

Leire Neighbourhood Plan



2020 - 2031

Referendum
Version

March 2022



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Foreword

On 4 December 2017, Leire Parish Council was successful with its application to Harborough District Council to become a Qualifying Body for the preparation of a Neighbourhood Plan. The Designated area was the existing Parish Council boundary.

The Parish Council has produced the Leire Neighbourhood Plan with assistance from an Advisory Committee including Parish Council members, community volunteers, and interested individuals in the community and with help from the District Council and other agencies.

The Neighbourhood Plan will form the basis for planning decisions applicable to Leire Parish, up to 2031, together with the policies in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), which embrace the whole of the country and the Local Plan for Harborough which covers the area controlled by the District Council. It is the District Council as the Local Planning Authority who will continue to determine planning applications, but they will have to consider the policies in the Neighbourhood Plan when reaching their decision.

The Leire Neighbourhood Plan reflects community-wide comments, observations and concerns about its future, bringing them together with Census information, strategic and statistical evidence into a document that mirrors the community's overwhelming desire to make Leire an even better place to live, both now and for future generations. The Plan sets out a Vision with aspirations and planning policy aims to help shape future development in Leire. The policies aim to address key concerns raised by local people including protecting the character of the village and surrounding area. Some of the issues raised cannot be directly addressed by planning policies within the Neighbourhood Plan but are included as 'Community Actions' to support the Plan policies.

Community consultation including Open Events and a community questionnaire have sat alongside membership of the Advisory Committee and several 'Theme Groups' and have enabled local people to be involved at a level to reflect their circumstances to contribute to identifying the changes that the local community wishes to see in Leire.

We are grateful to Officers at Harborough District Council, District Councillors and the wider community for their involvement in the development of the Neighbourhood Plan.

Leire is an attractive and popular place in which to live and the contribution from people who care about their community and want to make it better for generations to come is greatly appreciated.

Paul Rock and Patrick Cawley-Rock,

Joint Chairs,

Leire Neighbourhood Plan Advisory Committee

1 Background and context

Introduction

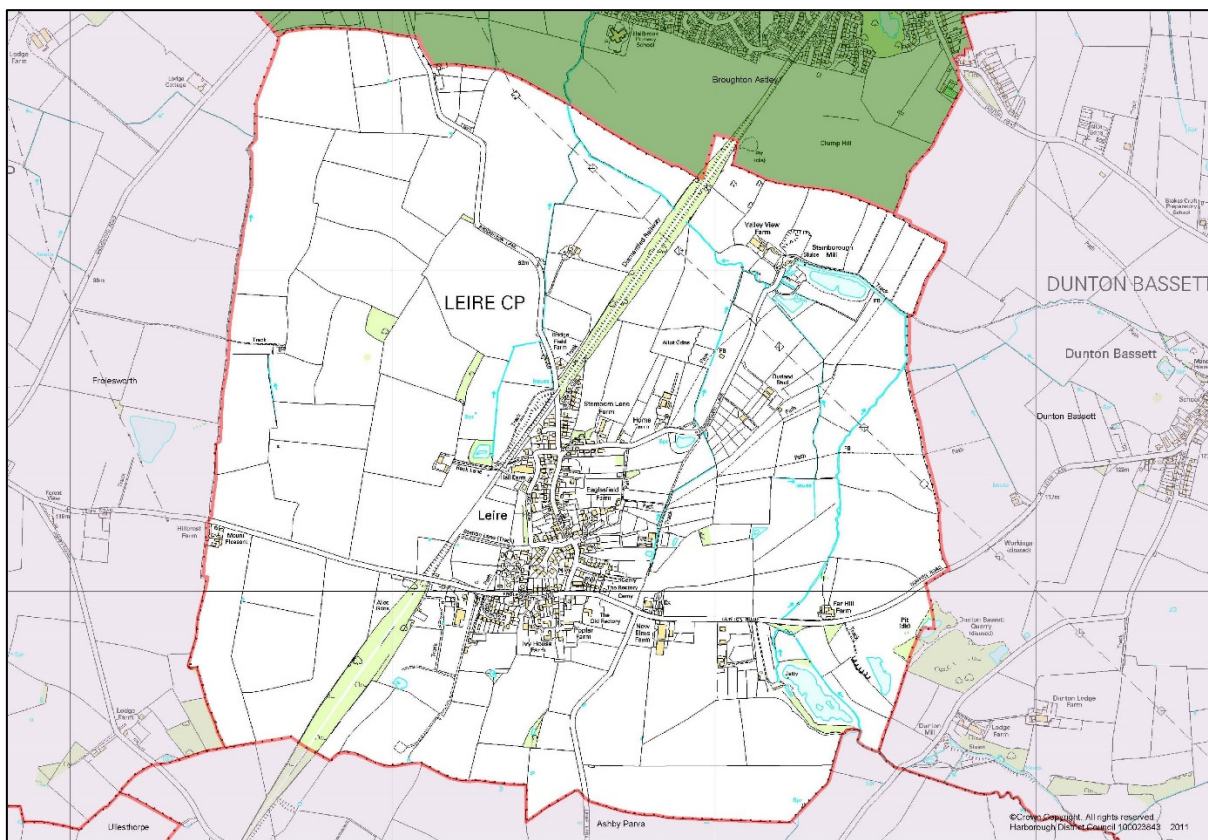
This Plan been prepared by the Leire Neighbourhood Plan Advisory Committee, which brings together members of the local community and Parish Councillors and has been led by the Parish Council.

A key part of the Government’s Localism agenda, a Neighbourhood Plan is a new type of planning document that gives local people greater control and say over how their community develops, now and in the future. This includes, for example, where new homes and businesses etc. should be built; what new buildings and extensions should look like and which areas of land should be protected from development.

As the *Plain English Guide to the Localism Act 2011* states, “Instead of local people being told what to do, the Government thinks that local communities should have genuine opportunities to influence the future of the places where they live”.

The Plan covers the whole of the Parish of Leire. It sets out a long-term approach for development and sets out out clear development-related policies to realise this.

Figure 1 Designated area



In preparing a Neighbourhood Plan a community is not working from ‘a blank piece of paper’. Legislation requires that the Plan, and the policies it contains, must be prepared in a prescribed

manner. In particular, the policies must be in general conformity with relevant national and district-wide (i.e. Harborough) approved strategic planning policies.

How the Plan fits into the planning system

The right for communities to prepare Neighbourhood Plans was established through the Localism Act 2011, which set out the general rules governing their preparation.

A Neighbourhood Plan forms part of the Statutory Development Plan for the area in which it is prepared. This statutory status means that it must be taken into account when considering planning decisions affecting that area.

One of the main rules governing the preparation of a Neighbourhood Plan is that it must be in line with European regulations on strategic environmental assessment and habitat regulations. It must also be in general conformity with national, county and district wide (i.e. Harborough) planning policies. This means that it cannot be prepared in isolation. It will need to take into account, and generally work with, the grain of district-wide and national policies unless there are good reasons for not doing so.

Also important is the NPPF This sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied. The NPPF requires the planning system (including Neighbourhood Plans) to encourage sustainable development and details three dimensions to that development:

- An economic dimension – they should contribute to economic development;
- A social dimension – they should support strong, vibrant and healthy communities by providing the right supply of housing and creating a high-quality built environment with accessible local services; and
- An environmental dimension – they should contribute to protecting and enhancing the natural, built and historic environment.

Following consultation with the community and statutory stakeholders, the Plan will be submitted to Harborough District Council for a validation check and further statutory consultation, before being considered by an Independent Examiner, who will check to see that it has been prepared in the prescribed manner. If the Plan successfully passes this stage, with any modifications, it will be put forward to referendum, where those on the electoral register in Leire Parish will be invited to vote on whether or not they support it. Over 50% of those voting must approve it for the Leire Neighbourhood Plan to become a 'Made' statutory planning document.

Whilst planning applications will still be determined by Harborough District Council, and in special circumstances Leicestershire County Council, the production of a Neighbourhood Plan will mean that they must have regard to the provisions of the Plan and the relevant locally formulated criteria when reaching planning decisions that affect Leire Parish. This means that the residents of the Parish will have a far greater control over what development takes place.

It should be noted, however, it is not at the 'Made' stage when the provisions of the Plan need to be taken into account when considering planning decisions by Harborough District Council and others. Once submitted to the Local Planning Authority, the draft Plan carries weight in the planning system. Legislation and guidance requires that the more advanced the preparation of the Plan the greater the 'weight' that may be given to its contents.

The Neighbourhood Plan and what we want it to achieve

The Plan area encompasses the whole of the Parish of Leire and covers the period up to 2031, a time scale which deliberately mirrors that for the Harborough Local Plan.

The Neighbourhood Plan is not intended to replace or supersede the district-wide Local Plan, but rather it sits alongside it, to add additional or more detailed policies specific to Leire. Where the Local Plan contains policies that meet the needs and requirements of Leire they are not repeated here. Instead, the Plan focuses on those planning issues which consultation shows matter most to the community and to which it can add the greatest additional value.

These include policies that:

- Ensure that development takes place in the most sustainable locations;
- Encourage the right types of development that meet local needs;
- Protect important buildings and structures of historic and architectural interest;
- Protect important community facilities;
- Promote high quality design in new development;
- Protect the countryside and special landscape;
- Protect open spaces that are important to the community and/or wildlife; and
- Seek ways of addressing the problems of traffic congestion.

Furthermore, these locally formulated policies will be specific to Leire Parish and reflect the needs and aspirations of the community.

It is important to note that when using the Plan to form a view on a development proposal or a policy issue the whole document and the policies contained in it must be considered together.

While every effort has been made to make the main parts of this Plan easy to read and understand, the wording of the actual policies is necessarily more formal, so that it complies with statutory requirements.

The Plan will be kept under review and may change over time in response to new and changing needs and requirements.

How the Neighbourhood Plan supports sustainable development

According to the key national planning document – the NPPF- the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to sustainable development.

The goal of sustainable development is to enable all people to satisfy their basic needs and to enjoy a better quality of life, without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own social, economic and environmental needs.

The NPPF carries a presumption in favour of sustainable development. It states that there are three dimensions to sustainable development: social, environmental and economic, all of which are important and interrelated.

In accordance with this, the Plan's aims and policies are centred on the achievement of sustainable development, including by, for example:

a) Social

- To safeguard existing open space for the enjoyment of residents;
- To protect existing community facilities; and
- To deliver a mix of housing types, so that it can meet the needs of present and future generations.

b) Environmental

- To ensure that housing development is of the right quantity and type in the right location, so that it does not harm but instead positively reflects the existing and historic character of the area;
- To protect important open spaces from development,
- To ensure that the design of development enhances the Parish's special character and identity;
- To protect and enhance biodiversity and important habitats; and
- To make provision for improved pedestrian and cycling facilities.

c) Economic

- To protect existing employment uses;
- To enable appropriate farm diversification;
- To support appropriate small-scale business development and expansion; and
- To encourage appropriate start-up businesses and home working.

2 Leire parish

A brief history of the Parish

Leire is a roughly square-shaped parish lying west of the A426 and M1, the village itself being surrounded by a mixture of arable and pasture fields, some still having the medieval ridge and furrow. Although the number of cattle and sheep kept has fallen, stabling for horses has become more common and horse riders are part of the daily traffic through the village. A sinuous main street runs north to south. In its middle section, the houses front directly onto the street, while to the north and south the houses are set back with front gardens with limited parking space. As a result, the street scape is mainly one of mature brick facades with the welcome greenery of the lime trees and hedges in the northern section. At the south end of Main Street, the east-west road between Dunton Bassett and Frolesworth is lined with mainly post-war housing set back from the road, allowing parking on drives and also space for grass verges. A small triangular garden is sited at the junction of Little Lane and Frolesworth Road. The Green is also beside this road, framed on two sides by brick cottages and is the site of one of the remaining village pumps. The village has natural end-points at the bridges on Broughton Lane and Frolesworth Road.

The church stands in a commanding position, within its churchyard, at the junction of the two main village roads. The tower was built in the 13th century and has a dramatic visual impact from all angles, being raised above the road. It is visible from the parish boundary in all directions. Opposite is the Queen's Arms beside the Old Manor House, two of the older buildings in the village. Four three-storey farmhouses of the 18th and 19th century survive, representing the village's agricultural past. The old Rectory, now a private residence, is an imposing 19th century building with two large conifers, including a Wellingtonia, visible from the road. Two former schools remain, one now serving as the handsome Village Hall at the centre of the village and the other as a private residence. The earlier cottages between the church and the turn to Stemborough Mill have been replaced or modernised, in piecemeal fashion, to present Victorian red brick frontages and the intervening spaces filled with 20th century dwellings, both as individual houses and cul-de-sac developments. There are two former water mills, both established before 1279 and repeatedly rebuilt, standing on the same stream to the east of the parish. There is a designated Conservation Area covering Main Street as well as the Green, Little Lane and the old Rectory. Included in the Area are the reverse S-shapes of Main street and Back Lane, linked by long narrow plots, perpetuating an open field furlong, enclosed in a planned manner in the Middle Ages.

The lane to Stemborough Mill is a popular route for walkers and horse riders, as is Back Lane, which runs parallel and west of Main Street. The remaining beech trees along Back Lane are covered by a Tree Preservation Order. The former railway line (1840-1962) is now Jubilee Walk, donated by a parishioner; a half mile stretch through a deep cutting with an abundance of

documented flora and fauna, much used by walkers from neighbouring villages as well as Leire. Beside it is the playing field, another charitable donation to the village and the site of the annual village fete and the children's recreation area. The Leicestershire Round runs through the parish from Stemborough Mill, across the fields, through the village centre to Back Lane, then along Station Lane and across the fields again to Frolesworth. The variety of habitats within the parish (lakes and ponds, streams, marsh, woodland, meadow, arable, sandy banks, hedgerow) has encouraged a diverse range of plant and animal wildlife.

Leire Today

According to the most recently available 2011 Census (see Appendix 1) Leire had a population of 587 residents living in 229 households, with ten vacant dwellings. Between 2001 and 2011 the number of residents living in the Parish increased by around 18 (+3%).

At the last census date of 2011, around 17% of residents were aged under 16 which was slightly lower than the district average of 19.2%. Around 63.9% of residents were aged between 16 and 64 which is very close to the district rate of 62.6% and the national rate of 64.8%. Older people (aged 65+) represented 19.1% of total residents which again is almost identical to the district rate of 18.3% and slightly above the national rate of 16.3%.

Properties are generally larger than the district average in Leire, the average number of rooms per household at 7.2 is higher than the district (6.3), regional (5.6) and national (5.4) rates. People living in the Leire Parish are also more likely to live in homes with a higher than usual number of bedrooms with the average number of bedrooms per household standing at 3.5 which is above the district (3.1), region (2.8) and national (2.7) rates.

Home ownership levels were very high with 83.4% of households owning their homes outright or with a mortgage or loan, this was higher than the district rate of 78% and significantly higher than the regional (67%) and national (63%) rates. Social rented properties accounted for only 5.2% of tenure which was lower than the district (8%) and significantly lower than the region (16%) and England (18%) rates. Around 10.5% of households lived in privately rented homes which was close to the district rate of 11.2% but significantly below the regional rate of 14.9% and England rate of 16.8%. Anecdotal local evidence suggests that the proportion of privately rented homes has increased and the number of owner-occupied homes has decreased over the last eight years.

Data from the 2011 Census also showed that a very high 73.2% of residential dwellings were detached which was significantly higher than the district figure of 47.7% and national proportion of 22.3%. Terraced properties only made up 6.7% of the stock in Leire, compared to 15.2% for the district and 24.5% nationally. A very stark indicator of the type of stock was that only 0.8% of properties were a flat, maisonette or apartment in Leire, compared with 8.1% for the district and 22.1% nationally.

People living in the parish were also far more likely to be living in dwellings with four or more bedrooms. Results from the 2011 Census show that 51.5% of households lived in a property with more than 4 bedrooms which was massively above the district rate of 34%, the regional rate of 20% and the England rate of 19%. There was also a significant under representation of smaller housing units with just 15.3% of dwellings having one or two bedrooms against 28.3% for the district 34.6% for the region and 39.7% England as a whole.

There is evidence of severe under occupancy in the parish (having more bedrooms than the notional number recommended by the bedroom standard). Analysis of the 2011 Census showed that 62% of all households in Leire had two or more spare bedrooms and around 26% had one spare bedroom. Under occupancy was much higher than district, regional and national rates. Under occupancy is not unusual in rural areas because there is typically less social housing and a tendency for the market to provide larger properties. Under occupancy was particularly evident in larger properties with around 51% of households with 4 or more bedrooms occupied by just one or two people.

Land registry data (see appendix 2) shows there were 161 property sales between 1995 and 2017 and ten of these were new build units, a building rate of about half a property per year. It should be noted that not all new builds will be captured in the land registry price paid data, for example some conversions and social housing units will be excluded.

The publication of ONS House Price Statistics for Small Areas presents an opportunity for housing affordability analysis.

The data reveals the cost of an entry-level property on average across England and Wales has increased by almost 20% in the last decade, to £140,000 (year ending June 2016). For new properties, the price was nearly £180,000. The data also shows that home-ownership prospects vary across the country.

In the Leire local area a low to mid-priced property costs on average £215,000 which is somewhat higher than the national average. Assuming a 15% deposit, those entering the property market in the area would require a household income of £40,611 (£26,444 E&W average) and savings of £36,050.

