other factors in the planning process, in order to fit development within the existing landscape character in the best locations, to minimise adverse impacts on valuable landscape features and characteristics which need protection or enhancement.

Project Constraints

The desk survey and mapping work is based on GIS information provided by Harborough District Council, and topography and aerial photograph information supplied by the Countryside Agency. The GIS information does not include layers relating to ecological or vegetation information so areas of significant vegetation have been mapped by eye from OS paper maps and aerial photographs to give an impression of significant areas of vegetation, e.g. woodlands. Ecological information has been taken from the MAGIC website down to the national level of designations i.e. SSSI level, as data from the county biological records office was unavailable in a useable format within the time available. Additional analysis with more detailed information on vegetation, ecology and heritage at individual site level would make the Focus Areas studies more robust.

Site work was carried out between March and June 2006, which means that the site analysis is based on spring and summer vegetation cover patterns, rather than winter when cover is at a minimum and views maximised. Visibility of site areas, key views and a sense of openness may be reduced through screening of views by vegetation. Additional follow-up visits in the autumn/ winter to confirm visibility issues for contentious sectors of the Focus Areas would serve to make the assessment more robust.

The report was produced within a five month period from commission to draft report. Stakeholder consultation has taken the form of regular steering group meetings, group meetings and a technical workshop for the Focus Areas. It was suggested that additional wider consultation could allow discussion and comment on the ratings given to each landscape character area with regard to capacity, and endorsement of the approach and results categorising the sectors within the Focus Areas. The report would obviously be of interest to local residents, particularly in the Focus Area settlements. Local knowledge regarding the less tangible perceptions of the landscape would add an additional element to the landscape characterisation process.

Summary

Working within the confines of the scope of the project timescale, this report presents a comprehensive assessment and evaluation of the landscape character, and the relationships between key settlements and their landscape setting.

The starting point for this two stage assessment was a review of the Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Landscape Character Assessment report, which was found to be an accurate representation of the general landscape characteristics of Harborough District. This study uses the previous document as a template for the boundaries of the five landscape

character areas put forward in this landscape character assessment. The names and boundaries of the character areas were retained as they portrayed a true representation of the descriptions and differences between landscape character areas at the district wide scale of the study. It was considered that dividing the character areas would further serve to stretch differences between character areas which would dilute the results of the study, suggesting more diversity in character than is apparent on the ground.

In terms of boundary positions on the ground, most boundaries are connected to changes in topography, such as breaks of slope for the limits of the Welland Valley character area. The most contentious, in terms of boundary positions, occur in the centre of the District in the vicinity of Kibworth, where four different character areas meet. The Welland Valley character area boundary is the easiest to define in relation to slope change. The rising slopes of its landform similarly define the Laughton Hills character area. The boundaries and differences between the High Leicestershire and Lutterworth Lowlands character areas to either side of Kibworth are harder to define. In this area, approximately along the route of the A6, the boundary is much more of a blurred interface, rather than a specific line, between the two character areas.

The boundary of the current APAC designation, as illustrated in Figure 2.0 runs in an approximately north-south direction across the centre of the District, with the eastern side of the district falling within the designation. The APAC boundary does not correlate to landscape character as defined by the five Harborough Landscape Character Areas. The APAC boundary matches most closely to the High Leicestershire landscape character area; the majority of which falls mainly under the designation. The Welland Valley landscape character area falls almost entirely under the designation. The Lutterworth Lowlands and Laughton Hills landscape character areas partly fall within the designation; the Upper Soar character area does not.

This study is based on the premise that current best practice advocates a move away from rigid designations towards character based protection policy. This landscape character assessment provides the basis for policy which is based on the inherent characteristics of the Harborough District landscape itself, rather than the APAC designation which does not relate, well, to landscape elements on the ground. It is recommended therefore that the APAC designation is removed, and the five defined landscape character areas are used as a basis for defining policy and making development decisions instead.

The report concludes that generally development in Harborough District should be firstly directed away from landscape character areas with low capacity ratings, such as High Leicestershire; and towards character areas with a higher capacity to accept development, such as Upper Soar and Lutterworth Lowlands. However, all development should consider landscape character and setting to minimise adverse impacts in all the character areas. All the character areas have the ability to accept development in some form, whether it be numerous small plots divided across numerous villages in High Leicestershire, or larger sectors of urban fringe development attached to key larger settlements within Lutterworth Lowlands.

As demonstrated by the Focus Areas section of the study, when local landscapes are considered at a smaller scale and more detailed level of study, it is possible to identify potential for development change which accurately takes into account the landscape setting and surrounding character. The Focus Area traffic light plans and tables act as a guide to be referred to when development proposals are put forward. However, the Focus Area assessment is based on a landscape focussed approach, and do not take into account additional factors such as access arrangements or other environmental factors. As individual proposals are suggested the traffic light plans can be checked according to a range of

criteria, including topography and visibility, to discern if development change will impact on the local landscape.

Further detailed study of the green and amber sectors will allow sites to be prioritised against a range of factors outside this study (access, infrastructure, ownership etc.) and gauge development demand against capacity

Next steps

To follow on from the assessment and evaluation work in this report the following areas of work are recommended to further evaluate the potential to accommodate development change within Harborough District in the urban fringe/ settlement edge or other areas.

Detail assessment of Amber and Green sectors of the Focus Areas:

Conducting Feasibility Studies to establish future development potential in the developable areas of the Focus Areas would explore potential for future development in more detail. In order to establish development capacity in detail further study is needed into the following aspects:

- The impact and effects upon public transport and highway systems including traffic impacts;
- Capacity and systems provision of new infrastructure and utilities, including green infrastructure;
- Social and community needs such as education, healthcare and open space needs;
- Employment needs to promote a sustainable mix of uses; and
- Consideration of the effects of other major proposals.

Sites can then be prioritised based on an evaluation of the above in addition to higher level landscape and visual assessment. An in depth landscape and visual impact assessment can then be undertaken for the defined sites followed by urban design recommendations at the masterplanning stage to guide the successful integration of the development with the existing settlement and the countryside edge.

Assessment of the land surrounding settlements with a population of 3000 or less

While the assessment considered settlements with a population of 3000 or more there are numerous substantial villages such as Husbands Bosworth, Ullesthorpe or Gilmorton which could accommodate a certain amount of development in landscape terms around the edges of the settlements. Through a similar assessment process to that employed for the Focus Areas it may be possible to identify areas of landscape with the capacity for future change, without adverse effect upon the villages. This would assist in appraising sites should the allocation of land for development prove necessary.

Residential Design Guidance

Within smaller settlements or for development which can reasonably be accommodated within existing residential areas, it is suggested that residential design guidance is prepared to ensure that locally distinctive settlement patterns retain their character and form, whilst meeting the requirements of PPS3. From this assessment it is clear that the settlements such as Medbourne, Hallaton and Tilton on the Hill for example, possess strong positive character in terms of their built form, use of local materials and locally distinctive detailing. It is important that any new development, within settlements such as this, respects these traditions whilst meeting the best practice in contemporary design techniques.

As previously noted, this report presents an impartial assessment of the key current landscape and settlement patterns for Harborough District. As development pressures and proposals change with time it is important that landscape character policy recommendations are reviewed to take full account of best practice, and to ensure that the valuable and important characteristics of Harborough District's landscape are protected, retained or enhanced.

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Produced by ATKINS
Broadgate House
Broadgate
Beeston
Nottingham
NG9 2HF