Prospective buyers would require an estimated £2,000 for legal and moving costs and £32,250 for a 15% deposit, £1,800 for stamp duty coming to £36,050 in total which is a challenge for many entry level households.

3. Community Engagement process

After the Parish Council took the decision to prepare a Neighbourhood Plan a process was set in motion to establish an Advisory Committee to drive the process forward.

The Advisory Committee met regularly throughout the process of preparing the Neighbourhood Plan and helped to steer the process and to pull together the various activities that were being undertaken.

Further detail on all of the following consultation activities are available on the Parish Council website.

In addition to the specific events described below, the preparation of the Neighbourhood Plan was kept in the forefront of people's minds locally through regular features in the Parish Newsletter and through numerous display board presences at village events such as quiz nights, summer fetes and correspondence at Christmas.

Initial Open Event

An initial Open Event in September 2018 set out the context and stages of the project and asked questions about people's thoughts about Leire. An analysis of the event is included in the evidence base. Over 40 residents attended this event.

The views expressed by the residents were used to shape the strategy in preparing the Neighbourhood Plan for Leire.



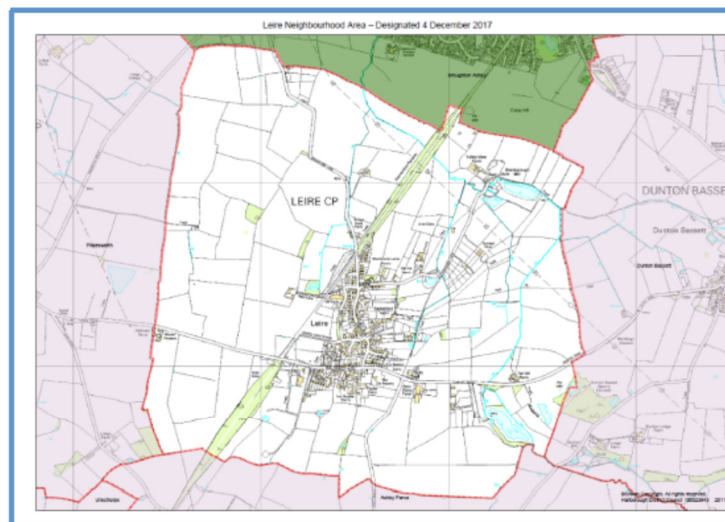
Questionnaire

A Community Questionnaire was distributed to each household in the Parish in October 2018. There were 155 responses from Parishioners - 32% of the adult population.

Leire Parish

Neighbourhood Plan

Community Questionnaire



Analysis

November 2018

Theme Groups

As the Neighbourhood Plan progressed, residents signed up to become part of 'Theme Groups'

to explore the detail of the Neighbourhood Plan; to build the evidence base and to lay the foundation for the draft Neighbourhood Plan. An environmental Theme Group was established, along with a theme group on housing and the built environment. Issues to do with employment; community facilities and transport were dealt with through the Advisory Committee.

The Theme Group work was launched with an event on 10 April 2019 (see images below) and the work continued throughout 2019 through a range of engagement processes such as fieldwork and group discussions. Evidence was gathered from statistical data; planning documents; historical records; fieldwork and consultation activities.



Further Open Event

Arrangements for a further Open Event to share the draft policies were thwarted with the onset of the Coronavirus Pandemic. Instead, the policies were shared with the community by written correspondence following Regulation 14 consultation. An Executive Summary of the Neighbourhood Plan helped to share the policies in plain English within the community.

4. A vision for Leire

Our vision for Leire Parish is that it continues, by 2031, to thrive as a vibrant and distinctive Village, to continue to respect and reflect the views of its community, to evolve and expand whilst retaining its unique and distinctive character, and to provide an outstanding quality of life for current and future generations of residents.

As residents and with our Parish Council, we will all support this vision by:

- Encouraging a thriving and prosperous community that delivers a high quality of life for all its residents;
- Recognising and protecting the character and history of the Village area;
- Supporting measured, proportionate, timely and sustainable development to meet local requirements;
- Promoting a flourishing local economy;
- Endorsing policies that have a positive effect on the environment, including those that remove or risk, mitigate climate change, reduce our carbon footprint and minimise the impact of increased traffic; and
- Maintaining a high-quality natural environment that preserves and enhances biodiversity.

5. Neighbourhood Plan Policies

5.1 Housing

Introduction

The village of Leire is of ancient origin and is designated as a conservation village where development will continue to be carefully controlled. Its street plan reflects its ancient origins and there are a large number of high-quality older properties, many listed. There remains a small number of working farms within the Parish which farm the land spreading outwards from the built form of the village core. Leire is a fairly small parish by regional standards and the built form makes up about 15% of the total land area, Broughton Astley is a large and expanding settlement approximately 1.2km to the North and the village of Dunton Bassett is located about 1.8km to the East. Maintaining and improving the unique aspects of the village and its wider environment are the key priorities in the Neighbourhood Plan.

Community consultation and involvement

Consultation with the community has been the central feature of the approach towards developing the Neighbourhood Plan as set out in detail in the consultation statement and attached appendices. Agreeing what, if any, development was preferred within the village was undertaken by a series of events starting in September 2018 and supported with a lengthy questionnaire undertaken in November 2018 which received an excellent response rate of 32% of parishioners.

The results revealed a strong preference for a limited amount of new residential development on smaller sites of around 2-5 units and a very strong preference against any large scale development that was perceived as spoiling the character, amenity and “sense of place that makes Leire so special”.

When asked what type of housing was needed, if there was to be new development in the Parish, the responses were expressed in percentage terms as follows;

Questionnaire findings

The predominant view of respondents when considering the type of homes required in the Parish is that smaller, affordable homes are needed, particularly for local people starting on the property ladder and for older people downsizing. In terms of tenure, owner occupied housing was the strong preference with 90% supporting 28% supporting shared ownership and 28% unsure and 27% supporting rented with 23% unsure. Eco-homes too are considered

important by a large proportion, 70% of respondents. There is a strong proportion against luxury executive housing with 60% against it and a further 19% unsure about it. The data shows a preference for smaller affordable properties suitable for first time buyers and retirees in numbers proportionate to the size and character of the village while recognising ecological concerns.

Combining the statistical data and community opinion is the key evidence to support the decision on future provision that meets needs.

Housing Provision

The Leicester and Leicestershire Local Authorities (including HDC) and the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) commissioned a Housing and Economic Development Needs Assessment (HEDNA) analysis from G L Hearn (part of the Capita group) to assess future housing needs, the scale of future economic growth and the quantity of land and floor-space required between 2011 and 2031/36. The report provided the evidence base for the preparation of the HDC local development plan. The HEDNA study was published in January 2017 and revealed an increase in housing need from earlier projections and this has since increased further by local issues including the Leicester Housing Market Assessment (2017) which identified Leicester City as being unable to accommodate its own housing need requirement based on the HEDNA figures. The LEP have also signed a “memorandum of understanding” committing all the relevant local planning authorities to collectively delivering this housing need to 2031.

As the adopted Harborough Local Plan (April 2019) states “The full objectively assessed housing need (OAN) for the Leicester and Leicestershire HMA is 4,829 dwellings per annum between 2011 and 2031 (96,580 total) and for HDC is an additional 532 dwellings per annum between 2011 and 2031 (HEDNA), giving a total plan requirement across the 20-year plan period of 10,640 dwellings”. In addition, the local plan incorporates a 20% buffer and therefore makes provision for 12,800 dwellings from 2011 to 2031. Of this, about 8,792 dwellings have already been built or committed (through the granting of planning permission or through allocation in neighbourhood plans) with a further 225 anticipated on windfall sites. Policy H1 therefore provides housing land for a minimum of a further 3,975 dwellings.

The Local Plan establishes a hierarchy of settlements to help to determine the most appropriate locations for development. On the basis of this hierarchy, Leire is classified as an ‘Other Village or Rural Settlement’ which the Local Plan describes as ‘the least sustainable locations for growth and covered by the housing in the countryside policy. New housing will be limited to small sites to meet a locally identified need (either through a housing needs survey or Neighbourhood Development Plan), housing to meet the needs of a rural worker, isolated homes in the countryside in accordance with NPPF paragraph 55, and replacement dwellings”.

HDC then apportioned this District-wide housing provision target in line with the settlement hierarchy outlined above, this gave a minimum target number of residential dwellings required

to be approved by 2031 and was set by HDC for Leire at zero. The housing theme group discussed the evidence of need in the parish and agreed that to “future proof” the Neighbourhood Plan a small residential allocation of 5 dwellings would be incorporated into the Neighbourhood Plan. This residential allocation is in addition to windfall units that have provided about one unit per annum over the last ten years.

Residential Allocation

To help establish the availability of adequate and appropriate land for residential development to provide for an additional 6 residential units by 2031 the Parish Council issued a “call for sites”. Letters and questionnaires were hand delivered to over 15 landowners and a large positive response was received.

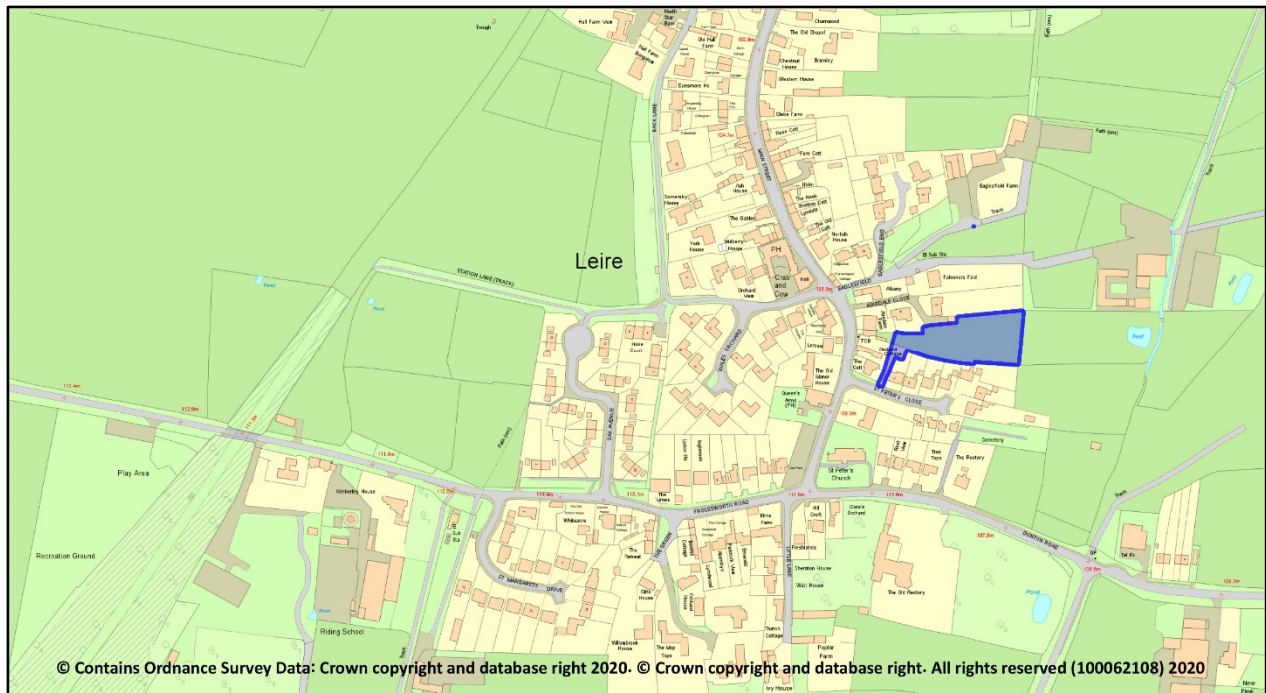
In total, landowners offered 7 sites that would yield approximately 155 units. All of the seven sites were then subjected to a professional Sustainable Site Assessment (SSA) exercise conducted by YourLocale against criteria agreed with the housing theme group members. The detailed SSA process that was undertaken is described in Appendix 5.

Through the Neighbourhood Plan the opportunity has therefore been taken to plan positively for additional housing that meets a local need, by allocating a small site for 5 dwellings, to meet this need and to help support local services.

POLICY H1: Residential site allocation - Land is allocated to the rear of Orchard Cottage on Main street, accessed from St Peter’s Close for five residential units as shown in figure 2, subject to:

- a) The site mix will comprise two 2-bed bungalows, two 3-bed houses and one 4-bed house. Any house can be substituted for a bungalow of any size;
- b) a minimum of two of the dwellings will be affordable;
- c) a public footpath will be provided to an adoptable standard to link to Main Street and serve the site;
- d) the development will not create an adverse impact on the character of the area, or undermine the amenity of neighbouring dwellings;
- e) all roads and footpaths should be constructed to Leicestershire County Council’s adoptability standards; and
- f) the whole of the site is to be built as one carefully designed scheme.

Figure 2: Residential allocation



Windfall development

A windfall site is defined in the NPPF as one which has not been specifically identified as available through the local or neighbourhood plan process. Such sites normally comprise of previously developed land that has unexpectedly become available.

A detailed Housing Needs Report commissioned as part of the process of preparing the Neighbourhood Plan is available as Appendix 3.

POLICY H2: Windfall Sites - Proposals for infill and redevelopment sites will be supported where:

- a) The location is within the Limits to Development boundary;
- b) It helps meet the identified housing requirement for Leire;
- c) It retains existing important natural boundaries and features such as gardens, trees, hedges, footpaths and streams;
- d) There is a safe vehicular and pedestrian access to the site;
- e) It does not reduce garden space to an extent where there is a significant adverse impact on the character of the area;
- f) If it involves two or more dwellings, provides for at least one small dwelling with three or fewer bedrooms for every one larger dwelling (i.e. four or more bedrooms); and
- g) It does not result in an unacceptable loss of amenity for neighbouring occupiers by reason of loss of privacy, loss of daylight, visual intrusion or noise.

Affordable housing

A strong theme from the statistical data and community involvement activity has been to address the difficulty of young people, or older people with limited income who cannot afford to live in the Parish. The entry point for market housing is simply too high for many and affordable rented property is very scarce.

A detailed study into the Affordable Housing Needs in the Parish is available at Appendix 4.

POLICY H3: AFFORDABLE HOUSING - Development proposals which include affordable housing should provide a mix of housing types and sizes to help meet the identified needs of the Parish. The provision of smaller homes, especially for young families and young people and for older people who wish to downsize, will be supported, as is the provision of affordable housing for people with a local connection.

The Parish Council will support Harborough District Council in working with its partner social landlords to agree the above local connection policy H3 is applicable to social and affordable rented re-lets in the Parish through the housing choice process.

Limits to development

Limits to development are a commonly used tool in planning documents such as neighbourhood plans and District Local Plans. They are used to define the extent of a built-up part of a settlement accommodating sustainable growth locations. They distinguish between areas where in planning terms development would be acceptable “in principle” such as in the main settlement and where it would not be “sustainable”, such as in the open countryside.

Residents have expressed support for the inclusion of a settlement boundary for Leire village. However, the Local Plan has removed Limits to Development in favour of criteria-based policies across the district, therefore the Neighbourhood Plan proposes to designate a revised and updated Limits to Development for the village of Leire. The proposed boundary is shown below in Figure 3 and was developed following consultation.

Focusing all forms of development in the built-up area of Leire will help to support the existing services, whilst helping to protect the countryside from inappropriate development.

Within the defined Limits to Development identified in this Plan, small scale sustainable development will be viewed sympathetically. This development will include windfall sites and the residential site allocation.

In addition, much of the built-up parts of Leire have been developed at relatively low densities and there are very limited public green spaces. Some properties are set within relatively large grounds whilst, conversely, others have very limited ground. The spaces between and around

buildings contribute significantly to the special character of the village and the wider Parish and maintaining residential amenity. When considering development proposals, it is therefore important to have regard to the impact any development would have on the setting and layout of the surrounding area and on the special views and vistas.

In addition, consultation has highlighted a lack of support for ‘tandem’ and ‘backland development’ defined as the placing of one dwelling behind another within a single plot and the erection of a dwelling or dwellings on parts of large gardens attached to existing dwellings.

Methodology

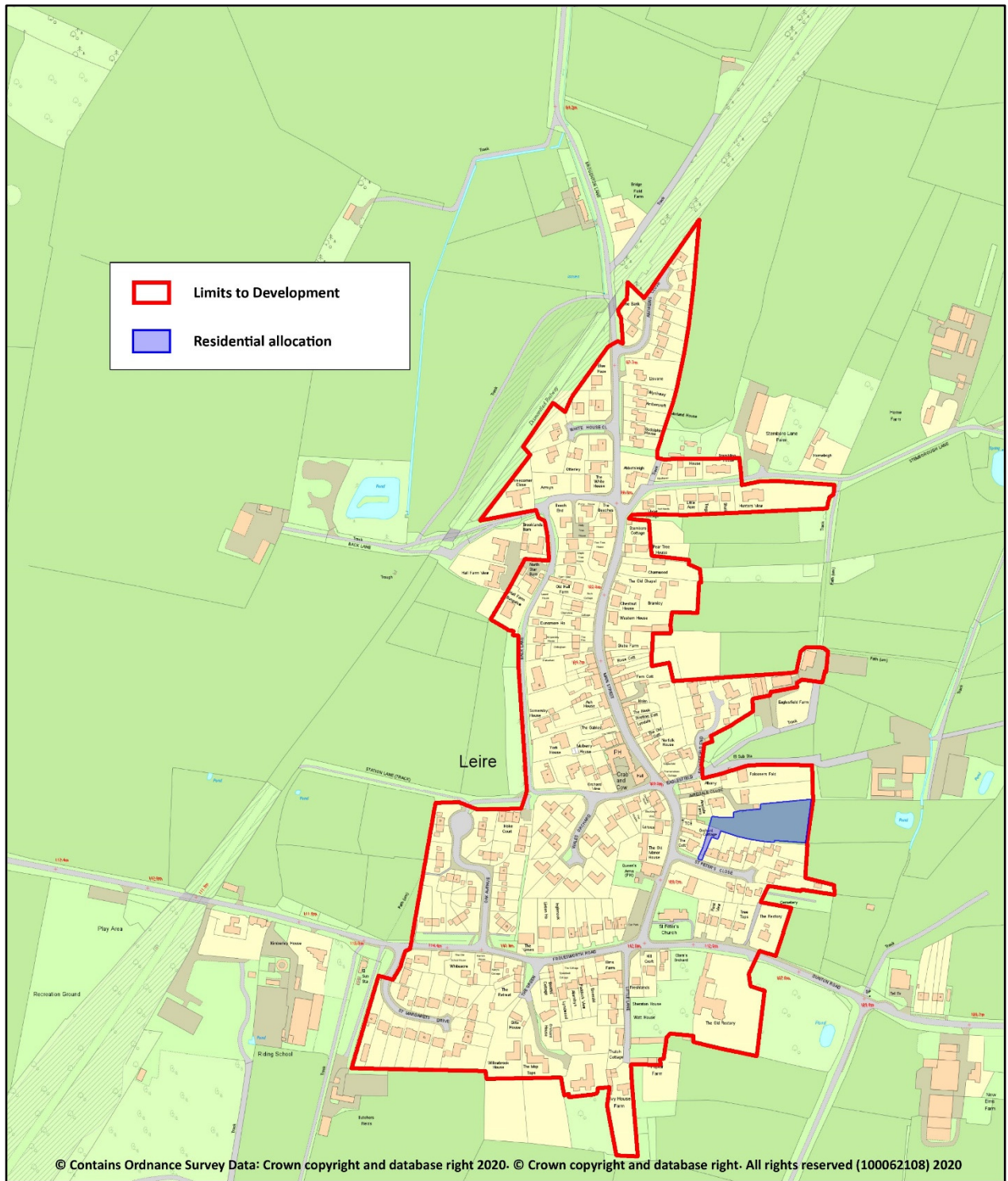
The Limits to Development for Leire, as shown in Figure 3 has been determined using the following criteria:

1. Clearly defined physical features such as walls, fences, hedgerows and roads have been followed wherever possible;
2. Potential small-scale development areas have been incorporated into the drawing of the Limits to Development to enable housing growth in the future, subject to the requirements specified within the Neighbourhood Plan. The site allocated for residential development in Policy H1 is included;
3. Non-residential land which relates more closely to the countryside, such as agricultural, paddock, meadow, woodland and/or another green-field use has been excluded;

POLICY H4: Limits To Development – Within the defined Limits to Development as shown in Figure 3, development proposals for windfall development, conversion and extension of existing buildings will be supported where they:

- a) Help to meet an identified housing need in Leire Parish;
- b) Retain existing natural boundaries such as trees, hedges, boundaries and streams which either contribute to visual amenity or are important for their ecological value;
- c) Retain and where possible, enhance the distinctive qualities of the special and attractive landscape in which Leire is situated;
- d) Preserve and where possible, enhance the setting of any heritage asset where the setting of that heritage asset would be affected by the proposal;
- e) Demonstrate that capacity is currently available within existing wastewater infrastructure or that capacity can be made available in time to serve the development; and
- f) Preserve and where possible, enhance the Leire Conservation Area.

Figure 3: Limits to Development



A high design quality to protect and enhance the parish

Leire Parish has a rich and attractive built environment from its long history, resulting in a wide range of heritage assets, attractive landscapes and a distinctive character, as reflected by the quality of the Conservation Area. The Neighbourhood Plan seeks to protect this character and

heritage by ensuring that the high-quality built environment is retained through the village and that development is in keeping with the existing high quality.

The NPPF (2021) states that development activities should be ; *“visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping; be sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change”*.

The Neighbourhood Plan Housing Theme Group and the wider community have produced the Leire Village Design Guide as a central element of this Neighbourhood Plan. (See Appendix 6). Its aim is to safeguard the distinctive character and rich heritage of Leire and to guide any new development in a way that ensures it is sympathetic to the existing village and enhances its special identity and character.

Residents in the Plan Area want their communities to play their part in the sustainable development of the District. As noted in the National Planning Policy Framework, Planning Authorities should, through their policies, contribute as fully as possible to the aims of Biodiversity 2020 DEFRA, 2011. New development in Leire should be designed to incorporate the current (at time of Application) best practice standards and methods for biodiversity protection and enhancement, particularly for bats.

The design policies required to support the implementation of the Village Design Guide are as follows:

POLICY H5: Design standards - Development proposals will demonstrate a high quality of design, layout and use of materials in order to make a positive contribution to the special character of the parish of Leire.

Development proposals should have regard to the Leire Village Design Guide (Appendix 6) and the following design principles to a degree that is proportionate to the development:

- a) **New development will be required to enhance and reinforce the local distinctiveness and character of the area in which it is situated. Proposals should clearly show how the general character, scale, mass, density and layout of the site, of the building or extension, fits in with the aspect of the surrounding area.**
- b) **Care should be taken to ensure that the development does not disrupt the visual amenities of the street scene and impact negatively on any significant wider landscape views;**
- c) **New buildings and extensions will follow a consistent design approach in the use of materials, fenestration and the roofline to the building. Materials should be chosen to complement the design of the development and add to the quality or character of the surrounding environment;**
- d) **New buildings and extensions will reflect the character and historic context of existing**

developments within the Parish. However, contemporary and innovative materials and design will be supported where positive improvement can be robustly demonstrated without detracting from the historic context;

- e) Proposals should minimise the impact on general amenity and give careful consideration to noise, odour and light. Light pollution should be minimised wherever possible;
- f) Development will include a need to enhance biodiversity and relate well to the topography of the area, with existing trees and hedges preserved whenever possible. Provision should be made for wildlife including roof design, bat and bird boxes and hedgehog friendly fencing, if hedges are not possible, to maintain connectivity of habitat for hedgehogs and other terrestrial animals;
- g) Where possible, enclosure of plots should be of native hedging, wooden fencing, or stone/brick wall, any enclosures that are necessarily removed through the development process should be reinstated in keeping with the original;
- h) Housing plots should accommodate discreet storage containers compliant with the refuse and recycling collection system;
- i) Avoidance of all unnecessary artificial lighting: there is no legal duty requiring any place to be lit, Lighting design, location, type, lux levels and times of use should follow current best-practice, e.g. by applying the guidelines in Guidance note 08/18 Bats and artificial lighting in the UK (Bat Conservation Trust/Institution of Lighting Professionals, 2018).
- j) Development should incorporate sustainable design and construction techniques to meet high standards for energy and water efficiency, including the use of renewable and low carbon energy technology; and
- k) Development should incorporate sustainable drainage systems with maintenance regimes to minimise vulnerability to flooding and climate change.

5.2 The natural, historical and social environment

Introduction

This chapter of the Neighbourhood Plan deals mainly with the *environmental* agenda of *sustainable development* together with open spaces of community value from the *social* agenda, as described in the National Planning Policy Framework (2019), page 5. The chapter aims to balance the requirement for appropriate development in the Plan Area against the value of environmental and other features that are both *special* – appreciated, in their own right and as community assets, by local people - and *significant* for their wildlife and history. It also deals with broader environmental issues of concern to the community, including protection and enhancement of local biodiversity and planning for resilience to climate change, including renewable energy generation in the Plan Area.

Care was taken during preparation of the plan to ensure that the policies (and the sites and areas of environmental significance covered by them) were not unduly restrictive on development during the Plan’s lifetime. Taking into account all existing and new (this Plan) designations and identifications, only 18% by area of all the open and currently undeveloped land in the parish is protected at any level in the Planning system from potential environmentally damaging development. The key statistics are:

1. Total area of Neighbourhood Plan Area	c.450 ha
2. Open or undeveloped land	c.415 ha
4. Area newly designated or recognised in this Plan for environmental protection	c.76 ha

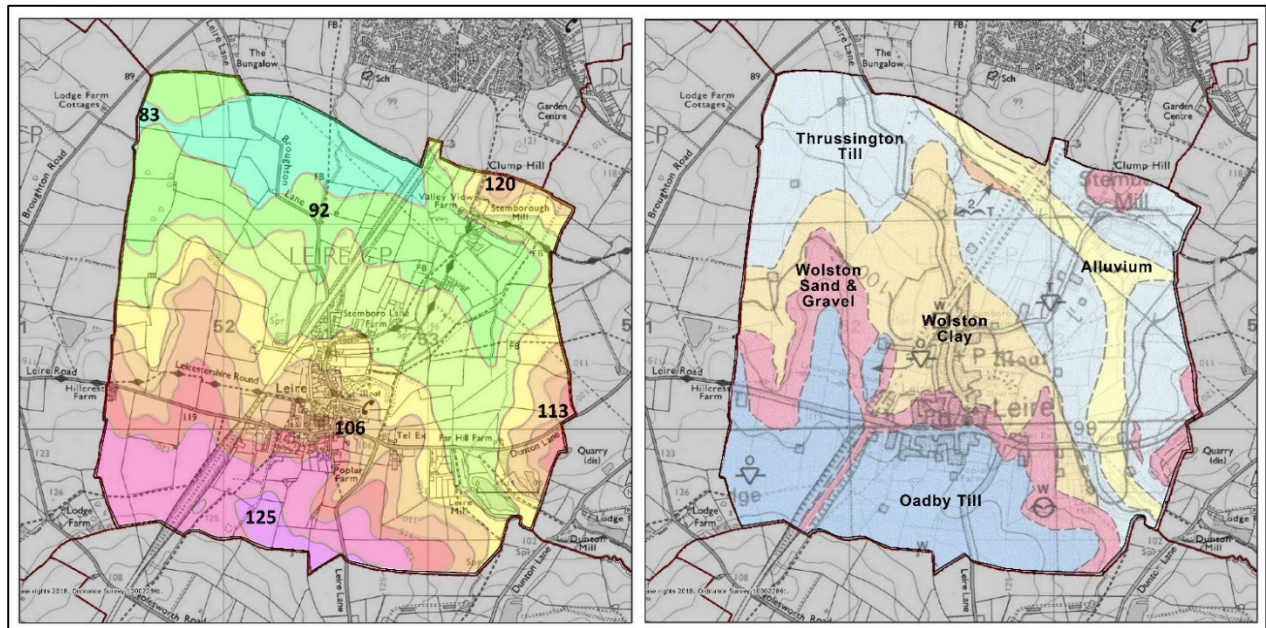
Landscape, geology and setting

The village of Leire lies in the centre of the Neighbourhood Plan Area, which coincides with the civil parish. The landscape here is gently undulating and open; this provides extensive views and is also an indication of the rarity of woodland or buildings beyond the settlement boundary. The Area includes the north-flowing headwaters of the Leicestershire River Soar, with three of its tributaries rising in or close to the parish. These streams leave the Plan Area at its northern boundary, at about 80m elevation, while the highest points, at some 125m, form a saddle of hills along the southern boundary.

Geologically, this landscape is the result of events in the Quaternary ice ages, when a succession of advancing and retreating ice sheets, meltwater lakes and tundra rivers deposited thick layers of stones, gravel, sand and clay. The sand and gravel beds have been historically

and economically important: the village was founded (at least 1500 years ago) where gravel outcrops provided a well-drained location for building (and springs for clean water) while quarrying in the 18th to 20th centuries provided sand and gravel for roads and later aggregate for the building industry. Within the Plan Area, Dunton Bassett quarry is potentially of at least regional geological importance for the ice age structures which have been discovered and studied here.

Figure 4: Topography (left) and geology of the Plan Area. Geological map adapted from British Geological Survey online mapping. Both © Crown copyright and database rights. All rights reserved (100062108) 2019.



Historic environment

Prehistoric flints and Roman material have been found around the village. Leire is a pre-English name, one of only a few in Leicestershire, which may indicate continuous Romano-British

Leire: probably derived from a pre-English river-name Legor or Ligor

SOURCE: Kev to English Place-names. University of Nottingham

occupation here from late prehistoric time until the Anglo-Saxons established a settlement on the present

site, perhaps in the 7th century AD, and laid out open fields. In Domesday (1086) there was a priest, and probably a church in the 11th century, the present tower being built by 1300. Late Anglo-Saxon and medieval occupation to the south west of the church and medieval evidence to the north suggest continuity of occupation on the higher ground. The reverse-S shape of Main Street and Back Lane, joined by roadside houses with long gardens, perpetuates an open field furlong built on in a planned manner in the Middle Ages. A modest agricultural community has flourished since, gradually enclosing its open fields. The modern street scene is a mixture of styles and periods: cottages, terraces and 3 storey farmhouses, mostly of brick and slate, built piecemeal but now creating an organic whole.

Natural environment

More or less continuous occupation and agriculture for two millennia in the Plan Area means that no 'wild' natural habitats survive here. Until recently, however, wildlife has been able to adapt, with some species co-existing and even taking advantage of human activity. This means that among the buildings and arable fields there are still locally important patches of semi-natural habitat in Leire, including species-rich grassland, woodland, wetland and watercourses, while some artificial habitats, like gardens, allotments, churchyards and plantations, also have biodiversity value. Pressure on these rare remaining semi-natural places from intensive agriculture and development means that they are highly valued by the community, essential for preserving England's biodiversity and for carbon sequestration, and should be protected by the planning system as a vital component of sustainable development.

Existing environmental designations

The Plan Area is located in National Character Area (as defined by Natural England to guide Planning) *94 Leicestershire Vales*, and in Harborough District Council Landscape Character Areas *Upper Soar* and *Lutterworth Lowlands*. There are 12 Listed Buildings, 16 further sites and features of history significance (LCC Historic Environment Record / Historic England), 8 areas of *Priority Habitat* (as defined by Natural England), 7 Local Wildlife Sites (LWS) and one regionally important geological site (Leicestershire RIGS). There is also a Registered Village Green.

Environmental inventory

An environmental inventory (Appendix 7) of Leire was carried out between May and October 2019. The work comprised two elements:

- Review of all existing designations and available information, and
- Fieldwork to identify sites and features of natural and historical environment significance in the context of the Plan Area.

The review compiled information from many sources, including DEFRA, Natural England, Historic England, Leicestershire Historic Environment Records, Leicestershire Environmental Record Centre records (biodiversity and geology), Environment Agency, British Geological Survey, Old maps (Ordnance Survey, archive), Local history and archaeology publications, and local knowledge.

The fieldwork reviewed all open and currently undeveloped land in the Plan Area, and significant species, habitats, landscape characteristics, earthworks and other extant features were checked and recorded.

These data, along with all relevant site-specific information from the existing information review, were mapped and tabulated, and each site was scored and evaluated using the seven

criteria for Local Green Space selection in the *National Planning Policy Framework 2019* (Appendix 7).

Local Green Spaces

Of the 153 inventoried parcels of open land in the parish, some 45 were identified as having notable environmental (natural, historical and/or community value) features. These sites were scored, using the nine criteria for Local Green Space designation noted in the *National Planning Policy Framework 2019* (see Appendix 7 for the criteria and scoring system devised for this Plan).

Three sites score 72% (18/25) or more of the maximum possible and meet the essential requirements for designation as Local Green Space as outlined in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF 2019, paragraph 100). Their statutory protection will ensure that these most important places in Leire's natural and human environment are protected.

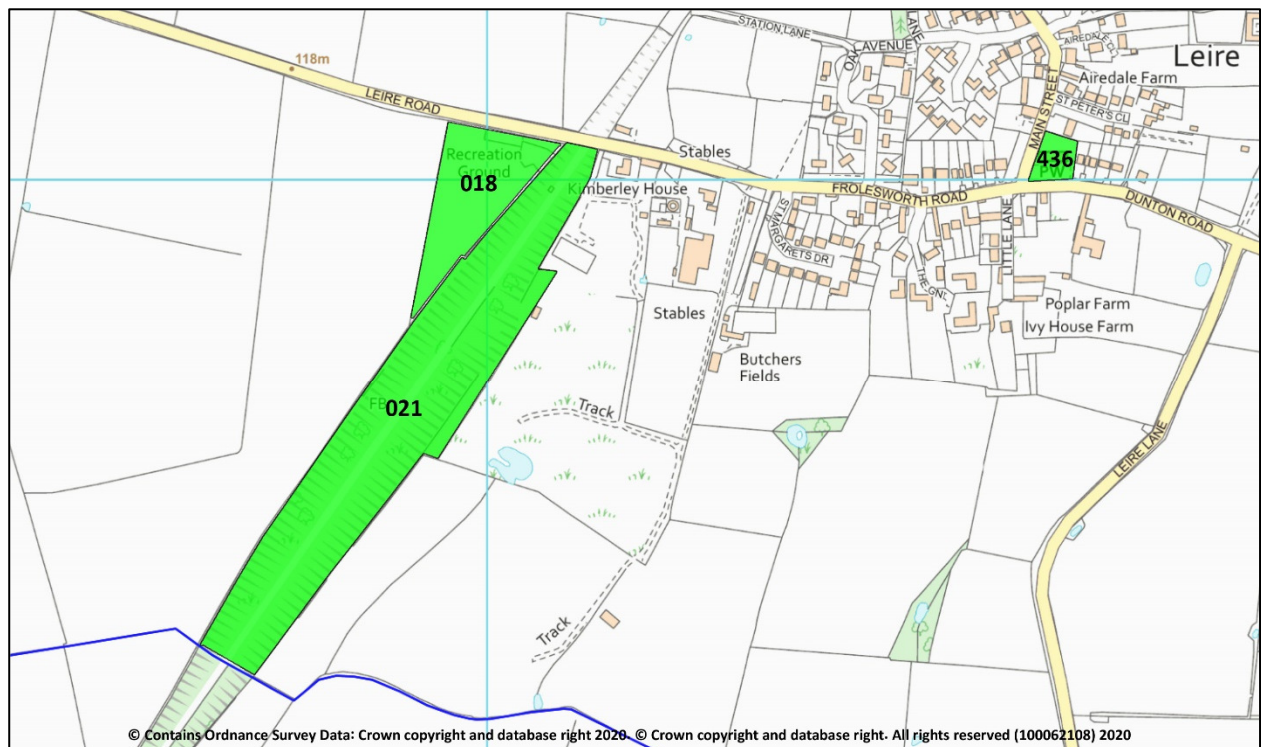
POLICY ENV 1: PROTECTION OF LOCAL GREEN SPACE – Development proposals that would result in the loss of, or have an adverse effect on, the following Local Green Spaces (evidence base Appendix 8; map figure 5) will not be permitted other than in special circumstances.

436 - St. Peter's churchyard

021 - Jubilee Walk

018 - Walker's Charity Field (recreation ground and children's play area)

Figure 5: Local Green Spaces

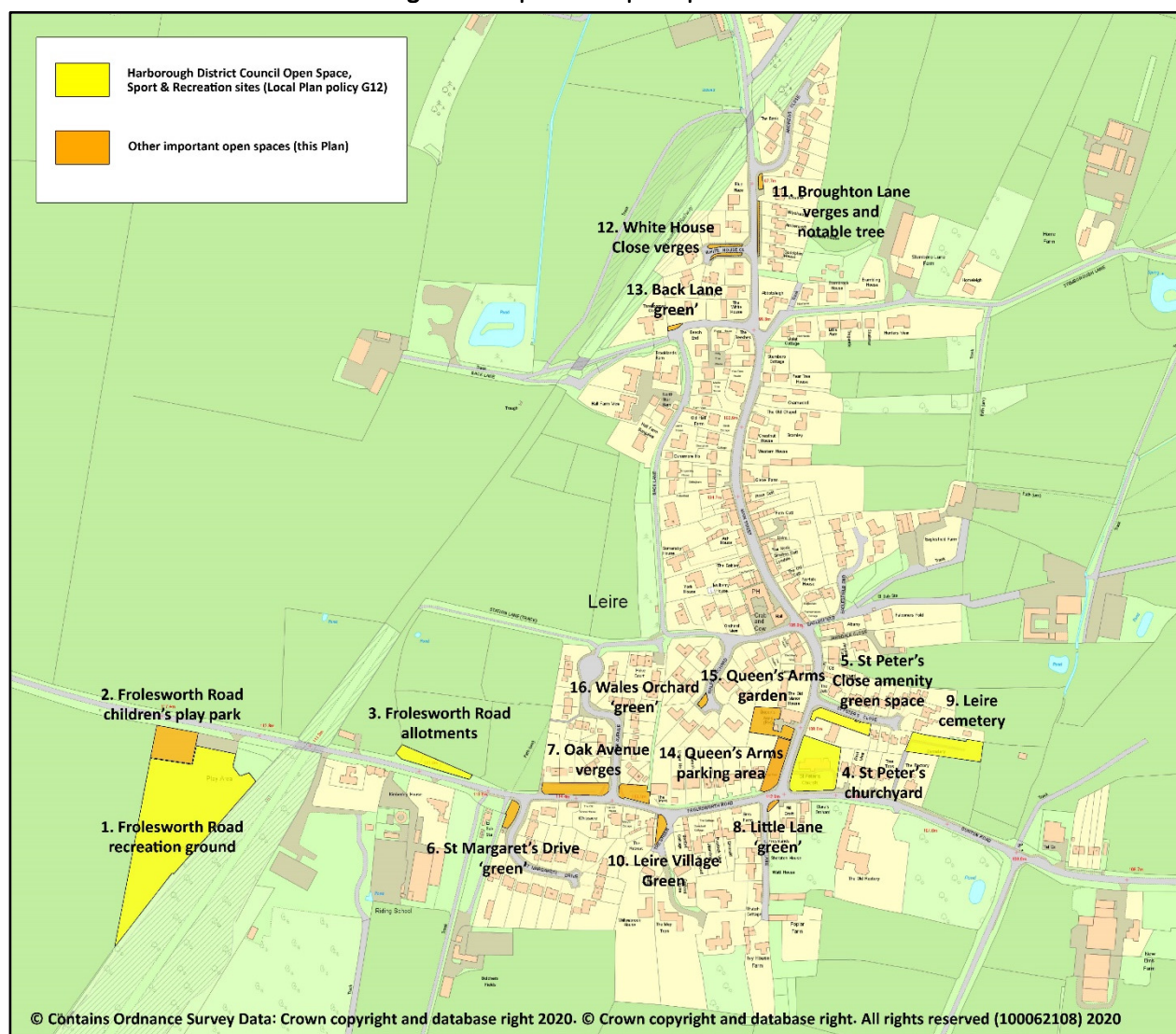


Important Open Spaces

A group of sites scored highly in the inventory for their outstanding community value. They have been identified in fieldwork, community consultations and in Parish records; some are existing Harborough District Council Open Space, Sport & Recreation (OSSR) sites and/or Leire Parish Council assets.

Their value as open space *within and close to the built-up areas* and/or their current, or potential, value as community resources are recognised in this Policy.

Figure 6: Important Open Spaces



POLICY ENV 2: IMPORTANT OPEN SPACES - The following open spaces in Leire (and figure 6) are of high value for recreation, beauty, amenity, tranquillity or as green spaces within or close to the built-up area. Development proposals that result in their loss, or have a significant adverse effect on them, will not be supported unless the open space is replaced by at least equivalent provision in an equally suitable location, or unless it can be demonstrated that the open space is no longer required by the community.

- | | |
|--|--|
| <p>1. Playing field, Frolesworth Road (HDC OSSR site <i>Children's play area</i>)</p> <p>2. Children's play area, Frolesworth Road (this Plan <i>Recreation ground</i>)</p> <p>3. Frolesworth Road allotments (HDC OSSR site, <i>allotments</i>)</p> <p>4. St. Peter's Churchyard (HDC OSSR site, <i>closed churchyard</i>)</p> <p>5. St. Peter's Close amenity green space (HDC OSSR site, <i>amenity greenspace</i>)</p> <p>6. St Margaret's Drive 'green' (this Plan, <i>amenity greenspace</i>)</p> <p>7. Wide verges with seating and trees, corner Oak Avenue/Frolesworth Road (this Plan, <i>amenity greenspace</i>)</p> <p>8. Little Lane 'green' (seat and flowerbeds) (this Plan, <i>amenity greenspace</i>)</p> | <p>9. Leire cemetery (HDC OSSR site, <i>burial ground</i>)</p> <p>10. Leire village green (this Plan, <i>Registered Village Green, amenity greenspace</i>)</p> <p>11. Broughton Lane (east side) verges and notable tree (this Plan, <i>amenity greenspace</i>)</p> <p>12. White House Close verges and trees (this Plan, <i>amenity green space</i>)</p> <p>13. Back Lane 'green' with beech trees (this Plan, <i>amenity greenspace</i>)</p> <p>14. Queen's Arms parking area (this Plan, <i>amenity greenspace</i>)</p> <p>15. Queen's Arms garden (this Plan, <i>amenity greenspace</i>)</p> <p>16. Wales Orchard 'green' (this Plan, <i>amenity greenspace</i>)</p> |
|--|--|

Natural environment and biodiversity

Sites and features of natural environment significance

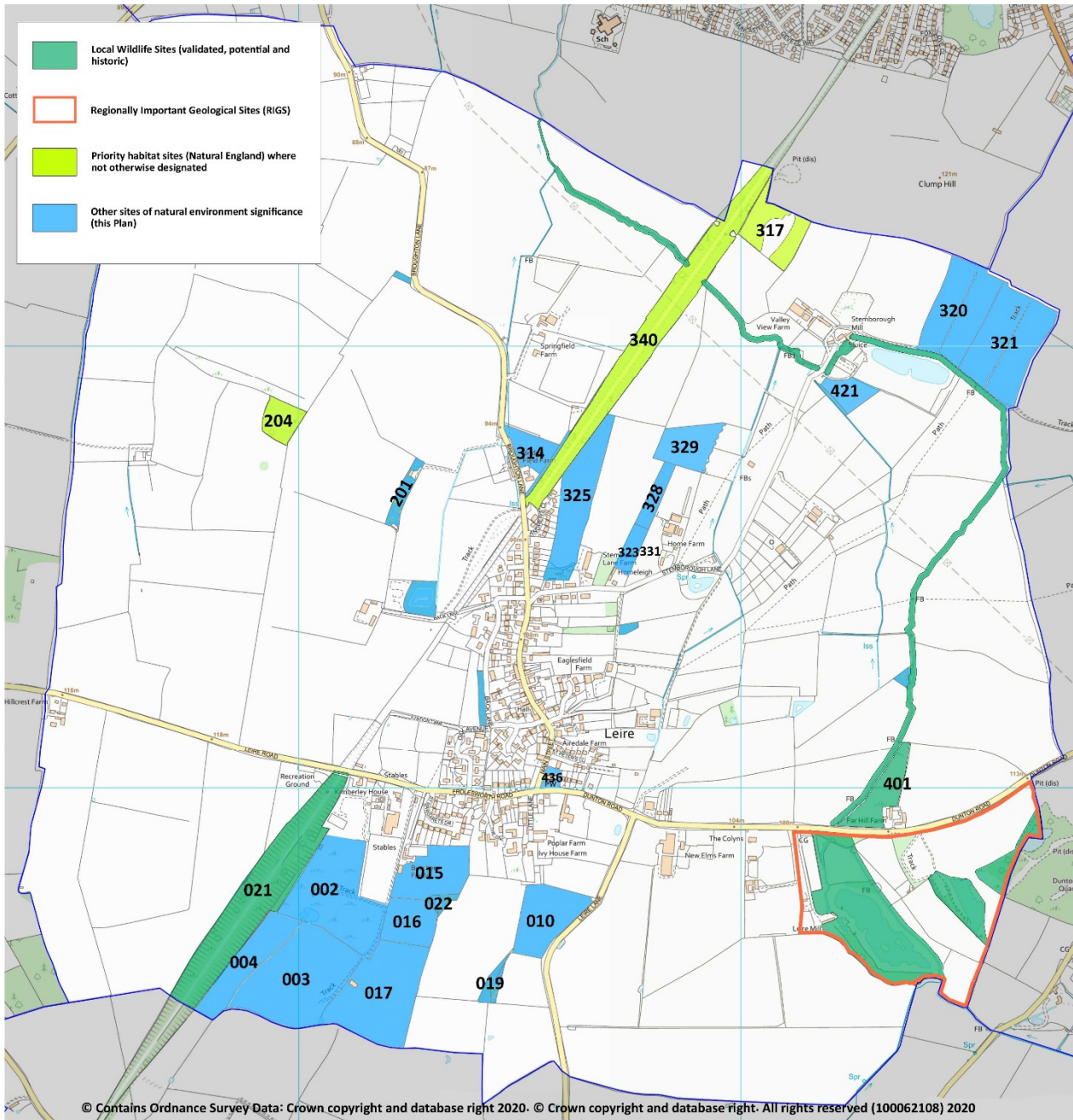
A group of inventory sites scores highly for 'wildlife' (scoring at least 3/5 under this criterion). The features for which the identified sites have been selected and notified are listed in the environmental inventory (Appendix 7). The map (figure 5) shows their locations.

These **natural environment** sites comprise a) those where *priority habitats* occur (Natural England mapping) or where *biodiversity action plan (BAP) species* have been recorded as breeding or as regular visitors; b) sites identified as ecologically significant by Leicestershire County Council, including Local Wildlife Sites, c) sites of significance for their geological interest and d) sites, notable trees and hedgerows identified during the inventory process as being of high biodiversity significance in the context of the Plan Area.

Policy ENV 3 delivers site-level compliance in the Plan Area with the relevant Harborough District Council policies, the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and the European Habitats and Species Directives. It also protects the small areas of semi-natural woodland surviving in what is, for land-use history reasons, a parish with very little of this important ecological and environmental (for carbon sequestration, etc.) habitat.

POLICY ENV 3: PROTECTION OF SITES AND FEATURES OF NATURAL ENVIRONMENT SIGNIFICANCE
 – The sites and features mapped here (figure 7) have been identified as being of at least local significance for their natural environment significance. They are ecologically important in their own right, make a contribution to carbon sequestration, and are locally valued. The significance of the species, habitats or features present should be weighed against the benefit of any development that would adversely affect them.

Figure 7: Sites of natural environment significance



Biodiversity and habitat connectivity

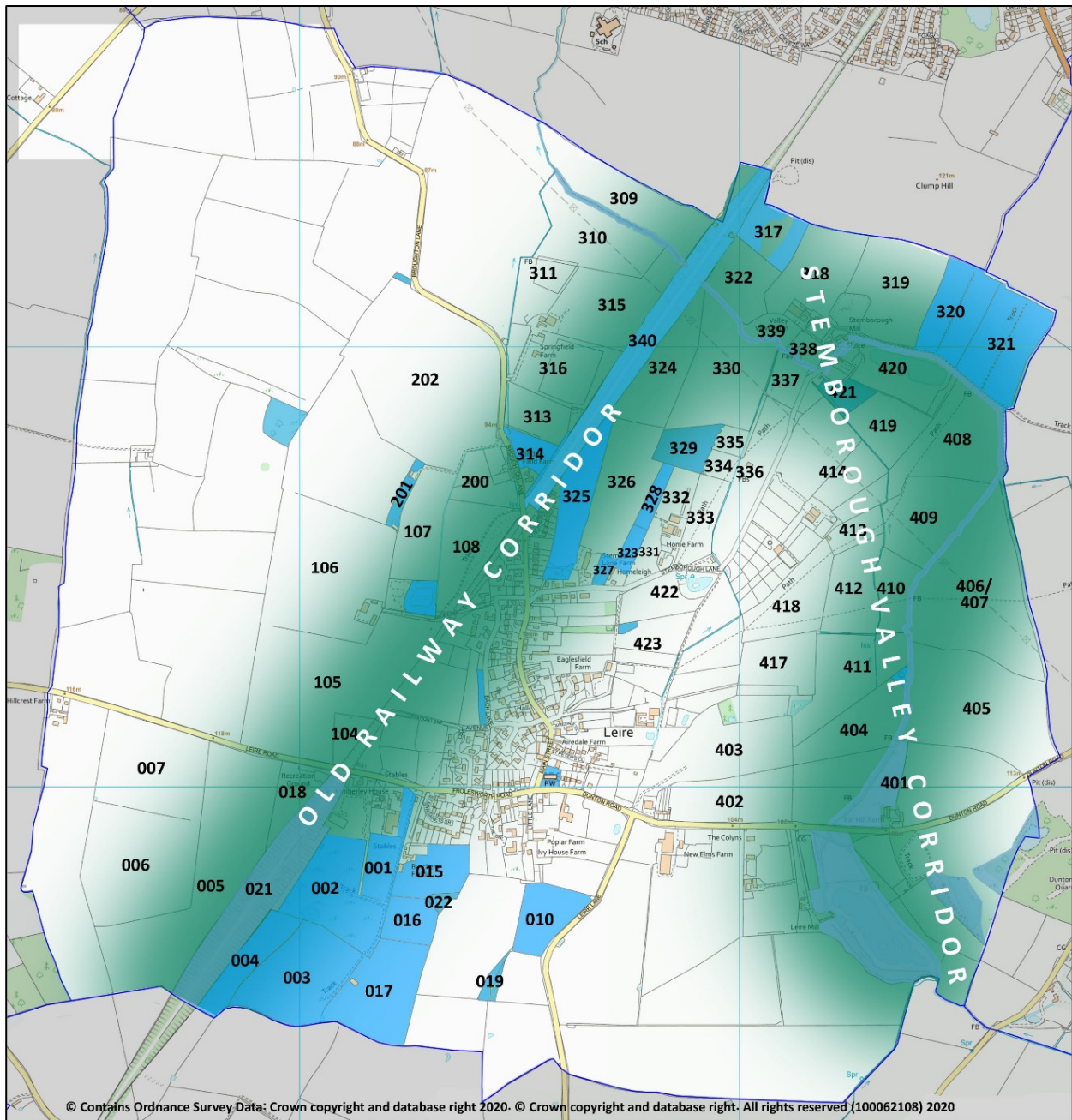
It might be said that Leire parish is a ‘typical’ area of English Midlands countryside because it has no nationally important wildlife hotspots, and thus that it has little or no biodiversity significance to be taken into account in the Planning system. This would be a misunderstanding of the concept of biodiversity. England’s biodiversity is entirely and only the sum of the wildlife in all of its individual parishes: Leire is as important in this regard as every other parish, and residents want it to play its essential part in protecting what remains of England’s threatened and diminishing biodiversity.

Connectivity is an essential component of biodiversity. Isolated populations of animals and plants are at risk of destruction or of simply ‘dying out’. Wildlife Corridors aim to re-connect populations

and habitats within parishes and more widely. Two wildlife corridors, (Figure 8) have been identified during the preparation of this Plan.

This policy is therefore about parish-level compliance with the relevant Harborough District Council Local Plan policies, the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), the Hedgerows Regulations 1997 (as amended), and the European Habitats and Species Directives [or their transitioned English equivalents] – and about how Leire can play its part in maintaining and enhancing biodiversity by taking it into account, at a Neighbourhood Plan level of detail, in the Planning system. The policy is supported by National Planning Policy Framework (2019) paragraphs 170 (a) and (d); 174; 175 (a) on which the policy is based, 175(c); and 177.

Figure 8: Wildlife corridors (green) providing connectivity between biodiversity sites (blue)



POLICY ENV 4: BIODIVERSITY AND HABITAT CONNECTIVITY- All new development proposals will be expected to safeguard habitats and species, including those of local significance. In line with NPPF paragraph 175(a), if significant harm to biodiversity cannot be avoided (through locating to an

alternative site with less harmful impacts), adequately mitigated, or compensated for (through net biodiversity gain, for example), planning permission should be refused.

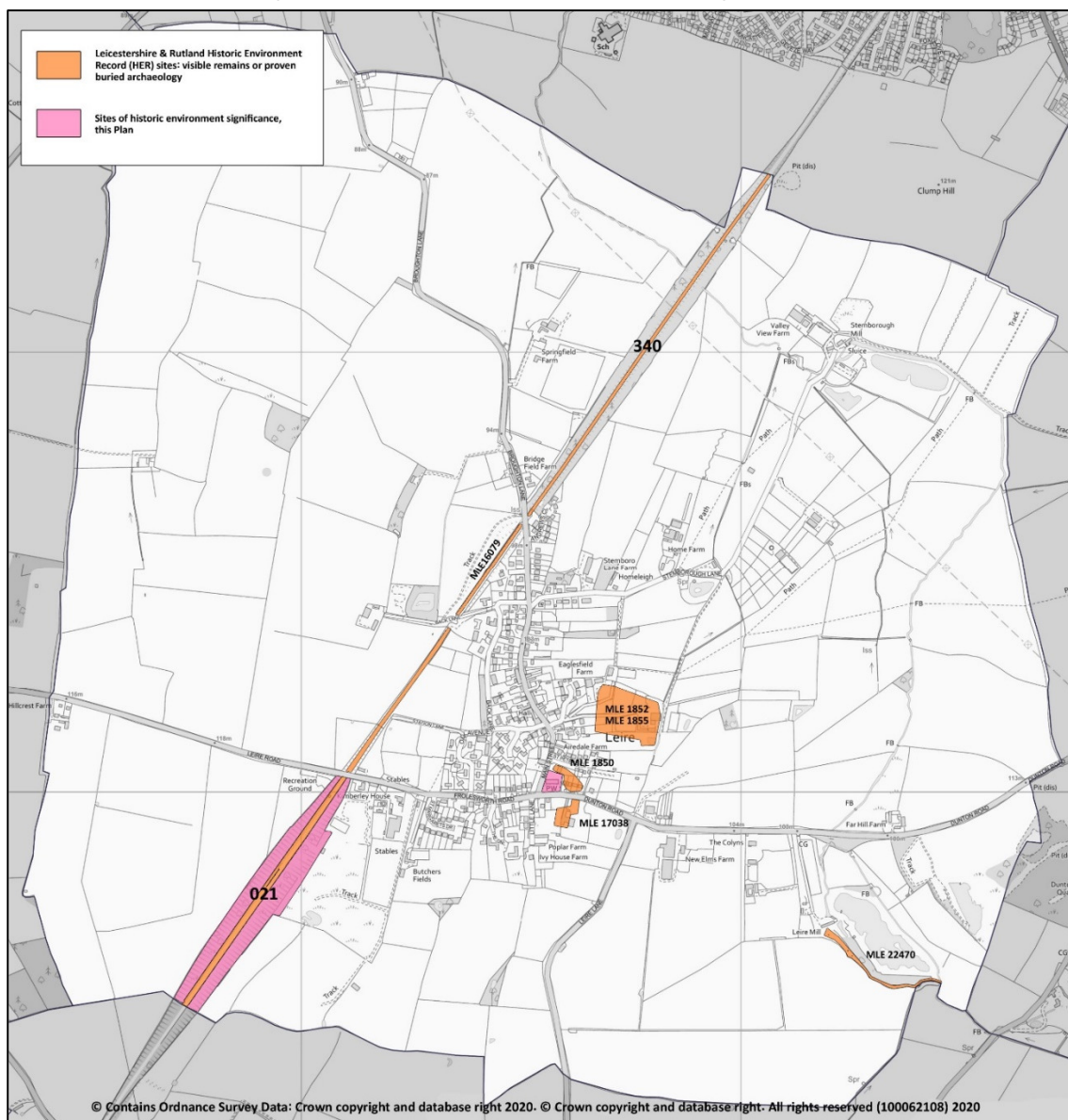
Development proposals should not damage or adversely affect the habitat connectivity provided by the wildlife corridors identified in figure 8.

Historical environment

Sites of historical environment significance

A group of inventory sites scores highly for ‘history’ (scoring at least 3/5 under this criterion). The features for which the identified sites have been selected and notified are listed in the environmental inventory (Appendix 7). The map (figure 9) shows their locations.

Figure 9: Sites of historical environment significance



The **historical environment** sites comprise a) sites with *extant and visible* archaeological or historical features or proven buried archaeology, as recorded in the Historic England or

Leicestershire Historic Environment Records databases, and b) other sites of historical and social significance identified in local records and during the inventory process.

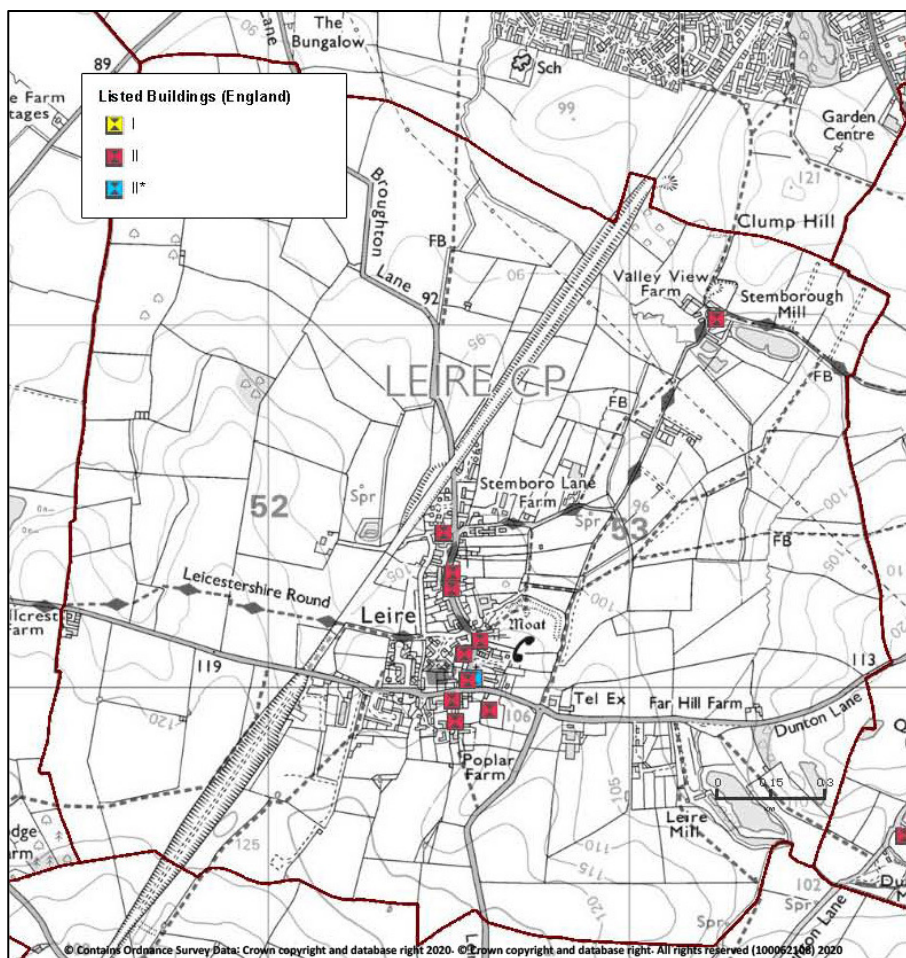
POLICY ENV 5: PROTECTION OF SITES OF HISTORICAL ENVIRONMENT SIGNIFICANCE – The sites listed and mapped (figure 9) have been identified as being of local significance for their historical features. The features are extant and have visible expression or there is proven buried archaeology on the site, and they are locally valued. The significance of the features present should be balanced against the benefit of any development that would affect or damage them.

Buildings and features of local significance

Listed Buildings

Twelve buildings and structures in the Plan Area have statutory protection through Listing at Grade II* or II. The Neighbourhood Plan lists them for reference (Supporting Information, [document N](#)), and to note that new development will be required to take into account their *settings* as defined, on a case by case basis, by Historic England. Their location within, or close to, sites designated or noted for protection in the Plan’s Policies and Community Actions also contributes to these sites’ evidence of significance.

Figure 10: Statutorily protected heritage assets (Historic England mapping, via DEFRA)



Local Heritage Assets

In addition to six unlisted buildings recorded by Leicestershire County Council in the Historic Environment Record (HER), the Neighbourhood Plan identifies six further other buildings and structures in the built environment of Leire that are considered to be of local significance for architectural, historical or social reasons (details in Appendix 9). Their inclusion here records them in the Planning system as *non-designated heritage assets*.

Figure 11: Local Heritage Assets: buildings and structures of local significance



POLICY ENV 6: LOCAL HERITAGE ASSETS – The structures and buildings listed here (map figure 11) are non-designated local heritage assets. They are important for their contribution to the layout and characteristic mix of architectural styles in the village, and their features and settings will be protected wherever possible. The local benefits of a development proposal, or of a change of land use requiring planning approval, will need to be judged against their significance as heritage assets.

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1. Leire Mill (LCC HER MLE 1849 | 4. Stemborough Mill Stables, Stemborough Lane, Leire (LCC MLE 22319) |
| 2. The Hatchery, Main Street, Leire (LCC MLE 18828) | 5. Railway Bridge, Leire Road/Frolesworth Road (LCC HER MLE 21158) |
| 3. Stemborough Mill House, Stemborough Lane, Leire (LCC MLE 22318) | 6. Railway Bridge, Broughton Lane. (LCC MLE |

21159)

7. The Old Bakery, Main Street (this Plan)

8. The Gables, Main Street (this Plan)

9. Village Hall, Main Street (this Plan)

10. Queens Arms Public House, Main Street (this

Plan)

11. Houses on The Green (this Plan)

12. Old School House, Frolesworth Road (this

Plan)

Historically significant tracks, roads and hedges

A body of historical landscape research about Leire has been undertaken in recent years by local historians. The work involved study of old maps and archives from the 13th century to the 19th together with fieldwork to confirm locations and to obtain supporting evidence for the age of hedges. The main finding is that Leire's boundaries, roads, tracks and other features have a demonstrable medieval origin, with additions at other key times in the village's history. Such tangible links with the past are clearly of high local heritage significance.

*Hooper's Rule [in Hooper 1970]

In a 30 metre length of hedge:

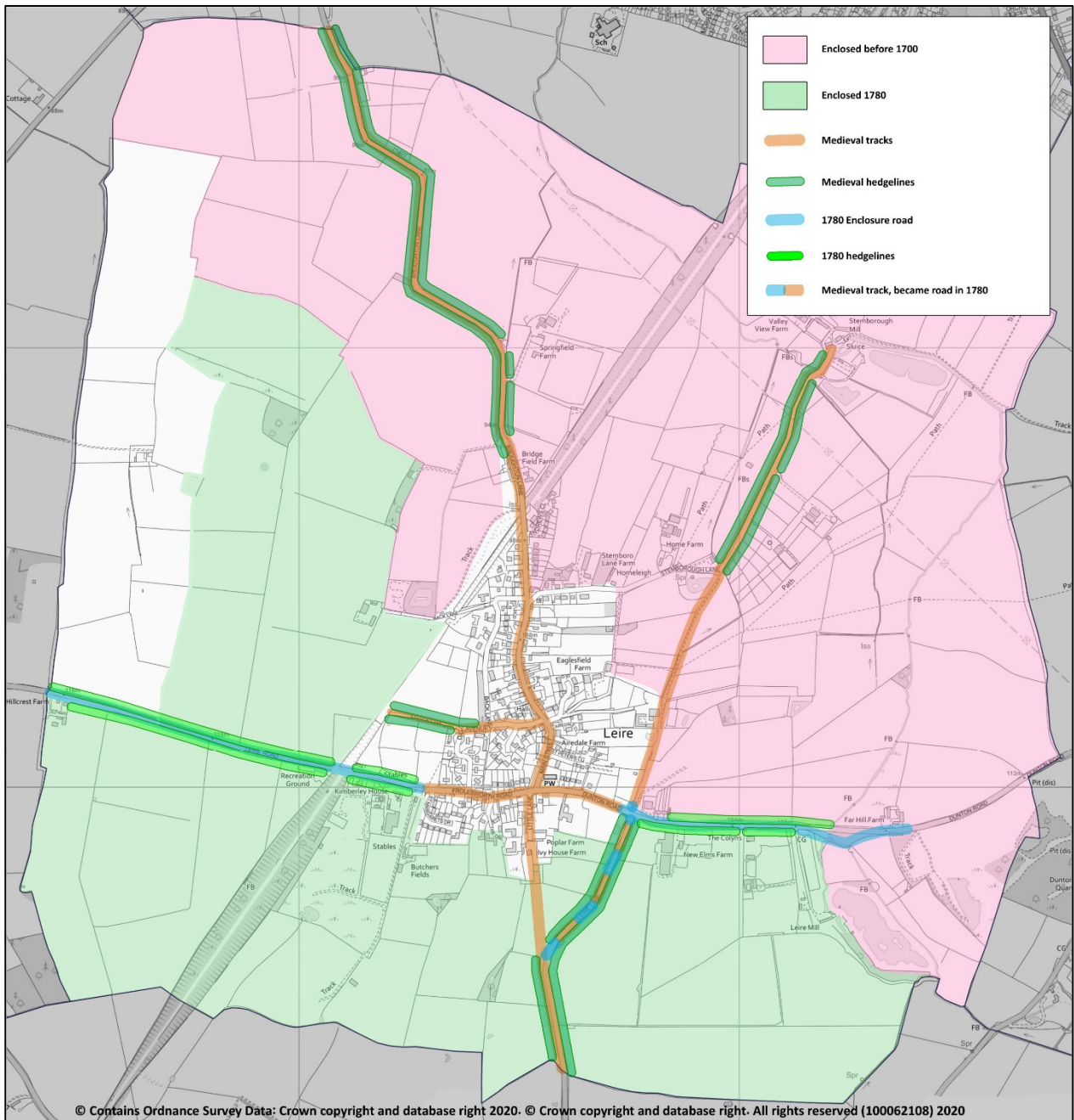
Age in years = (number of species x 99) – 16

Sections of the parish boundaries mark the course of the 'dark ages' (early medieval) territorial boundary. Some hedges on the boundary are suggested by the Hooper Rule to be up to 800 years old.

Field boundaries and hedges elsewhere in the Plan Area reveal the different styles and dates of Enclosure, with smaller fields and more sinuous hedges in the 17th century, straight boundaries and larger fields in the 19th. Hooper Rule dating confirms this.

- The road from Leire to Broughton Astley follows a boundary between two medieval open fields (in existence from the Saxon period until 1700). Hooper's Rule* applied to the species in the roadside hedges (4.4 species/30m section) gives a date in the 16th century.
- The road from Leire to Stemborough Mill (mill first documented 1279) follows a medieval route linking the mill to Ashby Parva. Hooper's Rule (5 species/30m section) gives a date in the 15th century approximately. This road was already incomplete on the 1885 map, reflecting its informal status. In parts, it is less than half the width of the 1780 enclosure roads (see 3).
- The road from Leire to Frolesworth was laid out by the Commissioners in 1780 when the open fields were Enclosed. Hooper's Rule (3.1 species/30m section) reflects the more recent date of establishment. Enclosure roads were required to be 40 feet between field ditches to allow for diversions around winter mud, resulting in the characteristic wide grass verges.
- The road from Leire to Dunton Bassett was also laid out by the Enclosure Commissioners in 1780. Hooper's Rule (3.6 species/30m section) gives a compatible date of planting.
- The road from Leire to Ashby Parva was laid out by the Enclosure Commissioners in 1780. Hooper's Rule (3.2 species/30m section) gives an expected date of establishment.

Figure 12: Historically significant tracks, roads and hedges



POLICY ENV 7: TRACKS, ROADS AND HEDGES OF HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE - Development proposals that damage the character or result in the loss of the identified (Figure 12) tracks and roads of historical significance and amenity value will be resisted. Proposals should be designed to retain and manage such features where possible.

Twelve species-rich, ancient hedges associated with these lanes (Figure 12) are of high historical and ecological importance and are identified in the Plan as non-designated heritage assets.

Ridge and furrow

The medieval township of Leire was primarily agricultural and, beginning in the 7th or 8th century AD, was farmed using the *Open Field* system. All the open land, except for small fields (closes) backing onto the village, meadows in stream valleys and a few patches of woodland or waste, was

worked in a seasonal and yearly rotation of arable crops (cereals, beans), grazing and fallow. Medieval ploughs were pulled by oxen and, because they were not reversible, the soil was always turned rightwards as the plough team progressed up and down the furlongs, to produce a corrugated pattern of ridges and furrows whose dimensions increased with every season. The difference in height between ridge crests and furrows could be as much as 2-3 metres; this had real advantages in the heavy claylands of the Midlands, with ridges remaining dry and the furrows acting as drains. The commonest arrangement was to have three open fields, but Leire, unusually, had four: Millfield, Middle Field, Moor Hill and Nethermost (Lower) Field.

The open field system was practised in Leire for almost all of the medieval period – perhaps 800 years – until changes in land ownership and an ‘agricultural revolution’ gave rise to a change from large communal open fields to enclosed, privately-owned small fields with hedged boundaries, and a change from arable to pastoral (livestock) farming. Leire was enclosed like this in three phases: two private agreements, made in 1653 and 1698/9, enclosed the north and east part of the parish; while Parliamentary Enclosure in 1780 completed the process across 370 acres in the south and west of the parish. The result of Enclosure, although socially disruptive, was to ‘fossilise’ the ridges and furrows under grass and hedgerows, and this situation persisted until the mid-20th century, when a second agricultural revolution after the Second World War effectively reversed the first one. British governments, later the European Union, encouraged farmers, mainly through subsidies, to plough the pastures and turn them over to intensive arable production. Wherever this happened, modern reversible ploughs quickly obliterated the ridge and furrow. In most English open field parishes, the loss of ridge and furrow since 1950 has been over 90%. In the 1990s English Heritage (now Historic England), realising the scale of this destruction, undertook the first of a series of surveys across the Midlands, including Leicestershire, and made recommendations for protection and management. In English legislation ridge and furrow fields (except for the few that are Scheduled Monuments) are not statutorily protected, despite recognition that “*as the open field system was once commonplace in NW Europe, these [surviving] sites take on an international importance*” (English Heritage, 2001).



Ridge and furrow, field 009, south of Leire village

The *Turning the Plough* (Historic England and Northamptonshire CC, 2009) survey (figure 13.1) was used as a baseline for a new survey, undertaken as part of the inventory for this Plan in 2019. The summary results show the decline since 2009; despite the rediscovery of several ridge and furrow areas not recorded in 1999 the situation is now critical.

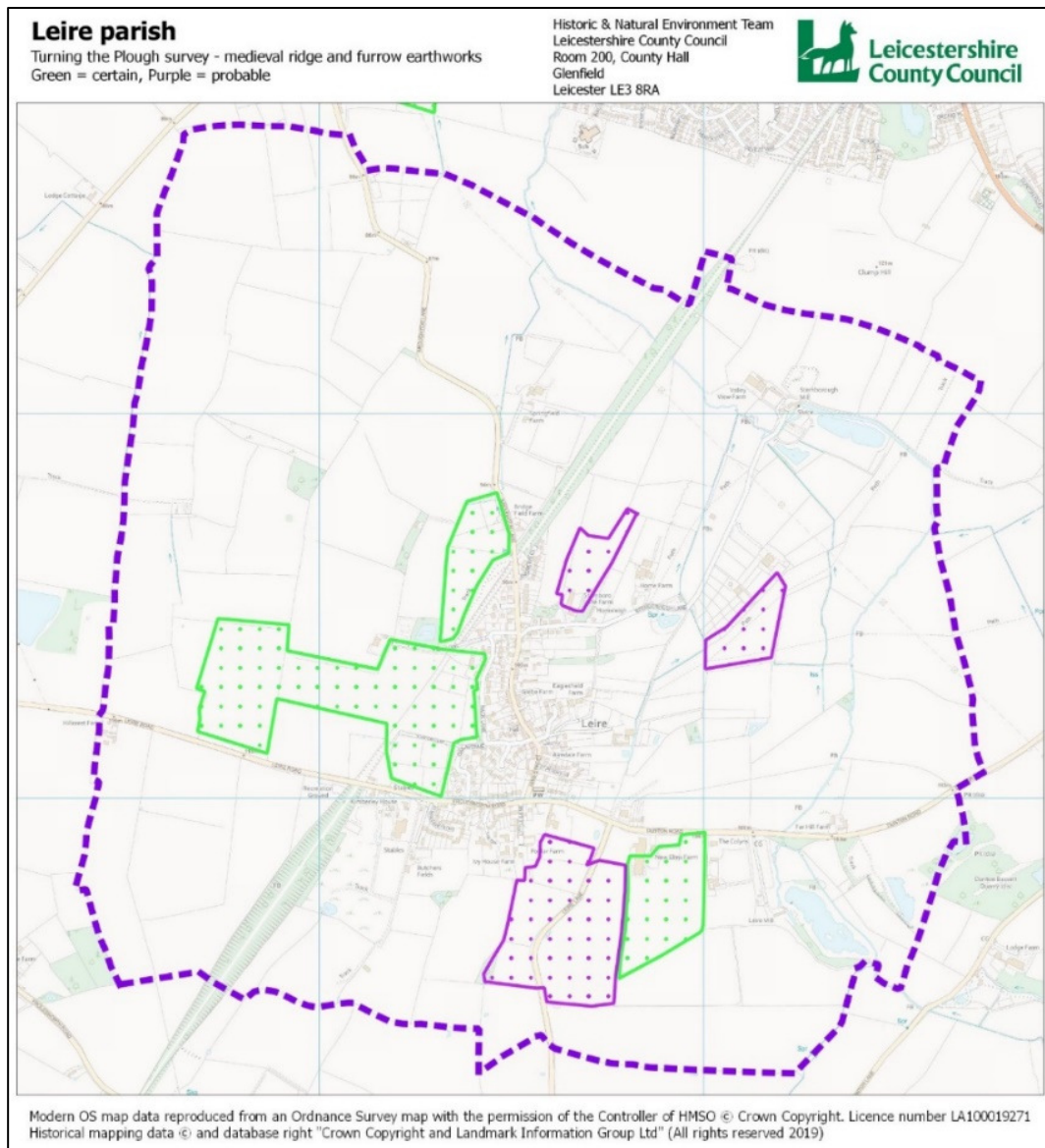
The *Turning the Plough* (Historic England and Northamptonshire CC, 2009) survey (figure 13.1) was used as a baseline for a new survey, undertaken as part of the inventory for this Plan in 2019. The summary results show the decline since 2009; despite the rediscovery of several ridge and furrow areas not recorded in 1999 the situation is now critical.

While the 17 individual fields of surviving ridge and furrow in Leire (figure 13.2) are not claimed to be of international importance, their rarity in the Plan Area and across the Midlands means that any further, avoidable, loss would be irreversibly detrimental. In conformity with paragraph 194 of

the National Planning Policy Framework (including footnote 63) and following the recommendation of Historic England all surviving ridge and furrow in Leire should now be regarded as a non-designated heritage asset and taken into account in the planning system as the visible evidence of a component of national heritage comparable in social history significance to that of surviving medieval buildings.

Figure 13.1 Ridge and furrow in Leire, 2009

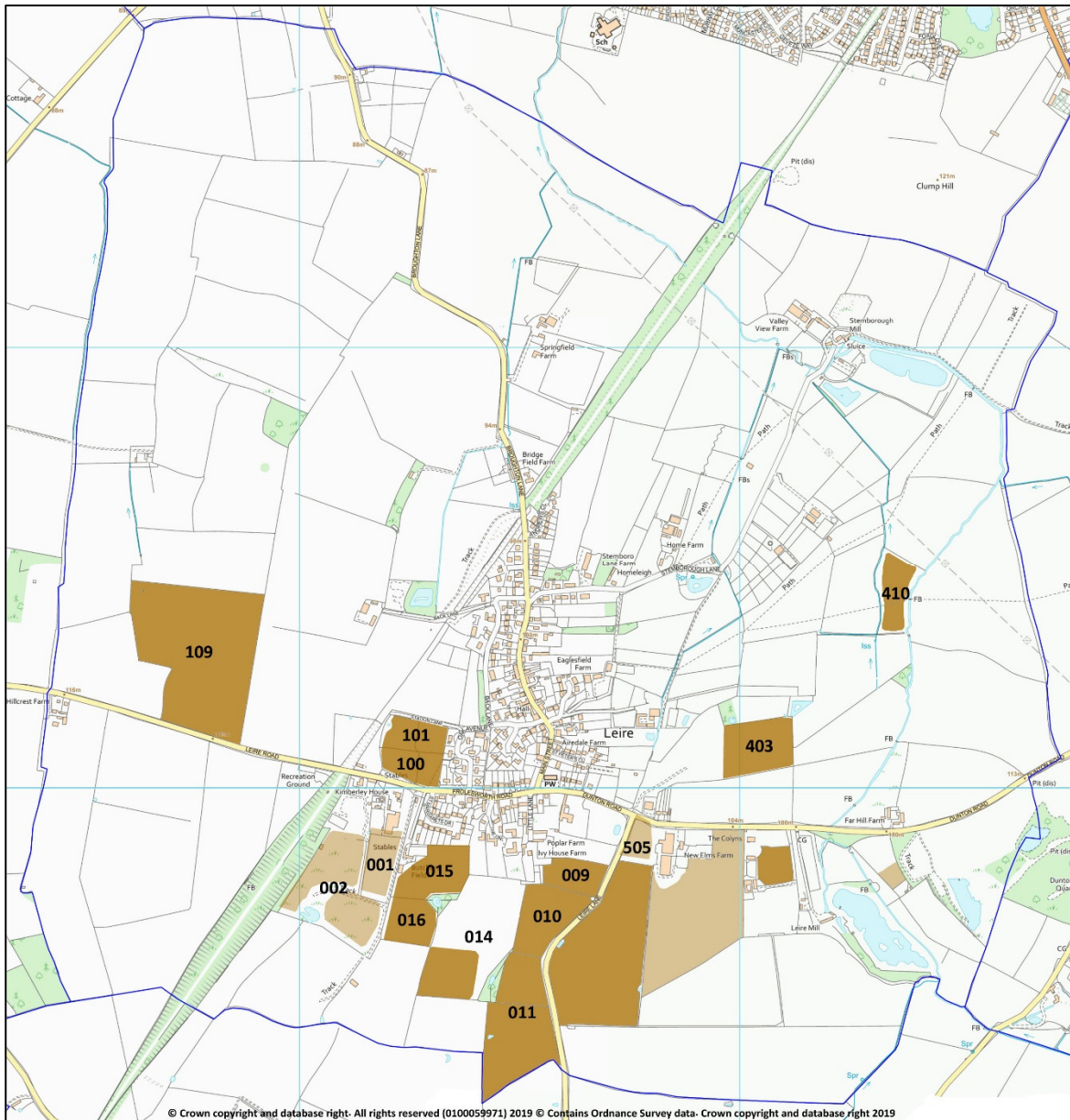
Data from *Turning the Plough* survey, © Leicestershire CC)



POLICY ENV 8: RIDGE AND FURROW - The areas of ridge and furrow earthworks mapped in figure 13.2 are non-designated local heritage assets.

Any loss or damage arising from a development proposal (or a change of land use requiring planning permission) is to be avoided; the local benefits of such development must be balanced against the significance of the ridge and furrow features as heritage assets.

Figure 13.2 Surviving ridge and furrow in Leire, 2019



Area of Separation

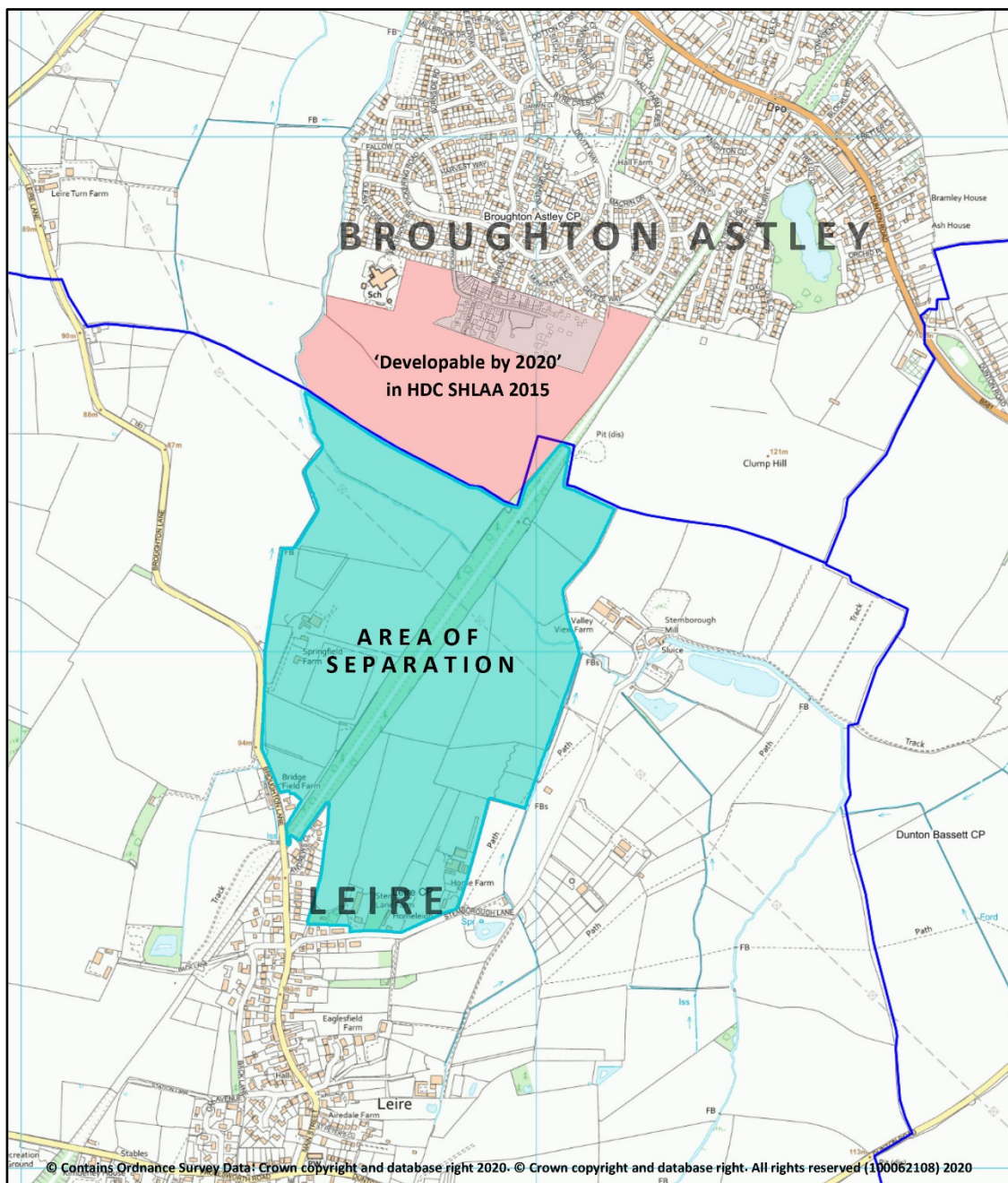
New development in the area between the Limits to Development and the Parish boundary close to the built-up area of Broughton Astley would encroach on open countryside and begin the process of coalescence of the two settlements.

The Area of Separation Review commissioned by Harborough District Council in 2017 recognises that the function of an area of separation is to ensure that development does not harmfully reduce the separation between settlements where there is a potential risk of merging. The 2017 study reinforces the importance of ‘prevention of coalescence’ and the sense of separation between settlements. The review identifies two large scale and strategic areas for inclusion in the Local Plan (between Great Bowden and Harborough and between Lutterworth/Bitteswell and Magna Park). The review acknowledges that further areas of separation will come forward in Neighbourhood Plans.

The Area of Separation identified in this Neighbourhood Plan has been delineated to help retain the physical separation between the built-up area of Leire and the adjoining *rural centre* of Broughton Astley in order to maintain the identity and distinctiveness of both settlements, as well as their landscape setting, built environment and the intervening views across open countryside. By so doing it will help to preserve the character of Leire.

The boundary extends up to the border with Broughton Astley parish because development of Broughton Astley into the Neighbourhood Plan Area would create a satellite settlement of Leire, separated from the village itself but also distant from the facilities in Broughton Astley. The Area of Separation seeks to recognise the difference in scale and character between Broughton Astley (large, suburb-style housing) and Leire (rural, small settlement, surrounded by open countryside in the HDC *Upper Soar Landscape Character Area*, which notes as issues ‘urban influence in particular around Broughton Astley’ and ‘open landscape vulnerable to the adverse effects of development’).

Figure 14: Area of Separation



The Area of Separation represents that area which is necessary to be maintained as open land so as not to reduce the existing degree of separation between the two settlements. Leire is not required by the Local Plan to identify any specific housing sites, so this policy is given added weight by the allocation in this Neighbourhood Plan of a development site in the Parish to meet local need and make a contribution to the District's wider housing target.

In doing so, this Neighbourhood plan adopts a reduced-scale version of the principle established in the HDC Local Plan (2018) for the area of separation between Harborough and Great Bowden, and applied in the Saddington Neighbourhood Plan, namely to designate the whole area directly between the two settlements in recognition of the harm that would be caused by encroachment of development from the larger to the smaller settlement. This is particularly pertinent in Leire, in view of development in Broughton Astley having already been permitted to extend to (and slightly encroach upon) the parish boundary, where its suburban appearance effectively compromises the valued rural character of the northern part of Leire parish (despite the latter's classification for planning purposes by HDC as a *small settlement*).

POLICY ENV 8: AREA OF SEPARATION – To retain the physical and visual separation between Leire and Broughton Astley, the area indicated in figure 14 is designated as an Area of Separation. Development proposals in the identified gap between the settlements should be of an appropriate scale and type and be located and designed to maintain and wherever possible enhance the separation of the villages.

Important Views

Consultation during the Neighbourhood Plan's preparation identified a widely held wish to protect Leire's rural setting, and its relationship with the surrounding landscape.

One of the main ways in which residents expressed this wish was by describing a number of highly valued views out into, and toward it from, the surrounding countryside and (at a more intimate scale) within the built-up area. These consultation findings were supported by the environmental inventory, which although principally aimed at identifying sites of environmental significance also confirmed the sightlines of the suggested views and mapped them (below, figure 15). Details of the views forms Appendix 10.

POLICY ENV 9: PROTECTION OF IMPORTANT VIEWS – The following views (shown in figure 15) are important to the setting and character of the village. Development proposals should, whenever practicable, respect and protect them. Development which would have an unacceptable impact on the identified views will not be supported.

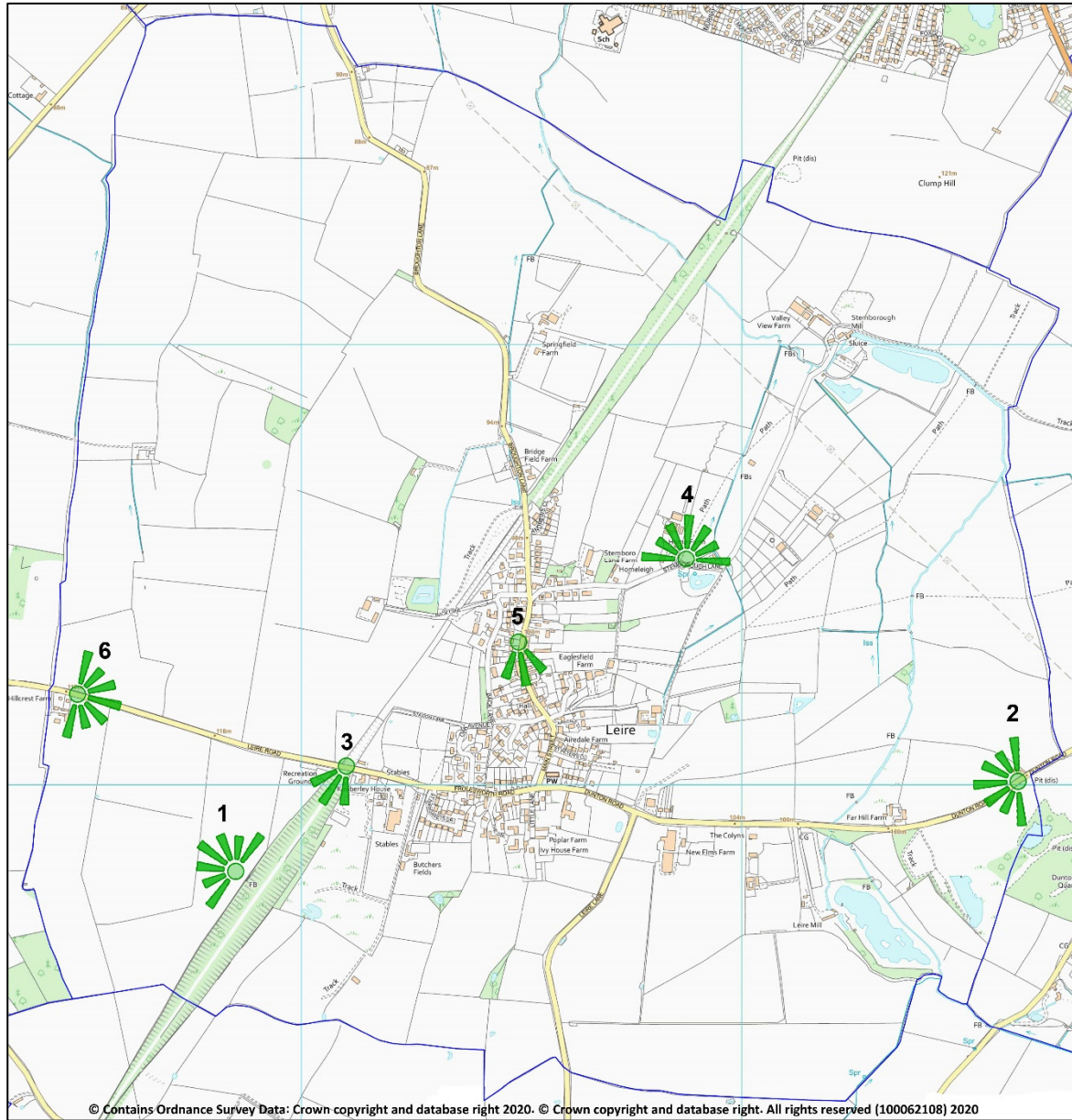
1. From 'Cliff Top' at the high point on footpath W64 above the railway cutting, 180° vista from southwest to northwest across the Plan Area and into the Soar valley, Charnwood Forest on the horizon to the northwest.
2. From the road from Dunton Bassett to Leire, at the Plan Area boundary, view looking back westwards into the parish.
3. Southwest along Jubilee Walk from under the bridge, view along the path following the course of the old railway, now managed for amenity and wildlife.

4. From Stemborough Lane, views north across small hedged fields of historic interest and the higher ground of the northern half of the Plan Area.

5. Street view on Main Street from the Post Office towards the church with several local heritage asset buildings including the village hall in the foreground

6. View east from Frolesworth Road at the Plan Area boundary toward Leire village including the church spire.

Figure 15: Important views

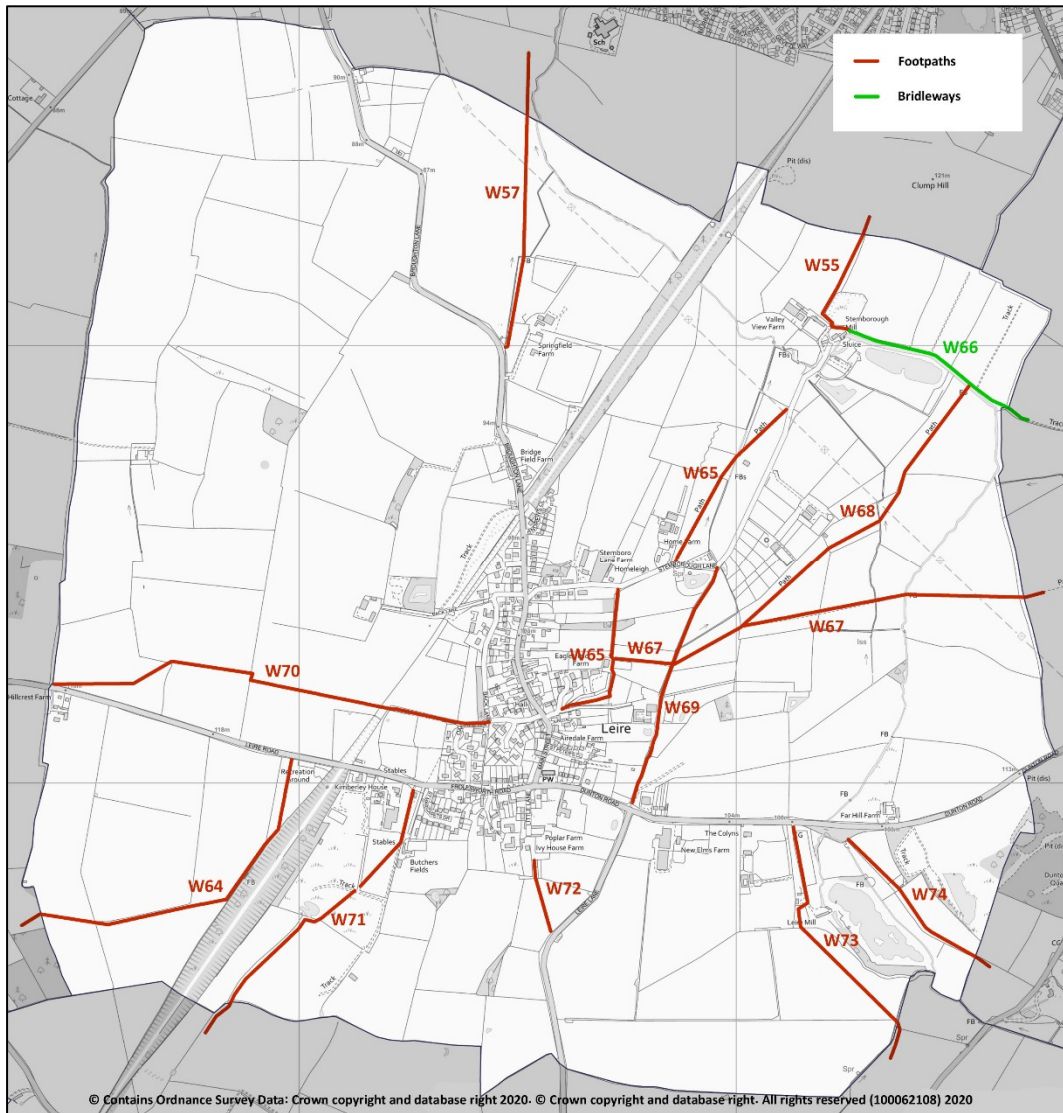


Footpaths and bridleways

A fairly extensive network of footpaths and bridleways survives in the Plan Area. They are a characteristic feature, as well as being a well-used community asset that helps improve physical and mental wellbeing for residents and visitors. The footpaths and bridleways (and many of the roads) around Leire are ancient ‘ways’ established and used in the medieval period when walking

was the only way of getting around – between Leire and neighbouring villages, to market towns, and out into the open fields – for most people.

Figure 16: Footpaths and bridleways



The essential function of the network diminished in the 20th century, being replaced by value for recreation. This popularity continues for residents and visitors (the Leicestershire Round passes through Leire), so the need for vigilance and a combination of Highways Authority and community support, together with ongoing maintenance is recognised by this Policy. It also requires developers to respect the historical and rural character of local footpaths, which have a value and meaning beyond simply being unobstructed linear features.

POLICY ENV 10: FOOTPATHS AND BRIDLEWAYS - Development proposals that result in the loss of, or have a significant adverse effect on, the existing network of footpaths (figure 16) will not be supported without appropriate mitigation.

Building for biodiversity

Residents in the Plan Area want their communities to play their part in the sustainable development of the District. As noted in the National Planning Policy Framework, Planning Authorities should, through their policies, contribute as fully as possible to the aims of *Biodiversity 2020* DEFRA, 2011. New development in Leire should be designed to incorporate the current (at time of Application) best practice standards and methods for biodiversity protection and enhancement, particularly for bats.

POLICY ENV 11: BIODIVERSITY PROTECTION IN NEW DEVELOPMENT – Provision should be made in the design and construction of new development to protect and enhance biodiversity, including:

- Roof and wall construction should incorporate integral bird nest boxes and bat breeding and roosting sites
- Hedges (or fences with ground-level gaps) should be used for property boundaries to maintain connectivity of habitat for hedgehogs and other terrestrial animals
- Avoidance of all unnecessary artificial lighting: there is no legal duty requiring any place to be lit
- Security lighting, if essential, should be operated by intruder sensors and illuminated for no longer than 1 minute. Sports and commercial facility lighting should be switched off during agreed 'curfew' hours between March and October, following best practice guidelines in *Bats and Lighting* Leicestershire Environmental Records Centre, 2014.
- Lighting design, location, type, lux levels and times of use should follow current best-practice, e.g. by applying the guidelines in *Guidance note 08/18 Bats and artificial lighting in the UK* (Bat Conservation Trust/Institution of Lighting Professionals, 2018).

Renewable energy generation infrastructure

The Plan Area is in Harborough District Council Landscape Character Areas *Upper Soar* and *Lutterworth Lowlands*, within which there are areas of moderate and moderate/high sensitivity (HDC *Landscape Character Assessments*, 2007; HDC *Lutterworth and Broughton Astley Landscape Character Assessment and Landscape Capacity Study* 2011).

National Planning Policy Framework 2019 paragraphs 152-154 make it clear that all communities are responsible for reducing emissions as part of the necessary approach to mitigating and adapting to climate change. Residents of Leire wish to play their part, but at a scale appropriate to the relatively flat, and thus moderately sensitive, landscape of the Plan Area. The impact of wind generation projects on communities has been recognised by the government: a Ministerial Statement made on the 18th June 2015 notes that suitable areas for wind energy development must be identified in local plans (as has been done in HDC Local Plan 2019 paragraph 10.3 and policy CC2) and that any such developments must have the support of local communities.

POLICY ENV 12: RENEWABLE ENERGY GENERATION INFRASTRUCTURE – Small-scale, local resident, business, amenity or community-initiated, solar and wind generation infrastructure will be

supported, subject to their complying with the environmental protection conditions listed in *HDC Local Plan Policy CC2*.

Large scale turbine developments will not be supported, in conformity with the Plan Area's designation in HDC Landscape Character Areas *Upper Soar* and *Lutterworth Lowlands* as an area of moderate and high landscape sensitivity and with *HDC Local Plan Policy CC2* and paragraph 10.3.

Resilience to flooding

Except for a narrow strip on which the oldest part of the village lies, the Plan Area is underlain by impermeable Quaternary age clay (Oadby and Thrussington Tills, Wolston Clay); combined with the topography, the soils developed from these clays allow river overbank and rain water to accumulate widely on farmland and in all low-lying areas, to overwhelm ditches and drains, and to cause surface water flooding (standing and flowing) across the parish, including in the built-up area. Local experience in 2019-20 has demonstrated that the current flood risk mapping underestimates the extent of flooding that can now be expected, possibly as 'the new normal', as weather patterns and rainfall intensity are altered by climate change.

The policy is in general conformity with HDC Local Plan 2011-2031 paragraph 10.5 and policy CC3, and supports the *Declaration of Climate Emergency* announced by Harborough District Council in June 2019. Its intention is to direct all new development away from Flood Risk Zone 3, including the effective floodplains, and to control it rigorously in flood risk Zone 2 and in respect of all aspects of risk and exacerbation associated with third party and surface water flooding.

POLICY ENV 13: MANAGING AND PROVIDING RESILIENCE TO FLOOD RISK –

1. In conformity with HDC Local Plan policy CC3, development proposals within the areas indicated in Figure 17 will be required, where appropriate, to demonstrate that the benefit of development outweighs the harm in relation to its adverse impact on climate change targets, and on the likelihood of it conflicting with future flood mitigation strategies and infrastructure proposals.
2. Proposals to construct new (or modify existing) floodwater management infrastructure (ditches, roadside gullies, retention pools, etc.), including within the built-up area, will be supported.
3. Development proposals for one or more dwellings and/or for employment development adjacent to watercourses should demonstrate that:
 - a) if in a location susceptible to flooding from rivers or surface water, no alternative site to meet the local residential development need is available;
 - b) its location and design respect the geology, flood risk and natural drainage characteristics of the immediate area and is accompanied by a hydrological study whose findings must be complied with in respect of design, groundworks and construction;
 - c) it includes a Flood Risk Assessment and where necessary commitments for mitigation;
 - d) it includes a Surface Water Drainage Strategy which demonstrates that the proposed drainage scheme, and site layout and design, will prevent properties from flooding from surface water, including allowing for climate change effects, and that flood risk elsewhere

will not be exacerbated by increased levels of surface water runoff and will not threaten natural habitats and water systems;

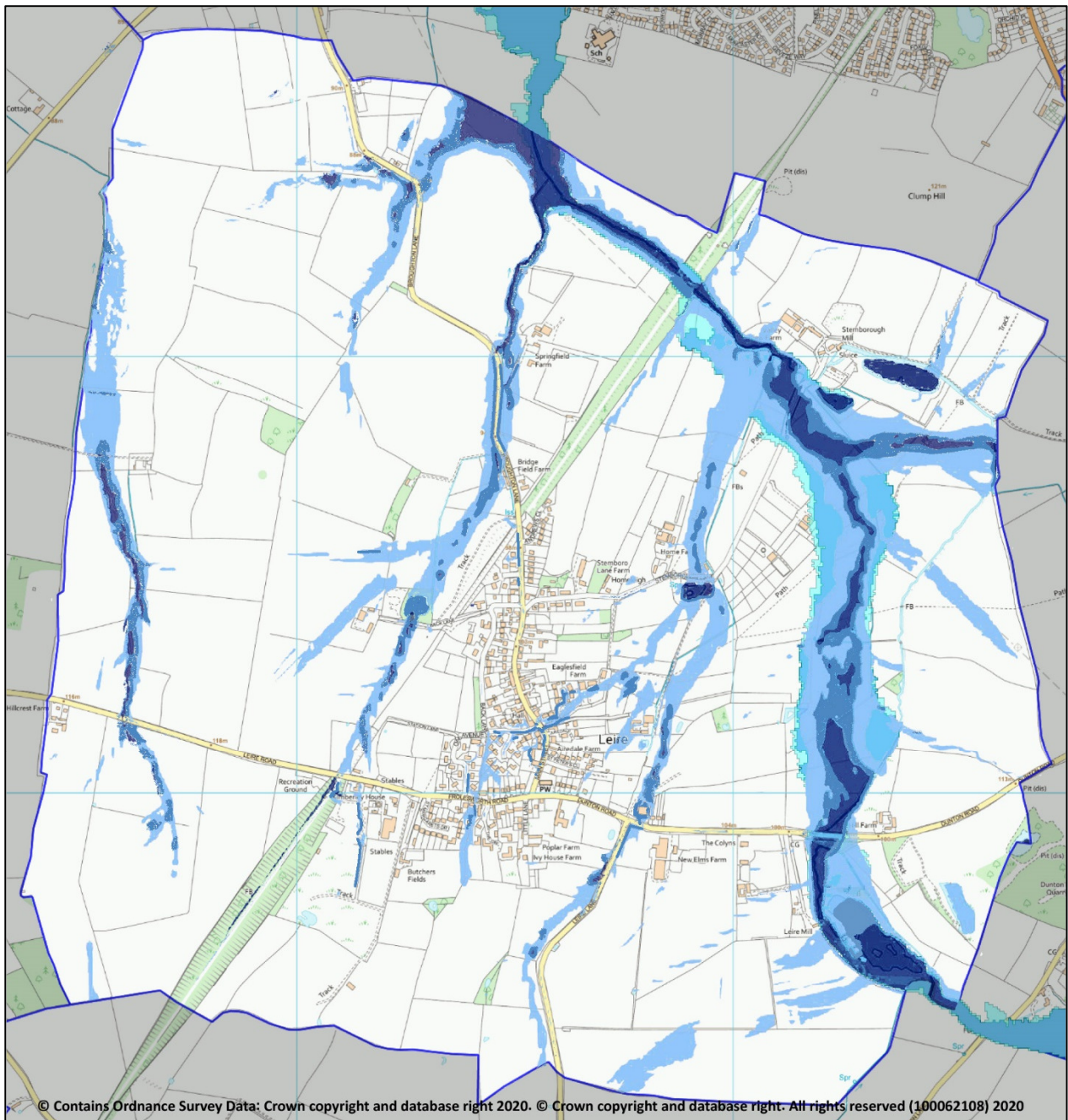
e) its design includes, as appropriate, sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) with ongoing maintenance provision, other surface water management measures and permeable surfaces;

f) it does not increase the risk of flooding to third parties;

g) proposed SuDS infrastructure includes, where practicable, habitat creation comprising e.g. landscaping, access and egress for aquatic and terrestrial animals, and native species planting; and

h) it takes the effects of climate change into account

Figure 17: Environment Agency mapping of all flood risk areas (Zones 3 and 2; surface water)



5.3 Infrastructure

Community facilities

A wide range of community facilities, amenities and assets exists in Leire; these make a distinct and significant contribution to the vitality of the Parish. They have a positive impact on the sustainability and quality of life for residents and provide essential opportunities for social interaction, friendship and community support.

To guarantee the on-going prosperity of the Parish, it is essential that existing community facilities are retained, protected and strengthened to ensure they continue to sustain the vitality of the community.

The importance and high value attached to existing community facilities were highlighted in residents' responses at both the Open Day event and the consultation questionnaire organised to assist preparation of this Neighbourhood Plan. The most important facilities, amenities and assets are briefly described here:

Perhaps the most important facility in Leire is the Village Hall. This is used regularly for weekly meetings of Pilates and Yoga classes, Brownies, Beavers, Cubs and Scouts, and a Mother and Toddler group which also invites lonely pensioners. The Hall also hosts WI meetings, Parish Council meetings, other various meetings, birthday parties, and election voting. In addition, the Village Hall is the centre for Leire Fete Week, when Cream Teas, Quiz, Treasure Hunt, film night, a bridge night and other events are based there. The hall is also the venue for a Local Show where produce, cakes and flowers are sold to raise money for charity.

The Leire Social Committee organises events here, such as a Winter Warmers Lunch and other community events to bring the village together. In the winter the Hall is the location for the "Tuck Shop", a weekly get together of children on their way home from school, and villagers.

Learning to ride horses is popular in the village, and, apart from private stables, there is a Riding School, which also supports Riding For The Disabled.

There are two public houses in the Village. The Queens Arms has an Indian Restaurant and a large garden which is popular in the summer months. This is also the venue of the yearly Village Pig Roast which is organised by the Leire Social Committee. The Queens Arms also hosts Quiz Nights, music nights, a weekly art group, a womens skittles team, and get togethers for major sporting events.

The Crab and Cow is primarily a high end restaurant and bar and is well supported.

On the western perimeter of the village there is a playing field, with a car park. Here there are soccer goals and a children's play area. The purchase of the equipment has been funded by village fund raising and grants. The playing field is also the main venue for the annual Leire Village Fete. This is the highspot of fete week and is the main fund raiser of the week. There are games, stalls, teas and barbeque, bars, a music stage, classic car show and a dog show. The money raised goes to the the Village and Church. The annual Leire Cricket Match takes place here, where the north

half of the village plays the south half. Steps from the playing field lead down to Jubilee Walk, a former railway line in a cutting and now a nature walk which is maintained by a group of village volunteers. Nearby are the village allotments.

St Peter's Anglican Church is well attended and hosts musical evenings each year. There is a bellringing group and an historical graveyard. The War Memorial is well maintained and the focus of Remembrance Day.

A group of villagers keep the history of Leire alive and have records of historical buildings, the two water mills, the two pumps, events such as street parties, families, and old photographs,

Community consultation confirmed the importance of enhancing the number and variety of community facilities and amenities in the Parish, recognising their value to the local community.

POLICY INF1: PROTECTION AND ENHANCEMENT OF COMMUNITY FACILITIES - Development proposals that result in the loss of an important community facility will not be supported, unless the building or facility is replaced by an equivalent or better provision in terms of quantity and quality in an equally suitable location or it can be demonstrated that the service or facility is not viable or is no longer required by the community and there is adequate alternative provision within the same settlement.

Development proposals to enhance the provision of community buildings that meet an identified local need, will be supported where the proposed development will:

- a) not detract from residential amenity by merit of excessive traffic movement or other disturbance;**
- b) not generate parking need that cannot be adequately catered for within the site;**
- c) be of a scale proportionate to local need, and**
- d) be readily accessible for cyclists and/or pedestrians.**

New Employment initiatives

Leire sits amidst a broad rural community and is close to urban areas offering significant employment opportunities. Employment opportunities within the Parish are therefore less important to parishioners than a thriving economy in the larger communities and the easily accessible industrial areas nearby.

At the time of the last Census and in our community questionnaire, the number stating that they were unemployed was very low. 13.4% at the time of the last census are self-employed which is higher than the district level. This implies a strongly self-sufficient community but also one which could potentially benefit from greater support and interaction of this business community within Leire.

The majority of residents choose to work away from the village and to travel by car. Public transport is seldom used. Some people living in the village operate small businesses whilst others choose to place their business in an area with higher population such as Lutterworth. The other major

business area is farming. Aside from employment on the local farms and small holdings, the other small businesses include a horse box manufacturer, a dog groomer, a chiropody clinic, a sign and sound therapist, the two public houses already referred to, and a computer software company.

New employment initiatives in the right location can help to boost and diversify the local economy and provide more local employment opportunities. However, there is concern that new employment opportunities will have a negative impact on the character of Leire.

However, any new employment initiatives should be sensitive to the character of the parish. Employment proposals should only be seen as acceptable if they avoid harmful impacts such as increased traffic, parking, residential amenity, the preservation of historic/heritage assets and the local environment.

The Plan therefore recognises the importance of a healthy and diverse local economy in providing employment opportunities locally for people but wishes to minimise the negative impacts of such activity. Whilst wishing to safeguard existing employment sites it is seen as important by the local community that any new development activity enhances rather than detracts from the character of the Parish. High levels of home working and self-employment are important indicators which are recognised within the Plan.

POLICY INF2: EMPLOYMENT AND BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT - Development proposals that result in the loss of, or have a significant adverse effect on, an existing employment use will not be permitted unless it can be demonstrated that the site or building is no longer suitable or viable for employment use.

Proposals for employment-related development (for new and/or expansion of employment uses) will be supported where it can be demonstrated that the development will not generate unacceptable disturbance, noise, fumes, smell or traffic; that it will respect and be compatible with the local character and surrounding uses; and that it will, where appropriate, protect residential amenity.

Farm diversification

There are several working farms in the Parish. Given potential challenges facing the agricultural economy, the Neighbourhood Plan will seek to support farming businesses within the Parish as they are considered essential to maintaining a balanced and vibrant rural community. Like many farmers, some of those in Leire have decided to diversify some aspects of their land. The most popular has been small riding stables and horse riders are a regular sight on the village roads. One farm has diversified into breeding pheasants, and a couple have fishing lakes

The conversion of former agricultural buildings has enabled farm diversification, led to the sustainable re-use of vacant buildings and provided opportunities for the establishment and development of small businesses, which generate income and employment opportunities for local people. This is a trend which the Parish would like to see supported locally through the Neighbourhood Plan in order to contribute to maintaining a balanced and vibrant community, subject to the proper consideration of residential amenity for nearby houses, visual impact on the

countryside and highway safety issues.

The conversion of farm buildings can enable diversification through sustainable re-use to provide opportunities for new businesses which can generate income and offer employment opportunities for local people.

To help maintain the rural economy and protect the open countryside from inappropriate development, the Plan supports the sustainable growth and expansion of business and enterprise through the development and, where appropriate, conversion of farm existing buildings in the countryside. Specifically, this is intended to:

Promote a sustainable farming and rural economy in Leire Parish;

Encourage the diversification of rural businesses;

Support businesses to provide a wider range of local produce, services and leisure facilities, to provide local employment and attract visitors to the Parish;

Maintain and enhance the local environment of rural and agricultural lands.

The change of use of some rural buildings to new uses is already permitted under the General Permitted Development Orders.

POLICY INF3: RE-USE OF AGRICULTURAL AND COMMERCIAL BUILDINGS – The use, conversion and adaptation of rural buildings for small businesses, recreation, or tourism purposes will be supported where:

- a) The use proposed is appropriate to the rural location;
- b) The conversion/adaptation works respect the local character of the surrounding area;
- c) The development will not have an adverse impact on any archaeological, architectural, historic or environmental features;
- d) The local road system is capable of accommodating the traffic generated by the proposed new use and adequate parking can be accommodated within the site; and
- e) *There is no significant adverse impact on neighbours through noise, light pollution, increased traffic levels or increased flood risk.*

Home working

The benefit of supporting home working is that it helps to promote employment activities, whilst reducing the dependency of the car for long journeys to employment sites outside the Parish. A large proportion of the Parish now benefits from fast broadband which for a long time had limited home working in rural locations.

There are established businesses which are run from home-based facilities within the village, with 6.3% of people in work saying that they work mainly or from home – higher than the district

average and almost double the rates for the East Midlands and England. With improving connectivity and changing employment patterns nationally, this trend is likely to continue. For example, 36% of respondents to the community questionnaire said that they work from home, demonstrating the significance of this area.

The Neighbourhood Plan recognises and supports the increasing numbers of people who conduct their businesses from home. This is reflected through policies to encourage a diverse range of housing types and support for proposals to extend or convert suitable buildings to accommodate such businesses.

In parishes such as Leire with limited full-time employment opportunities, the benefit of supporting home working is that it helps to promote and encourage local employment and reduces the dependency of the car for long journeys to employment sites outside the Parish.

The intention of the policy is to recognise that people may not have a suitable space within their home from which to run a business, or they may wish to distinctly and deliberately separate their work and living space. The policy supports the construction of extensions, the conversion of outbuildings, and the development of new free-standing buildings in gardens from which businesses can operate. This is intended to maximise the opportunity for home run enterprises to be created and supported in the long term in the Parish.

The policy would apply where a material change of use occurs, such that planning permission is required. This reflects positive support for entrepreneurial activity in line with the NPPF and Harborough Local Plan.

POLICY INF4: WORKING FROM HOME - Proposals for the use of part of a dwelling for office and/or light industrial uses, and for small-scale free-standing buildings within its curtilage, extensions to the dwelling or conversion of outbuildings for those uses, will be supported where the development:

- a) Is in keeping with the scale, form and character of its surroundings;
- b) Has safe and suitable access to the site for all people;
- c) Will not result in unacceptable traffic movements and that appropriate parking provision is made;
- d) Has no significant and adverse impact to nearby residents or other sensitive land uses from noise, fumes, light pollution, or other nuisance associated with the work activity which could lead to monitoring under environmental regulations; and
- e) Any extension or free-standing building shall be designed having regard to policies in this Plan and should not detract from the quality and character of the building to which they are subservient by reason of height, scale, massing, location or the facing materials used in their construction.

Electric Vehicles

In 2020 the UK government announced its intention to ban sales of new petrol and diesel cars from 2030 to combat rising levels of air pollution (in particular NOx) and address climate change concerns. The implication is that the number of 'pure' (i.e. not hybrid) electric vehicles (EVs) on the road will increase rapidly; there is some evidence this is already starting. If EVs are to have a similar range to today's petrol/diesel cars, they will need to have large capacity batteries installed (for example, an EV with a 310-mile (500kms) range requires a battery capacity of 90kWh). This raises the crucial question for the planning system of providing infrastructure for EV battery recharging.

Residential charging is probably the current norm but using a typical generator size of 3.7kW (as currently installed as standard on board EVs, with similar electrical usage as a domestic kettle), this would take 19 hours to re-charge the battery (assuming a typical run-down state of 25% of maximum). The lower capacity (and lower range <100miles) Nissan Leaf would take about 6 hours. Larger capacity on-board generators (7kW) are now available, halving these times, but this is the maximum currently possible using the current standard domestic electricity supply (single phase 240volt). However, residential charging is only allowed where off-road parking is available.

This issue is already influencing planning and building regulations, for example in London any new development that includes more than 5 parking spaces must include electric charging points in greater than 5% of these. It would seem wise to include such requirements for new developments even in locations such as Leire if rural communities are not to be left behind. Similarly, commercial rapid charging facilities are growing across the country (making use of 3-phase supply not possible at the domestic level and reducing the 7kW re-charge time by a factor of 3). These could be utilised in Leire for example by installation in a permanent parking area as described above, providing re-charging for residents with no off-road parking, and allowing opportunities for fast re-charging for all residents. It is noticeable that there has been an increase in the ownership of both electric and hybrid vehicles in Leire in the last 2 years.

POLICY INF5: ELECTRIC VEHICLES - Residential development of one or more houses should provide 7kW (or current best practice) cabling to a vehicle-accessible location on the exterior of each dwelling to facilitate subsequent installation of a home electric vehicle charging point.

The provision of communal vehicular charging points within the Parish will be supported where there is universal access and their presence does not impact negatively on existing available parking in the Parish.

Communications infrastructure

The modern economy is changing and increasingly requires good communications and infrastructure as a basic requirement to maximise technological advances. High-speed internet connectivity is driving business innovation and growth, helping people access services, and opening up new opportunities for learning. This is particularly important in small rural settings where e.g. better broadband enables improved access to an increasing number of on-line applications. Services provided by the public and private sector, can help to reduce social exclusion and create

business opportunities. 86% of parishioners responding to the community questionnaire expressed concern about broadband provision.

Additionally, the technological transformation of the past few years shows that there will undoubtedly be further advances in the future. It is crucial that Leire is able to accommodate and deliver new technology as it arises e.g. the need for further development of high-speed broadband infrastructure to serve Leire Parish as technology develops is very important. It is expected that good broadband provision and mobile phone service could act as a draw for homeworkers and small businesses and assist such enterprises already in the village to flourish.

POLICY INF6: MOBILE AND TELECOMMUNICATION INFRASTRUCTURE - Proposals to provide increased infrastructure in general and access to a super-fast broadband service (currently at least 30 MBPS but to include future developments at present unforeseen) and improve the mobile telecommunication network that will serve businesses and other properties within the Parish will be supported.

Where above ground networks installations are required, they should be sympathetically located and designed to integrate into the landscape.

6. Monitoring and Review

The Neighbourhood Plan will last for a period up to 2031. During this time, it is likely that the circumstances which the Plan seeks to address will change.

The Neighbourhood Plan will be regularly monitored. This will be led by Leire Parish Council on at least an annual basis. The policies and measures contained in the Neighbourhood Plan will form the core of the monitoring activity, but other data collected and reported at the Parish level relevant to the delivery of the Neighbourhood Plan will also be included.

The Parish Council proposes to formally review the Neighbourhood Plan on a five-year cycle commencing in 2025 or to coincide with the review of the Harborough Local Plan if this cycle is different.